

Chapter 2

ORQUESTRA GERAÇÃO 2007-2015

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Introduction

The *Orquestra Geração* (OG) was launched in 2007 in the Casal da Boba neighbourhood within the framework of the *Geração* project that had been under implementation by Amadora Municipal Council since 2005. Financed by the European Union's EQUAL⁷ program, this project was jointly coordinated by the aforementioned municipality and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation⁸.

The *Geração* project strove to develop a set of actions able to help combat factors of social exclusion, such as school absenteeism or unemployment, especially among young persons, which made up the bulk of the population originally from other neighbourhoods and rehoused in Casal da Boba. (Machado & Matias, 2005, 2007).

This represents the context in which Jorge Miranda (former director of the Amadora Municipal Council Department of Education and Culture) and António Wagner Diniz (former president of the executive council of the National Conservatory School of Music) launched the idea of adding a musical component to the *Geração* project, which would be centred on action and social integration through music and awarding priority to young persons facing situations of social and educational vulnerability.

The OG emerged in this context under the pedagogical and administrative orientation of the EMCN – the National Conservatory School of Music and inspired above all on the *Venezuelan National System of Youth and Children's Orchestras* but also drawing on other projects such as the Harlem String Program (USA) and Vibrato

⁷ A European Union Program that “seeks to promote new practices in the struggle against discrimination and inequality of any nature interrelated with the labour market within a context of national cooperation and encouraging the social and professional integration of asylum seekers” (in <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/PT/TXT/?uri=URISERV%3Ac10237>, accessed on 18 May 2016).

⁸ Furthermore, other project partners were the High Commission for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue, the Casal da Boba Parish Centre, Miguel Torga Middle School, São Brás Parish Council, healthcare centres, Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Lisboa, the Association Unidos de Cabo Verde and the Amadora Intercultural School of Professions and Sport (Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 2008).

(Rosário-Argentina). Through the collective practice of music, the OG program sought to contribute towards the integration of young persons, initially beginning in the fifth grade of schooling, living within precarious social and educational contexts. Thus, it was expected to create environments favourable to socialisation that would be able to help in combating school dropouts and stimulating social mobility among the populations living in surroundings displaying particularly phenomena of social exclusion (EMCN, s/d).

Initially planned as a phased formation process for an 80-member Orchestra at Miguel Torga Middle School, this involved the implementation of a teaching methodology above all based on collective work. Starting out as a pilot project, the long term objective was to expand the program to other areas in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area as well as other parts of the country (idem).

The pedagogical responsibility for the OG Program remained with the EMCN, especially as regards the organisation of the teacher training program, selecting both the teachers' trainers and the teachers to work in the project as well as integrating and accompanying students (idem). To this end, the project drew upon the collaboration of two Venezuelan musicians who, while resident in Portugal, are also products of the *El Sistema* (ES) where they first began their studies (idem).

The early stages of *Orquestra Geração*

The project launched with fifteen students from the Miguel Torga Middle School in Casal da Boba, which on the date of the OG implementation, was beginning to advance with a management process due to changes in the school context caused by the construction of a new adjoining neighbourhood. Given its social dimension, the Orchestra ended up falling under the auspices of the TEIP (Priority Intervention Education Territories) program that the school joined in 2010.

Despite the doubts and concerns regarding the ambition of this project and the fact that it relied on a cultural practice distant to those normally associated with students from this school, especially as regards the consumption of music from the western classical tradition, the project ended up advancing. This involved the process

of attracting students who volunteered to appear at instrument demonstrations performed by Orchestra teachers.

This group, while still counting on a limited number of participants, made its first public presentations to the school community and families in December of that same year and correspondingly reflecting the central role played by concerts in the project's methodology, a point to which we shall return.

At this time, the Orchestra had four string instrument teachers and one ear training and sight singing teacher from the school. In addition to this theoretical component, the program included individual instrument classes, section classes and orchestra classes. The other groups – wind and percussion – for budgetary reasons, were only launched in the academic years of 2008/2009 and 2009/2010 respectively.

Having begun their musical studies in the fifth or seventh grades, many of these students are no longer in this school and today attend professional music schools or study other academic areas already within a university setting. However, a large number continue to attend the Orchestra, especially through the Municipal and Inter-Municipal Orchestra project. These orchestras were founded as a means of providing municipalities with a tool for culturally leveraging their territories and as a means of integrating the former students emerging out of the project's activities. With OG attributing priority to primary and middle school students, these orchestras also enable the bringing together of other young persons who have completed their ninth year of schooling.

At the end of 2008, the OG already involved around 100 students, not only from Amadora but also from Vila Franca de Xira Municipal Council, which had joined the project in that academic year.

The Vialonga nuclei

While incorporating the OG pedagogical orientations, this nucleus took a relatively distinctive path and with some administrative autonomy. Effectively, the

Vialonga School Group⁹, which was also involved in the Priority Intervention Education Territories projects, already provided musical teaching in its school curriculum. In 2004, on the initiative of the School Group Board and with support from the Ministry of Education, Vila Franca de Xira Municipal Council¹⁰ and the *Central de Cervejas* beverage company, launched a violin teaching project for students in the group's primary school that ended up later getting merged into the OG project.

However, the most distinctive feature of this School Group, in relation to the other groups participating in the OG, stems from having been granted the School with Artistic Music Teaching status in the second and third cycles in 2008-2009 (General Inspectorate of Education and Science, 2011)¹¹.

The framework for the already integrated teaching regime for music distinguishes this group not only across the administrative dimensions but also in terms of its objectives given that the targets relative to the musical component are central to its development. Contrary to the other OG nuclei, which essentially focus on the social development components, students in this group fall under a framework with specific parameters for the specialist teaching of music that, for example, include the evaluation of their musical progress in order to ensure they get their learning formally recognised. It should also be noted that the integrated teaching approach ensures that the music classes get incorporated into the timetable of normal school classes¹².

Furthermore, while the other OG nuclei do not work exclusively with students from vulnerable socioeconomic conditions, the admission to the Vialonga Orchestra is explicitly open to any student irrespective of the socioeconomic context. In fact, the entrance criteria for this Orchestra fundamentally depend on the age of the children who are grouped accordingly.

⁹ In Portugal, a School Group is an organisational unit of the educational system, provided with its own administration and management board, and including pre-school and one or more further education levels under a common pedagogical project.

¹⁰ Specifically through the provision of the Vialonga Community Centre, where the Orchestra meets daily.

¹¹ In turn, the other OG nuclei in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area benefit from the status of a special project operating according to an after school regime.

¹² According to the juridical regime granting financial support by the state under the auspices of sponsorship contracts, under the terms and for the effects stipulated by the Statute of Private and Cooperative Teaching at the non-higher level, go to Dispatch no. 224-A/2015 DR 146/2015 series I, 29 July.

In the specific case of the Vialonga Orchestra, the teachers are not contracted by the EMCN but rather directly by the Group Board. Thus, as an integrated teaching school, there are not, as there are at the other nuclei, the annual uncertainties around program continuity. Finally, the number of students is not confined by an upper limit of hours assigned by the Ministry, as happens in the other nuclei in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area, and may grow in accordance with the respective needs.

We may thus conclude that the Vialonga OG takes on a very distinct profile and only shares certain dimensions with the remaining OG schools, as is the case with the repertoire, pedagogical guidelines and some activities.

The OG expansion

In 2008/2009 academic year, on the request of the AUCV – the Association Unidos de Cabo Verde, young persons from the Casal da Mira neighbourhood joined the project. Following the pedagogical orientations of the Conservatory, for the meanwhile they remained under the management of this Association. This orchestra emerged out of a protocol signed between AUCV, EMCN and Grupo Chamartín (owners of the Dolce Vita shopping malls) which, within the framework of its social responsibility programs, financially supported the launching of the OG in this neighbourhood. This nucleus ended up deactivated in the 2009/2010 academic year with some students transferred to the Miguel Torga OG nucleus and the teaching team redeployed to a nucleus that was due to open in Damaia.

The 2008/2009 academic year ended with around 200 students including children belonging to these first three groups. However, it was in the following year that the project expanded significantly as detailed in Table 1 showing the development of OG between 2007 and 2010.

This wider entrance of municipalities proved possible due to funding resulting from the application by the Lisbon Metropolitan Area to *PorLisboa*, from funding by local councils and the contracting of teachers by the Ministry of Education, summing

up to around 85% of the project's costs¹³. The schools in Camarate and Sacavém (the Eduardo Gageiro School Group) also received financial backing from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, through the local government, and with support from the *Portugal Telecom* Foundation and the University of Lisbon. These protocols took place under the auspices of the Loures Security Contract, setting up a series of orchestras that were together entitled the *Orquestra Geração Bora Nessa*.

2007/8	2008/09	2009/10	
Amadora 1 – Miguel Torga Schools Group			
	Amadora 2 - AUCV		
	Amadora 3 – Almeida Garrett Schools Group		
	Amadora 4 – Damaia Schools Group		
Vila Franca de Xira – Vialonga Schools Group			
	Oeiras – Carnaxide – Portela Schools Group		
	Sintra – Mestre Domingos Saraiva Schools Group		
	Sesimbra – Boa Água Schools Group		
	Loures 1 – Eduardo Gageiro Schools Group		
	Loures 2 – Camarate Schools Group		
	Loures 3 – Apelação Schools Group		

Table 1 – Evolution of the OG between 2007 and 2010

¹³ Through a Dispatch dated 20 August 2009, the then Minister of Education, Maria de Lourdes Rodrigues, recognised *Orquestra Geração* as a special education project of the National Conservatory School of Music. “By Ministry of Education dispatch (dated 20 August 2009 and 30 July 2010), that approved the project, the Conservatory is authorised to contract teachers for its respective development with its coordination the responsibility of an assistant director and an assessor” (in EMCN, 2012).

The Apelação nucleus

While Apelação did not fall within the scope of the Security Contract mentioned above, this nucleus began, from an early stage, to undertake its activities in conjunction with the other schools in Loures. The Apelação nucleus differs from the outset by the strong characteristics of deprivation and exclusion as well as its levels of school dropout. In parallel, these factors ended up reflected in the reception of the project by students and the multiple difficulties experienced as regards changing the attitudes and behaviours in the Orchestra classes. Also falling within a TEIP framework, this school group welcomed the Orchestra project initially with 25 students. Beyond the socioeconomic vulnerabilities characterising this territory, there were also further restrictions stemming from the isolation of the neighbourhood and the school itself. In order to minimise these and other aspects, this school hired a mediator, a resident in the neighbourhood that provided a point of linkage between the students and the OG project.¹⁴

The Amarante, Mirandela and Murça nuclei

Fully supported by the EDP Foundation (within the scope of social compensation on account of the construction of new hydroelectric plants), 2010 saw the launch of the Amarante and Mirandela nuclei followed by Murça in 2011/2012. This thus expanded the range of the OG to other zones in the country and regions with a less urbanised profile than those in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area. The Amarante nucleus began working with the *Amadeo de Souza-Cardoso* School Group and, in addition to private sponsorship, also gained support from the Amarante Cultural Centre, which hosted some of its activities. The Mirandela nucleus counted upon the collaboration of the respective Municipal Council, the Esproarte – the Professional Art School of Mirandela – the primary schools, and the *S. J. Bosco Salesian* Centre. The Murça nucleus, in turn, stemmed from a partnership between Artemir/Esproarte and the Murça School Group.

¹⁴ For further details on this, consult chapter 4, *Madalena – 'I control everything from my window' section*.

In 2013, the Amarante nucleus was successful in an application to the PARTIS program run by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation while Mirandela and Murça retained the support from EDP: “The management of this triad is done by the EDP Foundation” (interview with Margarida Pinto Correia, coordinator of the social programme of the EDP Foundation). While following the syllabus set down by the EMCN pedagogical coordination, these nuclei were given autonomy both in the recruitment of teaching staff and in the running of their activities.

These orchestras were to follow their own autonomous paths as regards the overall OG management framework, transforming into the *Orquestra Nova Geração* project and, later, into the *Orquestra Energia* project with pedagogical and artistic management by *Casa da Música*¹⁵.

New nuclei in the municipalities of Lisbon, Amadora and the central and northern regions

In the 2010/2011 academic year, Lisbon Municipal Council joined the OG, launching the project in the neighbourhoods of Ajuda and Boavista. The latter only opened courses for string instruments.

In 2011, the project also expanded into the central region of Portugal with a nucleus established in Coimbra under the charge of the local music conservatory. In the academic year of 2011/2012, there emerged another nucleus in Amadora and in the following year, the Lisbon council expanded its project participation into the neighbourhood of Armador. In 2014/2015, an orchestra was launched in Lisbon and another in Gondomar in the Porto Metropolitan Region.

Right from the beginning of its development, when counting upon only fifteen students, the OG reached the end of 2014-2015 with over 700 students (Table 2).

¹⁵ *Casa da Música* is the main Concert Hall in Porto.

2007/8	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Amadora 1 – Miguel Torga Schools Group							
Amadora 2 - AUCV							
Amadora 3 – Almeida Garrett Schools Group							
				Amadora 4 – Damaia Schools Group			
Vila Franca de Xira – Vialonga Schools Group							
		Oeiras – Carnaxide – Portela Schools Group					
		Sintra – Mestre Domingos Saraiva Schools Group					
		Sesimbra – Boa Água Schools Group					
		Loures 1 – Eduardo Gageiro Schools Group					
		Loures 2 – Camarate Schools Group					
		Loures 3 – Apelação Schools Group					
				Lisboa 1 – Francisco Arruda Schools Group			
				Lisboa 2 – Benfica Schools Group			
					Lisboa 3 – Olaias Schools Group		
						Lisboa 4 – Gil Vicente SG	
				Amarante – Amadeo de Souza Cardoso Schools Group			
				Mirandela – Mirandela Schools Group			
					Murça – Murça Schools Group		
					Coimbra – S. Silvestre School		
							Gondomar – S. P. Cova SG

Table 2 – The OG at the end of 2015

***Orquestra Geração* and *El Sistema* – adaptation and development**

The OG bases its methodology on the experience of *El Sistema* (ES) – the *Venezuelan National System of Youth and Children’s Orchestras*, founded in 1975 by the Maestro José António Abreu. Starting out as a project designed to foster the training of Venezuelan musicians, this rapidly took on a predominantly social

character, approaching orchestral practice – and above all its dimension of collective work – as a form of personal and social intervention. This system has spread throughout the country through orchestral and choral nuclei that may each contain up to and over 1,500 students. Such structures follow the pedagogical orientations stipulated by the ES that, in a very hierarchical and structured organisation, disseminates the methodology through its respective ramifications.

It is this methodological framework that guides the implementation of the OG in the Portuguese case even while there have been multiple specific characteristics that configured the local adaptations of the ES. In general terms, three core principles would seem to orient the work of the OG and distinguish its teaching methodology from those deployed in the majority of music schools. On the one hand, the principle that if children learn to speak before they learn to write or understand the theory that sustains language, then they are also able to play prior to knowing about musical theory and reading. The way of achieving this, and here approaching the second principle, stems above all from a process of imitating the teacher or even fellow students at a later phase in their studies. This thus introduces the third principle that encapsulates the priority attributed to group work. Effectively, this moves on from a paradigm of individual teaching focused on attaining musical objectives, and disseminated in the overwhelming majority of music schools, to a social paradigm based on collective work.

Therefore, the time spent on group classes takes up almost the entirety of the practice of each student distributed, in the majority of cases, across three hours of orchestra, two hours of instrumental section, one hour of ear training and sight singing and thirty minutes of individual class per week. The high weighting of this timetable commitment stands out, in the majority of school groups, from any other extracurricular activity on offer.

These classes are, in the majority of cases, given inside the school, whether at the main school or another school in the group. Students either voluntarily enrol or are put forward by their teachers, form teachers, psychologists or school partner entities, such as child protection commissions. All of these students are provided with, free of any

charge, an instrument¹⁶, transportation to training camps and concerts and, in the majority of cases, with meals during activities outside of the school.

The repertoire

The orchestra repertoires are defined by the pedagogical and artistic coordination team of the project based largely on the repertoire already in effect at the ES in Venezuela. Students gradually progress, advancing piece by piece through the repertoire, which is in turn structured and organised into four levels – initiation, pre-infant, infant and youth. These levels generally stipulate the specific orchestral groups even while they may also be grouped into Municipal or Intermunicipal Orchestras. The repertoires of orchestras also frequently contain pieces that do not feature in the generally defined repertoire, such as works defined by the respective teacher within a particular nucleus in accordance with each individual case.

In addition to the repertoire based on the Venezuelan methodology, the OG also integrates into its programs other works that reach out to the ethno-cultural imaginaries of the groups of students they work with. Hence, the orchestral repertoires correspondingly feature fados, funaná, kizombas, mornas, Portuguese popular music, film soundtracks, among others.

Teacher training

Given the specificity of the OG teaching methodology, there is a fundamental need to focus upon teacher training especially because the majority possess working tools fashioned by the “traditional” teaching of music that very commonly do not include an approach to teaching methodologies. This therefore spans training programs designed to provide resources for group learning and taking into consideration the profile of students displaying multiple emotional and social shortcomings and various failings in terms of academic progress. Hence, right from the outset of the project, training has acquired an increasingly important and diversified

¹⁶ Those students that go onto join professional training programs gain the opportunity to continue playing with the *Orquestra Geração* instrument. These students henceforth only attend the group classes of the project.

role. In the first years, training sessions were carried out by ES trained members who were in Portugal in order both to provide the working tools and to monitor the activities already under development¹⁷. In recent years, these trainers have been joined by educators from other national backgrounds (especially Portuguese) and from other fields beyond that of music¹⁸.

Internships

The work carried out over the course of the year gets intensified at the various internships that bring together children from all of the nuclei (or at least a great majority) in conjunction with their respective teachers, as well as guest conductors, both Portuguese and Venezuelan. These camps take place during the holiday periods in the school calendar – Christmas, Carnival, Easter and Summer – during which students spend entire days with different teachers or conductors inside one of the project school buildings. These camps normally culminate in a concert for family members and the public in general.

When the OG timetable ends, during the summer holidays, some students are selected to join the *European Sistema* camp and thus bringing together some of the many other students from countries also implementing the ES methodology.

Public presentations and community involvement

Within this context, two other core aspects to the OG program emerge – public presentations and community involvement. The concerts in fact constitute a fundamental component to the project to the extent that they enable students to incorporate the results of their studies, rewarding them for such efforts and creating visibility for the public, their families and school and as well as for the project funders. These aim to establish invigorating moments for students and for the surrounding

¹⁷ In the first project year, in October 2007, a theoretical-practical seminar was run by two Venezuelan method teachers.

¹⁸ Standing out among the examples is the training of musical directors, the orientations for pedagogical practices, conflict management, community relations, creativity, among others. We would also emphasise the collaboration with institutions such as *Nariz Vermelho* (Red Nose), SOS Racismo or the Child and Young Person Protection Commission in launching these training sessions.

community, fostering the self-esteem of participants and breaking down stigmas and ghettoized cycles of cultural practices. As detailed above, these are objectives that prove complementary to that of contributing to reducing school dropouts and social exclusion.

The concerts are not only held in school and community settings but also in emblematic concert halls such as those of the *Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation*, the *Belém Cultural Centre*, *Casa da Música*, *São Luís Theatre*, *Aula Magna of the Lisbon University Rectory*, *Olga Cadaval Cultural Centre*, *Circo Theatre in Braga*, among so many others.

Above all, in the concerts at the end of the year but also at other events held over the course of the school year, families display high levels of involvement, filling rooms that may contain audiences of over a thousand and that frequently do not represent their normal environments for cultural consumption. The involvement of the family and the surrounding community is a fact duly considered as an important aspect of the project and for which there are also purpose designed activities.

Other activities

Beyond the classes, concerts, training camps and family socialisation events, the OG develops other activities in parallel, even if sometimes on only an occasional basis. Drama, choir, and opera classes, study visits, and attending concerts are some examples of activities that have taken place. The *Gerajazz* group plays a prominent role, given its continuity and transversal nature to the various Lisbon Metropolitan Area groups. It holds activities fortnightly with students from various nuclei.

Today, the OG also runs experimental projects such as *GeraChoirs*, carried out with students from primary schools in Loures, and *GeraMeetings*, which bring together students from schools, philharmonic bands and other musical groups that do not belong to the OG. Furthermore, there is also the work undertaken by the wind and percussion groups – *GeraWind* – and the recently created *Geratchimpum* with percussion students.

The organisational structure of the *Orquestra Geração*

Through to 2014, the OG institutional structure was under the responsibility of the EMCN Friends Association gaining in that year its own juridical basis through the launching of AOSJSP – the Sistema Portugal Association of Youth Symphonic Orchestras, a non-profit organisation responsible for the dissemination of the social intervention methodology through music based on the experiences of *Fundamusal Simon Bolívar* (El Sistema - Venezuela) and other methodologies. Following this objective the AOSJSP and *Fundamusal* signed a protocol, with the ambition of facilitating the exchange of teachers and pedagogical training initiatives, in 2015.

While the OG structure has displayed stability, some changes have occurred over the course of the years in keeping with the constant evolution of the project and its adaptation to the new contexts¹⁹.

The pedagogical and administrative orientations are centralised in the EMCN and counted, throughout the project launch and in the first years, on the coordination of two Venezuelan musicians that play in the Portuguese Symphonic Orchestra and the Gulbenkian Orchestra and who carried out their studies in the ES. The pedagogical and artistic coordination of the project was attributed to these two musicians and is today under the coordination of two OG teachers – for strings (also a former ES student) and wind –, as well as a Venezuelan conductor who regularly returns to Portugal to monitor and implement the repertoire alongside the pedagogical orientations and to undertake the role of orchestra conductor.

The pedagogical coordinating teachers also sit on the current board alongside its president and a vice-president. The pedagogical or administrative orientations handed down by the OG board are implemented in the field through the musical coordinators who are responsible for the running of each nucleus. This responsibility implies articulation with the school coordinators, a function performed by the group teachers responsible for organising the work of the Orchestras in conjunction with the musical coordinators (with the exception of the Vialonga case where the coordinator combines both these functions). These two figures – one from the school and the other from

¹⁹ The organisational structure organogram for the OG features in Chapter 5.

AOSJSP – ensure the coordination between the various project participants, ranging from the Orchestra board to the school board, the Orchestra teachers through to the students and their families. Intermediate coordination plays a fundamental role in this project through channelling information to the different levels of decision making and implementation. There is also, at the majority of the nuclei, the role of Orchestra Leader, responsible for accompanying students in the orchestral practice and in any out of school activities.

In general terms, each nucleus today deploys teachers for each string instrument (with some doubling up in accordance with different timetable requirements), teachers for the eight wind instruments, a percussion teacher as well as an ear training, sight singing and choir teacher. These members of staff are generally young, qualified and frequently with diversified professional lives. Given that their commitments depend on the restriction placed on the number of hours provided by the Ministry of Education, the majority of teachers do not work full time for the project.

Numerous meetings take place over the year either for decision making and distributing information at the school level or about the musical work itself. These range from plenary meetings of all involved teachers, coordinators and directions to meetings at the school level with parents/guardians of the students. Furthermore, the work is also monitored through the visits made by the pedagogical coordinators to the Orchestra nuclei as well as the reports on project implementation submitted annually to the Municipal Councils.

As stated above, the financial stability of the OG depends to a great extent on the support provided by the host municipalities and the Ministry of Education. However, other partners have had a fundamental role not only for setting up nuclei but also for equipping them and launching specific projects. Further, the Metropolitan Council of Lisbon, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, the EDP Foundation and the PT Foundation (meeting 15% of costs up to 2012), the University of Lisbon, BNP Paribas, the Share Foundation, Antral Cipan, D. Pedro V Association, Rodoviária de Lisboa, among others, have been providing support in different ways and are associated with the project over the long term.

Planning the future

The program was designed for implementation over three years with the first focused on the introduction of string instruments followed by wind instruments in the second before launching percussion instruments in the third²⁰. Furthermore, there were plans for development spanning four phases with the first targeting project implementation at schools with students through to the ninth grade. The second phase, which began in 2012/2013, involved the founding of the Municipal and Intermunicipal Orchestras²¹. A third phase includes the launching of regional orchestras, assuming project dissemination at the national level, while the fourth phase will establish a national orchestra.

While the ES methodology shapes the OG, the latter does display its own specific features and undergoes constant adaptation to the new contexts. Furthermore, in addition to the activities staged on the initiative of the project's board, the Portuguese social and economic context also contains some particular characteristics.

From the outset, the dimension, sustainability and material and physical conditions of ES are only possible due to the absolute support of successive governments and continuous financial donations of very substantial amounts. Furthermore, the school system, not only referring to the general curriculum but also to the specific specialist music teaching coexists with and complements the ES. This particularly reflects on the number of hours dedicated to orchestral practice that is only possible because classes usually finish in Venezuela at lunchtime, leaving the remainder of the day to focus on music. On the other hand, the fact that ES students in have music class timetables totalling 20 to 24 hours per week is easily accepted by their parents which would be impossible to happen in Portugal.

These are some of the many examples that ensure OG cannot just copy and paste the ES wholesale, but must rather advance with adjustments and adaptations in keeping with the characteristics of its target public, and in accordance with its multiple restrictions as regards the annual lack of certainty over sources of funding.

²⁰ As stated above, this distribution fundamentally derives from budgetary reasons.

²¹ As existing in Amadora Council (Geração da Amadora Municipal Orchestra), in Loures Council (*Geração BoraNessa* Loures Municipal Orchestra), in Lisbon Council (Geração de Lisboa Municipal Orchestra) and that which brings together the municipalities of Sintra, Sesimbra and Oeiras (Geração do Atlântico Intermunicipal Orchestra).

Nevertheless, there is some evidence that the OG does provide personal, social and academic paths that would frequently be deemed improbable especially when taking into consideration the focus on the social dimension of its activities. The clearest expression of these outcomes derives from the entrance of students into professional music schools, as well as higher education programs in Portugal and internationally.

The success of the OG project has been recognised by various entities and has already been distinguished as one of the initiatives included within the list of the 50 Best Practices of Europe²², has been the object of numerous research works and emerged as a recognisable brand to the mass public. In fact, given the recognition of the work already carried out, one member of its board and pedagogical coordination team was this year invited to join the board of *Sistema Europe*.

However, the project still faces some important challenges, especially as regards its national dissemination, its financial sustainability and the stability of its human resources. We may thus state that there is still a long way to go to consolidate its structure and define its identity in keeping with a methodology that, while embodying a set of main characteristics, does not avoid the multiple adaptations to the particularities posed by the Portuguese context.

²² Information available at http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/projects/best-practices/portugal/2686, accessed on 18 May 2016.

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