Making-Do from Mozambique: Rethinking musical modernity through World Music 2.1

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This article examines contemporary music-making in Mozambique through three interconnected concepts: Making-Do, World Music 2.1 (WM 2.1), and Remix Circularity. It argues that Mozambican musicians engage in sonic worlding shaped by structural constraint, cultural memory, and improvisational use of technology. Drawing on long-term ethnographic fieldwork, audiovisual documentation, and practice-based research conducted between 2018 and 2025, the analysis examines how these dynamics unfold across regions and collaborations. Making-Do describes practices of reuse and hybridization rooted in scarcity and local knowledge. WM 2.1 captures the integration of traditional instruments and aesthetics into electronic and hybrid forms. Remix Circularity theorizes the glocal feedback loops through which sound circulates between tradition and innovation. Case studies including Dilon Djinji, Artista Mil-Quinhento & Conjunto Popombo de Nampula, May Mbira, and Maneto — illustrate how Mozambican music enacts resilience and multi-territorial creativity. The article concludes by calling for ethical reflection on commodification and support in the global sound economy.

Keywords: Making-Do, World Music 2.1, Remix Circularity, Mozambique, postcolonialism, cultural heritage

Making-Do de Moçambique: Repensando a modernidade musical através da World Music 2.1

Este artigo analisa a criação musical contemporânea em Moçambique através de três conceitos interligados: Making-Do, WM 2.1 e Circularidade Remix. Argumenta que os músicos moçambicanos constroem mundos sonoros moldados por constrangimentos estruturais, memória cultural e uso improvisado da tecnologia. Com base em trabalho de campo etnográfico de longa duração, documentação audiovisual e investigação baseada na prática realizada entre 2018 e 2025, a análise examina como estas dinâmicas se manifestam em diferentes regiões e colaborações. Making-Do descreve práticas de reutilização e hibridização enraizadas na escassez e no conhecimento local. WM 2.1 designa a integração de instrumentos e estéticas tradicionais em formas eletrónicas e híbridas. A Circularidade Remix teoriza os ciclos de retroalimentação glocais através dos quais o som circula entre tradição e inovação. Estudos de caso — incluindo Dilon Djinji, Artista Mil-Quinhento & Conjunto Popombo de Nampula, May Mbira e Maneto — ilustram como a música moçambicana encena resiliência e criatividade multiterritorial. O artigo conclui apelando a uma reflexão ética sobre a mercantilização e o apoio na economia sonora global.

Palavras-chave: Making-Do, World Music 2.1, Circularidade Remix, Moçambique, pós-colonialismo, património cultural

Mozambique as sonic laboratory

Mozambique is often overlooked in global narratives of musical modernity, often eclipsed by more internationally visible African pop and club forms such as Nigeria's afrobeat. Even Pandza has remained largely under the radar internationally, despite sharing the energy and urban appeal of its better-known continental counterparts (Conceição, 2021, p. 76). A closer listen reveals a rich sonic ecology of hybrid instrument-making, digital improvisation, and remix-based creativity that challenges Eurocentric teleological narratives framing non-Western societies as "weak or incomplete" or as "Westerners in potential" suffering from "centuries of delay" (Lima, 2016, p. 6; Ngoenha, 1993, p. 48). These practices are not recent imitations, but continuations of long-standing musical strategies rooted in local history. This article argues that Mozambique is actively participating in contemporary global sound revolutions through innovative material practices that generate distinctive sonic experiments and complicate prevailing narratives of cultural marginality — practices traceable to colonial disruption, post-independence improvisation, and enduring rural-modern continuities.

While the frameworks that follow are interconnected, they target distinct dimensions of Mozambican musical practice: Making-Do (material and social resourcefulness under constraint), World Music 2.1 (tradition-based compositional foundations in contemporary forms), and Remix Circularity (feedback loops between local and global sonic flows).

Making-Do (Blanes, 2026) names a mode of cultural and technical production in which artists work with what is at hand — reusing, reconfiguring, and repurposing limited materials, tools, skills, and social relations to keep practice viable under constraint. In this sense, it is both (i) a pragmatic methodology — closer to what everyday-practice theorists describe as tactical "making do" and bricolage — and (ii) a creative ethic, where constraint becomes a generative condition rather than a simple deficit (Certeau, 1984; Lévi-Strauss, 1966). It also foregrounds ongoing maintenance — repair, patching, and iterative adjustment — as central (not peripheral) to technological and musical life, which is especially salient in contexts where breakdown, scarcity, and infrastructural unevenness are normal operating conditions (Jackson, 2014; Simone, 2004). Building on this, the article proposes an expansion of existing World Music discourse (Born & Hesmondhalgh, 2000; Erlmann, 1996, 1999; Feld, 1988, 2000; Stokes, 2012; Taylor, 2014). World Music 2.0 (WM 2.0) — introduced by Burkhalter around 2010 and later developed in academic and curatorial writing — has been used to describe a digitally mediated shift from the commodified "exoticism" associated with ear-

lier world-music marketing toward more networked, participatory forms of hybrid production and circulation (Burkhalter, 2011, 2016; Clayton, 2016). Yet WM 2.0 often centers remixed popular music (e.g., baile funk, cumbia), rather than reinvented traditional genres or localized musical expressions. In response, I propose the term WM 2.1 to refer to creative practices where traditional instruments, aesthetics, and performativities are intentionally integrated into contemporary electronic, digital, or hybrid forms as the musical base for new creation.

The third concept, Remix Circularity, reflects the complex glocal dynamics (Appadurai, 1990; Robertson, 1995) that shape contemporary Mozambican music. Rather than a unidirectional flow of influence from "center" to "periphery" (Appadurai, 1990; Canclini, 2005), Remix Circularity describes a feedback loop wherein Mozambican artists remix not only foreign sounds, but also sounds from their own musical traditions, and in doing so, reterritorialize both local and global musical imaginaries (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Stokes, 1994). It describes more than sonic repetition or stylistic reworking (Lessig, 2008; Navas, 2012); it encapsulates the multidirectional flow of cultural memory, musical structure, material tools, and aesthetic ideologies across local and global terrains (Connerton, 1989; Katz, 2010). These feedback loops generate new configurations of both sound and meaning, reconfiguring authorship, technology, and tradition.

These ideas are explored through a series of ethnographic case studies, including the work of May Mbira, a Maputo-based live-looping performer and master mbira maker with a documented performance career of roughly fifteen years; Maneto Tenfula, a builder and player of evolved traditional instruments whose craft practice also functions as a livelihood strategy; Dilon Djinji (b. 1927), widely known for marrabenta and for a life that combined music with other occupations including farming, pastoral work, and mining; and Mil-Quinhento '1500' & Conjunto Popombo de Nampula, documented internationally through early-1990s releases that foreground collective ingenuity in instrumentation and arrangement.

The reflections and arguments presented in this article are grounded in long-term ethnographic fieldwork and practice-based research conducted between 2018 and 2025 in Maputo, Mozambique. This includes participant observation, collaborative instrument-building, audiovisual documentation, and performance with musicians and makers from urban and rural regions of Mozambique, particularly Maputo, Marracuene, and Tete. The article also draws from my own dual role as musician and researcher, enabling a reflexive perspective that links theory and practice.

On this basis, the article proceeds in three steps. First, the next section consolidates the conceptual and analytical framing that makes the argument legible: remix as a cultural logic of repetition-with-difference, Afro-modernity as a way of refusing "delay" narratives, and multi-territoriality as a vocabulary for overlapping zones of belonging and circulation. Second, the article operationalizes these concepts through ethnographic case studies, each selected to foreground a different configuration of material practice, tradition, and technological mediation: live-looped performance and digital circulation (May Mbira), instrument innovation and livelihood strategy (Maneto Tenfula), historical depth and multi-occupational musical life (Dilon Djinji), and collective Making-Do as sonic and material inventiveness (Mil-Quinhento '1500' & Conjunto Popombo de Nampula). Third, the concluding discussion draws these cases together to show how Making-Do, WM 2.1, and Remix Circularity jointly reframe Mozambican musical modernity as a recursive, entrepreneurial, and multi-territorial practice rather than a peripheral imitation.

Rather than merely analyzing Mozambique's present, this article proposes conceptual tools for thinking from Mozambique. In an era of growing scholarly and artistic interest in decolonial epistemologies, Making-Do, World Music 2.1, and Remix Circularity offer ways of listening otherwise — showing how sound builds space, history, and futurity from the ground up. In doing so, the article contributes to the aims of this special issue on entrepreneurship in the PALOP by treating contemporary music-making as a form of cultural entrepreneurship: a set of livelihood practices, resource mobilizations, and networked strategies through which artists and instrument-builders generate value and sustain careers under structural constraint. In foregrounding Making-Do as an applied methodology and creative ethic, the article also highlights how postcolonial conditions shape entrepreneurial improvisation in the cultural field, while remaining attentive to the epistemic hierarchies embedded in global cultural economies. The next section clarifies the conceptual and analytical framing that supports this argument.

Conceptual and analytical framing

This section consolidates the theoretical vocabulary that supports the argument. At the core of the analysis lies the concept of remix — not only as a compositional technique, but as a cultural logic through which forms circulate, repeat with difference, and are resignified through recombination (Gunkel, 2017; Navas, 2012). In Mozambique, acoustic ensembles such as Artista Mil-Quinhento & Conjunto Popombo de Nampula, Conjunto Nimala de Laulauah, John Issa Band,

and Tete Thaumo — among many others — have long blended recycled materials with inherited melodic-rhythmic structures, remixing both sound and cultural memory. A concrete example is the group Mabulu — an ensemble that included Dilon Djinji — which Rui Laranjeira (2010) identifies with a "third phase" of *marrabenta*: a moment in which the genre's memory is reactivated through dialogue with other expressive practices rather than treated as a closed heritage form. Significantly, *mabulu* in Changana can be glossed as 'to seek dialogue', underscoring a local idiom for placing distinct expressive practices into relation. In this context, remix is not simply an aesthetic choice: it often functions as a practical strategy for sustaining and rearticulating musical knowledge amid material constraint and historical rupture.

Although this article focuses on contemporary remix practices, remixing, bricolage, and multi-territorial creativity have long been constitutive of Mozambican musical traditions, including tufo, mapiko, timbila, and ritual forms. The argument here does not treat tradition as static: contemporary remixing amplifies older epistemologies of recombination. What changes is not the logic, but the materials and technologies through which it is enacted.

From a postcolonial perspective, the article draws on scholarship on diasporic and postcolonial modernities that challenges linear models of progress and singular belonging (Appadurai, 1996; Gilroy, 1993; Hanchard, 2006). Particularly influential is Hanchard's notion of Afro-Modernity, which frames Black cultural production not as delayed or derivative, but as differently modern — shaped by colonization, resistance, and survival (Hanchard, 2006). This framing matters here because Mozambican musical innovation is frequently evaluated against external benchmarks of modernity. The approach adopted instead is to treat modernity as situated and produced through practice: through technique, material improvisation, and the iterative remaking of inherited musical knowledge within changing conditions of access and mediation.

Bauman's distinction between "solid" and "liquid" modernity is also useful for describing how musical infrastructures shape creative possibility. Bauman contrasts "solid" modernity — industrial infrastructure and stable institutions — with "liquid" modernity, characterized by fluidity, mobility, and improvisation (Bauman, 2001, p. 74). This distinction is evident in groups such as the John Issa Band, whose salvaged electric instruments and signal chains exemplify infrastructural ingenuity in rural Mozambique. Where institutional scaffolding is limited, musical practice often depends on repair, substitution, and low-tech adaptation — precisely the kinds of processes foregrounded in Making-Do.

Finally, the concept of multi-territoriality, as developed by Haesbaert (2004), helps frame the experiences of Mozambican musicians who live, create, and circulate across multiple cultural and geographic zones. This includes not only physical migration but also sonic and digital mobility across Lusophone media ecologies. Remix Circularity, in this sense, becomes territorial as well as sonic: a reassertion of presence and belonging through sound across real and virtual borders. May Mbira, whose performances circulate through Lusophone digital networks while drawing on Mozambican musical logics and global loopstation culture, exemplifies this layered mobility.

These conceptual coordinates clarify how the analysis will proceed in the case studies that follow. Making-Do emphasizes grounded material resourcefulness and the improvisational ethos it engenders. WM 2.1 names a compositional logic in which traditional sonic knowledge forms the base of contemporary creation. Remix Circularity traces the glocal circulations through which musical ideas, aesthetics, and tools move across territories. Taken together, these lenses support an account of Mozambican musical modernity not as rupture, but as a recursive, reassembled continuum — at once local, regional, African, and global (Conqui & Rantala, 2023, p. 434; Machonisse & Ribeiro, 2023, p. 73). The following sections operationalize this framing through ethnographic cases.

From World Music 2.0 to World Music 2.1: digital hybridity and traditional continuities

Consider a live performance by May Mbira as the Curandeiro Eletrónico: a multi-instrumentalist standing behind a loopstation and microphone setup, who begins ceremoniously layering rhythmic ostinatos rooted in the compositional logic of traditional bow instruments such as the xipendani, xivelane, and xitende (see Dias, 1986; Mucavel, 2022). The textures build gradually, interlocking in cycles; a deep extension of the Mozambican traditional temporal structure (Tracey, 1983). His use of looping is not a gimmick or a borrowed aesthetic from electronic music, but an extension of a cyclical, dance-anchored temporal organization widely described in Mozambican performance. The rig is improvised: controllers such as the MidiMbira (triggering sounds from an app) sit beside the xigovía, alongside assorted flutes, shakers, and other instruments. The performance is not a remix of pop music with traditional samples. It is something else: a musical logic built from tradition upward, not imported genre downward. This is World Music 2.1.[1]

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[1] The ".1" signals not a mere upgrade or stylistic evolution, but a structural shift — from tradition as decoration to tradition as compositional foundation. It marks a subcategory within World Music 2.0 that reorients the flow of influence, reversing the hierarchy of tradition and innovation.

World Music 2.1 is proposed here as a subcategory within World Music 2.0, but one that moves in a different direction. While WM 2.0, as theorized by Burkhalter (2016), Clayton (2016) and Novak (2011), describes the digital-era re-mixing and circulation of regional popular musics from the Global South (e.g., kuduro, cumbia, baile funk), these practices often retain compositional logics rooted in Western popular music. WM 2.0 marks a shift from industrial commod-ification (WM 1.0) to decentralized, digitally-mediated production and sharing, a shift accompanied by new ethics of curation, remix, and global fandom (Schmidt, 2020).

But WM 2.0 remains largely stylistic. It centers on sonic hybridity without necessarily altering the underlying musical structures. WM 2.1, by contrast, refers to a practice in which traditional musical knowledge — not only instru-ments, but tonal systems, playability, and compositional forms — provides the structural foundation of new works. It reverses musical hierarchy: rather than placing tradition within Western frameworks, it builds outward from indigenous logic, sometimes appropriating Western tools but without compromising con-ceptual foundations.

Figure 1: If WM 2.0 and its predecessor represent opposing poles — industry commodification versus digital hybridism — then WM 2.1 is the structural seed embedded within both: a compositional logic that draws its foundations from within traditional epistemologies, even as it circulates within global remix culture. Created by the author. Licensed under CC BY 4.0.

A song using only bass and djembé, for instance, might unfold structurally not through verse-chorus form, but through structures modeled on Indian tabla solos. The compositional logic shifts, and with it, the aesthetic result. To Western ears, such music may sound "ethnic" or "experimental," but for its creators it represents continuity, not revival, not fusion, but transformation from within (see figure 1). This is what separates WM 2.1 from neo-traditional music, which typically retains Western forms while adding "traditional" timbres, languages, or ornamentation.

WM 2.1 is not necessarily digital, but in practice, it often is. It includes analog and acoustic expressions, provided they embody this same bottom-up logic. It is not a movement per se, but an emergent mode of making. Its practitioners do not reject technology, they reconfigure it: mbiras turned into MIDI controllers, loopstations sustaining traditional loops, *kankubwes* adapted with extra strings and tuners. Here, remix is not just stylistic appropriation, but structural recomposition.

Remix culture scholarship has examined the aesthetic and political dimensions of sampling, citation, and recombination (Gunkel, 2017; Navas, 2012), while WM 2.0 studies have linked lo-fi distortion and sensory displacement to global authenticity narratives (Novak, 2011). Burkhalter (2013) has noted that even within democratized digital scenes, power asymmetries persist, net-savvy curators often benefit more than creators. WM 2.1 extends this discourse, shifting focus from circulation to composition. It asks not only who remixes what, but on what terms — and with what embedded logics.

WM 2.1 is not the world remixing tradition. It is tradition remixing the world.

Multi-territoriality and the sonic bridge

The sonic practices explored in this article are deeply local, yet shaped by circulations across space, platform, and diaspora. While Making-Do reflects a grounded, improvisational logic rooted in material constraint, it also interacts — sonically and socially — with translocal movements, diasporic ties, and digital imaginaries. It must be understood not only as a product of locality, but as an expression of what Haesbaert (2004) calls multi-territoriality, the lived experience of inhabiting overlapping spaces.

Mozambican musicians inhabit overlapping Lusophone zones; the Maputo–Lisbon circuit remains central to mobility and circulation. Lisbon-based artists maintain ties via travel, collaboration, and release strategies linking local scenes to transnational publics (Arenas, 2011, pp. 14-16, 37; Malauene, 2021, pp. 245, 252,

265). These trajectories echo Appadurai's "deterritorialized cultural flows" (1996, pp. 37, 48), yet sound also reterritorializes, asserting presence and belonging across displacement. Digital platforms extend multi-territoriality as negotiation: they enable income while nudging artists toward aesthetic translation because "global electronic" styles often travel more easily. This keeps diaspora flows audible while reworking territory through performance, recording, and circulation.

Remix Circularity: remixing the archive as sonic repatriation & restitution

Music's social force does not guarantee its archival survival: the record is shaped by institutional priorities, epistemic hierarchies, and uneven infrastructures that decide which sounds become legible and which remain unheard (Blacking, 1995; Erlmann, 1999; Miller & Shahriari, 2020). For Mozambique, this means the archive must be read for its silences as much as its contents, because what we can retrieve and circulate today is already filtered through histories of mediation, suppression, and selective documentation (Nercessian, 2002; Tracey, 1983).

Yet the archives we rely on to understand music are rarely neutral; they often omit, silence, or suppress voices. Colonial efforts to assimilate Mozambican music — particularly styles labeled "pagan" or "subversive" — reflect deliberate erasure (Malauene, 2021). These acts of repression produced archival voids (Blacking, 1995; Freitas, 2023; Malauene, 2021). Even after independence, musicians faced pressures to self-censor in response to informal political constraints (Freitas, 2022). The privileging of written traditions marginalizes oral transmission and improvisation, further skewing the archival record (Bohlman, 1988; Butt, 2002). What is deemed "authentic" must therefore be examined critically, as archives often reflect constructed — or curated — versions of the past (Weiss, 2014; White, 2011).

In this article, "sonic repatriation" refers to practices of return and reactivation of historical recordings for the benefit and agency of the communities, artists, and lineages from which those sounds were taken — often through digitization, negotiated access, and community-controlled circulation rather than through the physical transfer of originals. In ethnomusicology and archival studies, repatriation and "digital return" are increasingly discussed as ethical responses to colonial collection histories and to the asymmetries of who can access, interpret, and monetize recorded heritage (Christen, 2019; Giroux, 2021; Kahunde, 2012; Nannyonga-Tamusuza & Weintraub, 2012). "Restitution" is used more narrowly

here to name claims over ownership, custodianship, and rights (including pro-tocols governing reuse), which digital circulation can enable but does not auto-matically resolve (Perullo, 2018). Within this frame, archival remix becomes a mode of "return" not because it simply quotes the past, but because it re-situates recordings in contemporary social life under conditions that can renegotiate au-thority, audibility, and control.

When artists engage archival recordings today, they do not simply play them back, they "activate" them, reanimating dormant sounds and stories within the present. This may be part of a broader effort to revoice archival silences (Borea, 2025; Golding, 2022; Risk & Tulk, 2025). Music becomes a dynamic social context through evolving modes of production, circulation, and consumption, facilitating new appropriations of the world (Erlmann, 1999). The act of recontextualizing and juxtaposing historical repertories is now central to musical meaning-mak-ing (Bohlman, 1988). Modern practices often involve "selectively choosing, and not infrequently selectively inventing, the past" to establish continuity (Bohlman, 1988, p. 130). Performance becomes a means of bodily and spatial transforma-tion (Ferrara, 2014). Through schizophonia (Feld, 1995) — the splitting of sounds from original sources — artists reframe and resignify them (White, 2011), as seen in the contemporary reworking of indigenous oral music (Eriksen, 2007).

Contemporary tools — loop stations, samplers, remix software — enable artists to "layer time," merging historical elements with the present (Clayton, 2016; Feld, 2012). This transports sounds out of the archive and into live contexts. Sampling, for instance, can "conjure up decades of history" in seconds (Clayton, 2016, p. 8). Such hybrids reflect a sonic aesthetic of "primitive futurism" or "fu-turist primitivism" (Feld, 2012, p. 49), achieved through decontextualization, incorporation, and curation. As new syntheses emerge, they are shaped by the technologies of recording, diffusion, and performance (Vilas, 2019). Even per-formances of ancient music with electronic accompaniment reflect a deliberate strategy to bridge old and new (Butt, 2002).

This engagement is ultimately about the politics of memory: reshaping his-torical narratives and restoring agency to suppressed voices (Howard, 2016; Malauene, 2021). Continuity with the past — often constructed selectively — is a modern phenomenon (Bohlman, 1988), involving a "struggle of memory over forgetting" (Howard, 2016). Power dynamics influence which histories are ele-vated and which erased (Howard, 2016; Malauene, 2021). Music, long implicated in state-led identity formation, is also a site for resistance, critique, and reclama-tion (Malauene, 2021). The ability of non-European artists and scholars to reinter-pret terrain historically dominated by the West marks a potent act of decolonial

agency. Said (2012, p. 50) argues that it is "possible [and, one might add, necessary] to reinterpret the Western cultural archive as if fractured geographically by the activated imperial divide". Hybridity here is not mere combination, but an ongoing negotiation of meaning (Weiss, 2014), allowing artists to assert cultural difference and challenge dominant narratives. Through this, perceptions of authenticity and identity shift (Hayward, 2011; Noveck, 2011), and historical music gains new resonance in contemporary life (Butt, 2002). Such acts are not merely aesthetic — they constitute a reconfiguration of epistemologies and modes of authorship. Remix here refers not just to sonic sampling, but to a deeper renegotiation of cultural knowledge and power (Weiss, 2014).

Making-Do as cultural logic and sonic *habitus*

In the Mozambican musical context, I use Making-Do to name a patterned mode of cultural and technical production in which musical practice remains viable under constraint through the tactical reuse, recombination, and maintenance of materials, skills, and social relations. To theorize its durability and its stylistic consequences, I treat Making-Do as a form of *habitus* in Bourdieu's sense: a system of socially formed dispositions — acquired through repeated practice — that orients perception, judgement, and action without needing to be fully explicit or consciously articulated. *Habitus* is not a fixed "culture" or a set of rules; it is a practical sense, a learned feel for what is possible and appropriate in a given field, reproduced through everyday action under historically specific conditions (Bourdieu, 2020 [1972], pp. 72, 79).

Appropriated in this paper, the notion of *habitus* serves two purposes. First, it clarifies that Making-Do is not reducible to a moment of scarcity-driven improvisation, but is a stable disposition toward problem-solving that becomes embodied and transferable: musicians learn to anticipate breakdown, to value repair, to improvise substitutions, and to hear constraints as compositional parameters. Second, it allows Making-Do to be analyzed as sonic: these dispositions leave audible traces in timbre, tuning, texture, instrumentation, and performance practice. In other words, Making-Do is both a cultural logic (a practical orientation toward recombining what is available) and a sonic methodology (a way of producing recognizably situated sounds).

Analytically, I identify Making-Do through recurring features of practice in Mozambique. It includes material reconfiguration (building, repairing, or retooling instruments and signal chains from locally available or second-life components), technical substitution (replacing unavailable tools or expertise with

workable equivalents, often generating distinctive solutions), and maintenance as creative labor (repair, patching, and iterative adjustment as central rather than peripheral, particularly where infrastructural unevenness makes breakdown a normal operating condition) (Jackson, 2014). It is also relational: Making-Do depends on social ties — borrowing, sharing, teaching, and collaboration — through which resources and knowledge circulate informally (Simone, 2004). These are not merely strategies for coping; together they form a learned practical sense that organizes musical work and, over time, shapes stylistic outcomes.

Rooted in Mozambique's musical modernity — from colonial marginalization to post-independence improvisation and contemporary infrastructural precarity — Making-Do bridges rural continuities and the digital present without treating the latter as a rupture. Material limitation becomes generative because it continuously reorganizes technique: reusing discarded materials, hybridizing instruments, customizing tunings, and combining acoustic logics with electronic mediation are not deviations from "proper" technique but forms of situated knowledge that expand sonic possibility. In this respect, Making-Do resonates with Kubik's discussions of "neo-traditional" musical practices in parts of East Africa, where musicians adapted inherited forms to urban realities and repurposed industrial materials into functional instruments — processes through which constraint becomes stylistically productive rather than merely restrictive (Kubik, 1981). Across this continuum, Making-Do is more than a survival strategy: it is a repeatable creative ethic, a remix of memory, environment, and expression under constraint.

Finally, this concept underpins the paper's broader argument about circulation and hybridity. Where WM 2.0 debates have often foregrounded global access and platform visibility, WM 2.1 — as developed here — emphasizes practices in which ancestral instrumental knowledge provides the compositional base for digital and hybrid creation. Remix Circularity, in turn, describes how these locally grounded practices move through translocal circuits and return reconfigured, reinforcing Making-Do as both method and ethos.

Neo-traditional popular music in East Africa — and its Mozambican echoes

In Gerhard Kubik's foundational text "Neo-traditional popular music in East Africa since 1945", he describes how migrant workers, removed from the social and material conditions of traditional life, turned to industrial waste and everyday objects to reconstruct familiar instruments:

> So-called traditional instruments disappeared more and more from country districts. In the cities and places of work migrant workers often used industrial waste to build instruments in imitation of the traditional ones. The appearance of these instruments began to change considerably. A series of new organological inventions was made. Often, however, it was simply a matter of using utilitarian objects as substitute instruments. There arose among the groups of workers a kind of music which mirrored the social position of men in a changed environment. (Kubik, 1981, p. 89)

The neo-traditional movement in East Africa emerged from a confluence of socio-economic displacement and changing material environments, in which migrant workers repurposed available objects to reconstruct familiar instrumental functions under new urban and labor conditions (Kubik, 1981, pp. 83, 87, 89). Crucially, the transformation operated not only at the level of style, but at the level of instrument playability and technique (see Blanes, 2025b). Guitar-derived fingerstyle was adapted to lamellophones such as the lukeme, bass approaches shaped bow-derived practices such as the ndonga, and slide-like techniques were transferred to zither playing via knives, bottles, or calabash as friction implements. In parallel, guitar-like fingering was mapped onto instruments such as the kipango, demonstrating how neo-traditional recombination could be enacted through hands-on technique as much as through repertoires. Instrument-making evolved into a domain of creative experimentation. Factory-made instruments were often unaffordable, so musicians built guitars, drums, and basses from repurposed materials (Conceição, 2021; Freitas, 2023; Kubik, 1981; Malauene, 2021). These "make-do" instruments not only enabled participation in new musical styles but became vessels for expressing contemporary experience within culturally resonant frameworks.

A key early example is Dilon Djinji, later hailed as "The King of Marrabenta." At age twelve in 1939, he constructed an oil-can guitar from scavenged materials. Though a small step in his youth, this act stands as an emblem of the inventive spirit that has shaped Mozambican musical practice: adaptive, expressive, and grounded in Making-Do (Conceição, 2021; Wane, 2020).

More recent examples: case studies

Acoustic ensembles like Artista Mil-Quinhento & Conjunto Popombo de Nampula, Conjunto Nimala de Laulauah (Nampula) in the 1990s, John Issa Band (Niassa) in the 2010s, and Tete Thaumo (Tete) in the 2020s exemplify the spread of homemade instrument-building across Mozambique.

In the late 1980s, professor João Soeiro de Carvalho recorded a village concert by Artista Mil-Quinhento & Conjunto Popombo de Nampula (see figure 2), offering rare insight into their practice of Making-Do in a style resembling Afro-skiffle, a sonic bricolage of recycled materials, homemade instruments, and hyper-local musical references (Carvalho et al., 2019). Rather than mimicking foreign genres, their sound reinvents tradition through salvage aesthetics, danceable and polyphonic, with fluid tempos and spontaneous improvisation. It fuses call-and-response vocals with informal, percussive visual performance, reflecting both their socio-economic environment and a philosophy of collective resourcefulness.

Figure 2: Digital painting of Artista Mil-Quinhento & Conjunto Popombo de Nampula performing in unknown location, late 1980s. Based on a still from footage recorded by João Soeiro de Carvalho. Image courtesy of João Soeiro de Carvalho. Used with permission. All rights reserved. Artwork by the author.

A landmark documentation due to its rare field recordings during the final years of the civil war (1977-1992), appears in GlobeStyle's Mozambique 1 and 2 (1989). These albums form a fragmented yet invaluable archive of the musical landscape on the cusp of transformation. Track 9 on Volume 2, "Arminda" by Milquinhento & Conjunto Popombo de Nampula, was later featured on the *Saba Saba* album (GlobeStyle, 1992), performed on instruments built from industrial debris: including *pankwe* zither made from bicycle spokes and a tin box, *chikotela* maracas, and a washtub-style tea-chest bass.

In 2013, a recording expedition led by Simon Attwell, Freshlyground guitarist Julio Sigauque, and radio producer Kim Winter — under the auspices of the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA) — traveled across Mozambique equipped with a solar-powered mobile studio mounted on a 4x4 vehicle. Their aim was to document rarely recorded artists in remote regions, particularly in the north where access remains limited (Afropop, 2014).

Figure 3: Digital painting of John Issa Band image as published in wiredforsound.co.za (no longer online; accessed via the Internet Archive WaybackMachine4, 2025). Artwork by the author. Used here for academic and illustrative purposes. All rights reserved. Artwork by the author.

One of the documented performances, by the John Issa Band (see figure 3), delivered a raw, rural electric sound grounded in Making-Do: a drum kit assembled from plastic fuel jerry cans and stringed instruments built with bicycle brake cables, routed through repurposed radio hi-fis as amplifiers (Afropop, 2014). In an accompanying podcast, José from the John Issa Band narrates the instrument-making logic and the improvised wiring that enables the guitar and voice to enter the same signal path (Attwell, Winter & Sigauque, 2014):

> I had to go to the bush, to find this tree called mbila. I had to scratch (carve) it, sand it so that it can come out as a guitar […] then start putting the strings, until it starts looking like a guitar, until it is a guitar. […] So I made an installation […] and those two wires I had to take them all the way directly into the radio so that the sound can come from the guitar into the radio, and then from the radio to the speakers. […] So when the person plays the guitar, everything goes into the radio and we can hear it well, we can hear it with the songs.

Figure 4: Digital painting of John Issa Band drummer performing with jerry-can drums.
Illustration based on the John Issa Band's performance in the YouTube video titled Wired For Sound-
Mozambique. Original video by WIRED FOR SOUND. All rights reserved.
Artwork by the author. Used here for academic and illustrative purposes.

Maneto Tenfula: re-imagining the instrument

Maneto Tenfula, an instrument maker from Tete based in Maputo, exemplifies a Making-Do practice rooted in design innovation and adaptive continuity. While committed to safeguarding traditional Mozambican instrument-making as a form of custodianship,[2] he also constructs technologically enhanced variants, such as his tunable *kankubwe*. Instead of replicating canonical models, Maneto systematically modifies structural elements to expand tonal possibilities, improve tuning precision, and extend expressive range. Maneto Tenfula exemplifies the Making-Do approach to performance, treating it not as fixed form, but as a framework for experimentation.

Working primarily with local materials, he integrates new functional components into inherited designs. His modified *kankubwe*, for instance, incorporates guitar tuning pegs to enable microtonal adjustment. He also experiments with alternative resonators and body shapes, like experimenting with replacing the reed with a metal tube to enhance projection. These are not makeshift solutions, but thoughtful, iterative responses to performance needs. In this light, Making-Do is not merely a response to scarcity, but a creative method for reconfiguring tradition to meet contemporary musical demands.

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[2]   A film which documents Maneto as he builds, plays and discusses the *kankubwe*: https://youtu.be/iJj5jrqfVV4

Across the case studies that follow — whether digital, acoustic, performative, or organological — Making-Do emerges as a living, evolving, and profoundly situated methodology (Bourdieu, 2020 [1972]). It reflects not only what is done, but how and why it is done: in response to constraint, in dialogue with memory, and in pursuit of expressive and collective possibility.

May Mbira: live looping as sonic continuity

Among today's Mozambican artists, May Mbira epitomizes the Making-Do ethos in performance[3] (Blanes, 2025a, 2025b). A master of the *mbira* and a pioneer of live-looping in Mozambique, May Mbira fuses traditional melodic and rhythmic structures with real-time layering, improvisation, and effects processing. His rig — a loopstation, microphone, several controllers, and a set of traditional instruments — is minimal, but his musical architecture is expansive. Grounded in the *mbira's* cultural and spiritual significance, May Mbira does not "modernize" by detaching from ceremony. Instead, he extends its temporal logic treating looping not as a novelty but as a means to amplify its cyclical, trance-inducing power (Dutiro & Howard, 2007; Tracey, 1983). His performances are both culturally saturated and aesthetically experimental, blending tradition, electronic composition, and live remixing.

This reflects Making-Do not merely as a technical setup, but as a guiding philosophy. May Mbira's music shows how ancestral soundworlds can migrate into new formats without rupture. His use of the loopstation continues — rather than departs from — traditional logics, offering new forms of expressivity and endurance. Making-Do thus becomes a practice of layering sound, time, identity, and sonic memory.

On the ethics of remix

While this article celebrates Making-Do and WM 2.1 as powerful frameworks for understanding Mozambican sonic creativity, it is equally important to acknowledge the limits and risks of these concepts. The aim is not to diminish their value, but to engage in a reflexive critique, one attuned to the tensions between celebration and romanticization, theory and lived experience.

Remixing is often seen as liberatory, reclaiming material and transforming meaning. Yet remix is not inherently decolonial. The global remix economy is still shaped by asymmetries of power. Questions around who samples whom — and

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[3] His performances are documented in a publicly accessible video produced during my PhD fieldwork (Blanes, 2025a), which complements the forthcoming thesis (2025b). https://youtu.be/5zmIRkd3Lgk

under what conditions — remain deeply fraught. In Mozambique, many traditional musicians are sampled without consent, without attribution, and certainly without compensation. The same is true across the Global South.

While WM 2.1 emphasizes intentionality and situated knowledge, it must be vigilant not to reproduce the extractivist tendencies of prior WM economies, which took without giving back. When field recordings are reduced to raw material for distant beatmakers, cultural knowledge risks losing its embedded meaning. Thus, remix ethics must include questions of reciprocity, consent, and attribution, not as afterthoughts, but as central principles.

Remix as identity

Making-Do, with its hybrid logic, operates alongside — and often in friction with — evolving state policies (Connell & Gibson, 2004; Deleuze & Guattari, 1988; Malauene, 2021; Said, 2012). In Mozambique, musicians engage in creative sonic world-making shaped by constraint, memory, and technological improvisation (Malauene, 2021). Music has long been "intertwined and interconnected with politics," appropriated for social critique and resistance — often under sanction — as artists claim "a unique cultural space" within inherently "hybrid, heterogeneous, extraordinarily differentiated and unmonolithic" cultures (Connell & Gibson, 2004, p. 2).

These hybrid practices fuse handmade traditional instruments with loop stations, effects pedals, and electronic tools, producing sounds that are both ancestral and contemporary. They form a technologically adaptive, underground successor to the neo-traditional popular music genre described by Kubik (1981), where musicians build instruments from recycled materials, sample field recordings, or loop ceremonial fragments within electronic frameworks. Tradition becomes a mutable toolkit for sonic futures. Historically, Mozambicans have built instruments from "*lata de azeite e linha de pesca*" (can of olive-oil and fishing line) (Conceição, 2021, p. 118) and "industrial waste" (Kubik, 1981, p. 87). The addition of "brass and electric instruments" (Carvalho, 1999, p. 155), synthesizers (Nettl, 1985), and other tools to traditional rhythms reflects this ongoing blend (Manuel, 1988; Stock, 2004).

This compositional logic is deliberate. Connecting spiritually significant instruments like the *mbira* to modern gear is itself a statement. It allows artists to "renegotiate contested domains of ownership and boundaries of identity that modernity questions" (Mendes, 2022, p. 148). May Mbira, one of Maputo's most prominent proponents of the Making-Do aesthetic, extends the *mbira's* temporal logic through digital looping. As Dutiro and Howard (2007, p. 1) note, "music

and religion" are often contested domains of ownership. En-textualizing im-provisation into fixed compositions raises issues of authorship in oral traditions (Conceição, 2021). Sampling and the extraction of traditional sounds by Western producers — where "oral tradition can mask both the existence of local canons of ownership and the existence of local consequences for taking without asking" (Feld, 2000, p. 161) — highlights the importance of asserting control over cultural property through digital tools (Howard, 2016; White, 2012). Such assertions fuel an ongoing renegotiation of what constitutes "ours" *versus* "theirs" (Bohlman, 1988).

Making-Do musicians reject hierarchies that privilege Western instruments or sleek production. Instead, they claim their own musical modernity, built from the ground up. This counters state-led efforts to "improve" traditional music through Westernization, as in China, where folk arts were deemed "backward" (Howard, 2016, pp. 24-25). Global South musicians have often resisted "unplugged" formats or "World Music" labels, insisting instead on modernity expressed through local languages and themes (Conceição, 2021; Connell & Gibson, 2004). As Erlmann (1999, p. 200) argues, such positions reflect an "African discourse about Africa" that both "rejects and embraces modernity," not as contradiction, but as continu-ity rooted in context and experience.

This positioning also responds to a colonial legacy of cultural control. Under Portuguese colonial rule, local music in Mozambique was heavily regulated, reshaped to fit assimilationist policies, and denounced as "evil" or "pagan" (Malauene, 2021; Miller & Shahriari, 2020). Still, Mozambican music remained a tool for personality expression and subversive critique, often in a way totally incomprehensible to the colonial power. Subversive songs were labeled "*músi-ca subversiva*" (subversive music) and met with "*repressão às culturas locais*" (Conceição, 2021). Even post-independence, informal censorship shaped state ra-dio playlists, avoiding music linked to the past or to "bourgeois" values (Freitas, 2022; Ribeiro, 2014).

The rise of digital and DIY production offers new routes to circumvent these constraints. Artists now use "pirate infrastructures" — cracked software, repur-posed gear, homemade studios — to bypass gatekeepers. Access to "cheap tech-nology (recording, FM transmitting or sampling equipment)" (Malm & Wallis, 2003, p. 298) fuels autonomous creativity and innovation, allowing artists to re-ject industry definitions of "truth" and "quality" (Draper, 2008). Songs circulate "outside commercial spheres" (Clayton, 2016, p. 104), and some artists deliber-ately relax copyright restrictions to allow free reuse (Browning, 2011). This strat-

egy challenges industry control and supports a broader project of "breaking up a monopoly of the imagination" (Clayton, 2016, p. 122).

Such resistance is not new. From migrant workers repurposing "industrial waste" into instruments (Kubik, 1981, p. 89) to modern musicians remixing archival recordings (Butt, 2002), Mozambican artists have consistently reasserted control over sound. The Making-Do ethos — improvisational, experimental, and situated — continues this tradition by asserting both cultural ownership and creative sovereignty.

There is a fine line between celebrating resourcefulness and fetishizing poverty. Romanticizing Making-Do risks aestheticizing systemic inequality. It can obscure the real consequences of infrastructural neglect, and distract from the urgent need for structural support, access to resources, and equitable cultural policy. A true celebration of Making-Do must therefore include a critique of the conditions that make it necessary, and a commitment to supporting artists beyond their ability to "make do."

Making-Do depends on fragile ecosystems: shared microphones, intermittent electricity, borrowed laptops. A single police raid, a broken cable, or a virus-infected hard drive can wipe out months of work. While the improvisational capacity of Mozambican artists is immense, it cannot compensate indefinitely for the lack of structural support. To theorize Making-Do is to recognize this fragility not as failure, but as intrinsic to its ecosystem. It is to ask: what would Making-Do look like with support? With access to tools, training, networks? Can Making-Do survive institutionalization, or does it require precarity to thrive? These are open questions and they demand not only intellectual, but practical, responses.

Conclusion

The sonic worlds explored in this article reveal a Mozambique that refuses the binaries so often imposed upon it — traditional versus modern, local versus global, scarcity versus creativity. What emerges instead is a landscape shaped by recombination, ingenuity, and relational knowledge: a musical modernity made through practice, not measured against external benchmarks. Through the concept of Making-Do, I have traced material and musical strategies at the intersection of structural constraint, ancestral continuity, and sonic experimentation, where knowledge flows not from industry to user, but from context to maker, from lived experience to sonic artifact.

This is not a rejection of modern tools, but a reconfiguration of their use: home-studios repurpose cracked software for communal creation, Artista Mil-

Quinhento builds acoustic dance floors from scrap materials, May Mbira loops the mbira to deepen its ancestral pulse, and Maneto reshapes instrument acoustics to extend tradition's expressive range. Taken together, these cases describe a political epistemology — an Afro-Modernity grounded not in Eurocentric timelines of progress but in adaptation, translation, and survival (Bauman, 2001; Hanchard, 2006). While this article highlights emergent forms and technologies, the creative strategies described — bricolage, remix, adaptation — are not modern inventions; they extend African musical epistemologies in which transformation and circulation are foundational rather than exceptional.

Afro-rooted practices, particularly in popular music, play a crucial role in "sounding out" a nation built "from the ground up" or "from the periphery," in tension with state projects that attempted to impose a singular identity (Feld, 2000, p. 147; Freitas, 2023, pp. 408-409; Malauene, 2021, pp. 268-269). In post-colonial Mozambique, musicians have repeatedly mobilized music for critique and resistance — even under sanction — while peri-urban innovation emerged from the "interaction between distinct worlds," with genres such as marrabenta carrying popular commentary, anti-colonial resonance, and contested representativeness (Baquete, 2020; Freitas, 2023; Malauene, 2021; Pereira, 2020, p. 96; Vail & White, 1978; Wane, 2020). Post-civil-war cultural shifts and institutional debates increasingly acknowledged pluralism across rural/urban and ethno-linguistic difference, even as earlier consolidation efforts sometimes seeded "artificial and external elements of identity" and policed tribalism (Freitas & Carvalho, 2022; Malauene, 2021; Morais, 2020, 2022; Tracey, 1983). The result is "more fragmented maybe, but also potentially richer," with musical life functioning as a "fundamental agent" for grasping socio-political change, while the classification of "popular" versus "traditional," and the overlap of ethnicity/nation categories, remain historically charged — better understood through ongoing negotiation and creolizing contact than through fixed origins (Carvalho, 1999; Chikowero, 2002, p. 15; Freitas, 2022; Freitas & Carvalho, 2022, p. 228; Glissant, 1997; Lima, 2016; Malauene, 2021, p. 6; Nettleford, 1978; Pereira, 2020; Weiss, 2014).

Musical identity also stretches beyond borders through transnational ties that sustain diasporic ways of feeling Mozambican or African, linking sending and receiving societies and generating new zones of cultural expression (Arenas, 2011; Connell & Gibson, 2004; Ferrara, 2014, p. 110). Many popular music forms emerge through unequal cultural contact and ongoing cross-fertilization; the rhumba/soukous trajectory is one emblematic instance, and Mozambique's guitar style likewise reflects historically layered influences across Congolese, South African, Portuguese, and Brazilian circuits (Eriksen, 2007; Manuel, 1988; Martin

& White, 2012). Related debates on cosmopolitan cultural formations — such as work on Angolan semba — underscore how Atlantic musical modernities resist binary African/European framings (Marzano, 2020). In Lusophone transnational formations, music can become a "homeland" for dispersed "nation-families," while the politics of "World Music" often involve performed identities and strategic emphases on locality or authenticity within global networks (Cidra, 2008; Connell & Gibson, 2004; White, 2011). This is the paradox of globalization: intensified connection can heighten the stakes of place, even as "roots" remain in flux; Mozambique's Timbila becoming a national symbol is a clear example of how specific local expressions are elevated and re-framed within national imaginaries (Connell & Gibson, 2004; Hebdige, 2003; Morais, 2020; Weiss, 2014; White, 2011).

Seen through the aims of this special issue, Making-Do, WM 2.1, and Remix Circularity can be read as analytic tools for cultural entrepreneurship: they describe how value and viability are produced through repair, reuse, collaboration, and the retooling of inherited musical knowledge within contemporary infrastructures. At the same time, the framework demands an ethics of interpretation: Making-Do should not be romanticized into an aesthetic of lack, and Remix Circularity should not be mistaken for an automatically decolonial practice when platform economies and sampling regimes can reproduce extractive asymmetries. The analytical payoff is therefore inseparable from the practical implication: sustaining these practices requires reciprocity, consent, attribution, and material support commensurate with the creativity that global cultural economies so readily celebrate. While this article has focused on Mozambique, the concepts developed here travel. Making-Do is observable across the continent, in the ghettos of Luanda, the townships of Johannesburg, the peripheries of Nairobi — wherever musicians must invent their tools as much as their songs. It resonates in diasporic settings, in Lisbon's housing estates or Rio's favelas, wherever creativity collides with material limits.

WM 2.1, likewise, provides a framework for understanding a growing body of hybrid practices that consciously engage traditional musics within contemporary forms — not as static heritage, but as mutable toolkits for sonic futures. The dynamics of Remix Circularity and Multi-territoriality are equally instructive beyond Mozambique. They remind us that cultural flows are rarely unidirectional. But if Making-Do teaches us anything, it is that ingenuity should not be romanticized at the expense of material support. Artists should not have to always make magic from lack. Recognition of Making-Do's power must be accompanied by attention to its fragility. What infrastructures might sustain it? What networks

could nurture its practitioners? How do we ensure that remix remains a practice of agency, not extraction?

Mozambique's music cultures offer no utopia. What they offer is far more valuable: a grounded, complex, and fiercely alive set of practices that illuminate how sound can be a site of continuity and rupture, of survival and invention, of memory and futurism.

Making-Do is not the opposite of technology, it is its re-appropriation (see Blacking, 1995 and Feld, 2012).

WM 2.1 is not a genre, it is a way of sounding identity under new conditions.

Remix Circularity is not just technique, it is a politics of relation.

And Mozambique, in this telling, is not peripheral. It is central to the story of how music everywhere survives, not only in spite of constraint, but because of what constraint demands: listening, making, adapting, remixing.

Not from nothing.

But from what is at hand.

From what is remembered.

And from what can still be imagined.

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