



Wind bands beyond cultural practice: An analysis of their productive organization in Sincelejo, Sucre (Colombia)

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ABSTRACT. This article analyses the productive organisation of wind bands in Sincelejo, Sucre, focusing on their organisational structure, management and sustainability in the cultural and economic context of the region. A qualitative case study was used, based on semi-structured interviews with 15 musicians belonging to two renowned wind bands in the city of Sincelejo. The results show that these bands have a traditionally family-based organisation, where leadership is passed down from generation to generation, which facilitates cohesion but limits administrative formalisation. Labour relations tend to be informal, which poses challenges for the economic stability of the musicians. In addition, the research highlights the cultural recognition of these groups, as well as the need for institutional support to strengthen their sustainability. It concludes that providing institutional support to the bands and offering music training programmes would improve their productivity

and consolidate their role in the cultural identity of the region, ensuring their preservation as cultural heritage for future generations.

INTRODUCTION

Music is one of the most universal cultural elements in human history. Throughout time, it has played a fundamental role not only as a form of artistic expression, but also as a vehicle for identity, social cohesion and, in recent times, as an instrument of power on the global stage. In this context, music can be understood as a complex cultural phenomenon that, through its multiple dimensions, reflects both the values of a society and the tensions between different cultures. Like other cultural elements, music is imbued with diverse meanings that vary according to the social, political and economic context in which it is embedded (Smircich, 1983; Peralta Farak and Espinosa Espinosa, 2023).

In different regions of the world, musical bands have played a fundamental role as collective expressions of cultural identity. Such is the case in Sincelejo, capital of the department of Sucre, in the Colombian Caribbean, where wind bands represent an artistic expression and a means of transmitting the local sound heritage. These groups, in addition to allowing musical performance, also function as spaces for socialisation, cooperation and productive organisation. Their internal structure and organisational dynamics respond to the specific sociocultural context in which they operate, revealing the close relationship between culture, economy and forms of community management (Peralta Farak and Espinosa Espinosa, 2023).

In the specific case of wind bands, their configuration has particular characteristics that distinguish them from other musical groups. These bands, composed of wind instruments made of metal and wood, require precise coordination between musicians, often led by a conductor who ensures the synchronised performance of complex scores. Discipline, cooperation and structured organisation are fundamental pillars for their functioning (Castillo, 1984). In addition, their internal organisation encompasses both the artistic sphere and logistical, administrative and commercial processes, aspects that are often invisible in the common perception (Bulloni, 2013).

The nature of work in a musical band is also influenced by external factors such as market trends, audience demands and conditions in the music industry. Adaptability and flexibility are essential characteristics for these groups, especially in a context where music and cultural consumption practices are constantly changing. A band's ability to manage its resources and adapt to new forms of music production and distribution can be decisive

for its long-term sustainability and success. In fact, bands often face challenges related to market competition, copyright management, and contract negotiation, processes that require organisational and business skills (Zallo, 1988).

In the context of Sincelejo, these groups are strongly rooted in the cultural practices of the territory and constitute a key element of regional identity. The organisation of wind bands in Sincelejo is also marked by the interaction between traditional forms of music production and new forms of cultural management. This contrast between the old and the new creates an environment in which bands must find a balance between preserving their traditions and incorporating innovations that allow them to thrive in an increasingly globalised world. Their existence responds both to an expressive need and to a social and educational function, driven by actors such as schools, government institutions and local communities (Gereffi & Sturgeon, 2005). However, they operate in an environment where economic resources and cultural infrastructure are limited, requiring innovative strategies for their sustainability.

Thus, this article aims to analyse how the productive organisation of wind bands in Sincelejo, Sucre, is structured from the perspective of collaborative networks and cultural management. It seeks to understand how these groups manage to sustain themselves, coordinate, adapt to their environment and keep local musical traditions alive in a changing and competitive context.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE BANDS THROUGH THE YEARS

Music bands were historically closely associated with official ceremonies and events, particularly in the military and religious spheres. These groups oversaw providing music for parades, religious services and national celebrations, fulfilling a function of solemnity and discipline (Granovetter, 1985). However, with the passage of time, bands began to acquire an identity more linked to entertainment and social service, especially in the context of the new emerging nations in Latin America (Briceño, 2007).

In the case of Latin America, the transformation of bands towards a more social role began to consolidate in the 19th century, coinciding with the process of independence and the creation of new nations. With the incorporation of bands into local festivities and civic celebrations, they ceased to be exclusively instruments of military and religious control and became vehicles of popular culture. This change was also driven by the Industrial

Revolution, which facilitated the importation of more sophisticated instruments and allowed for the diversification of musical repertoires (Granovetter, 1985).

In Colombia, for example, the first bands emerged in the military sphere at the end of the 18th century, but quickly spread to the civilian sphere, participating in religious and festive celebrations. The importance of bands in Colombian social life grew in parallel with the formation of new groups and the consolidation of an expanding music market. These bands not only entertained at social events, but also played an educational role by training musicians and teachers who would eventually become key players in the consolidation of popular music (Valencia, 1999).

Thus, bands in Latin America, especially in countries such as Colombia, were not only a means of entertainment, but also an important mechanism for socialization and musical education. This dual role, as vehicles of entertainment and educational agents, consolidated the social roots of the bands, making them a key cultural reference in many communities. This transformation process spread throughout Latin America, generating a diverse musical phenomenon that today continues to have a strong impact on popular culture in the region (Gutiérrez Calderón & Méndivil Hernández, 2024).

THE SOCIAL ROLE OF BANDS IN LATIN AMERICA

The evolution of bands in Latin America reflects a process of cultural adaptation that responds to both social and economic changes. At first, music bands were limited to formal contexts such as civic celebrations or religious events, but over time, they began to be central elements in popular festivities (González, 1988). In the case of Colombia, bands played a crucial role in the consolidation of national identity, actively participating in parades and national celebrations, as well as in religious festivities. These musical groups began to be associated with the people's festivities, becoming fundamental elements in the social fabric (González, 1988).

According to (Fortich, 1994), as Latin American nations consolidated and modernized, bands were also integrated into new spaces, such as town squares and popular festivals. In this context, the role of bands in shaping national and local identity expanded. The use of bands as vehicles for social integration, especially in rural or marginalized communities, allowed these groups to fulfill an educational function, being the first contact with formal music for many children and young people. In this way, the bands became a key tool for the development of local musical culture (Loaiza, 2008).

The interaction between the bands and their communities also led to a significant diversification of repertoires, which were adapted to the cultural needs of each region. In Colombia, for example, music bands began to integrate popular genres and rhythms into their repertoire, such as porro and fandango, which were part of regional musical traditions (Valencia, 1999). Thus, the bands were not only a means to disseminate classical or military music, but also to keep local musical traditions alive (Machado, 2007). This process of cultural appropriation and adaptation of the repertoire allowed the bands to become an essential part of the regional identity.

The growth of bands as agents of social change was not only limited to their function as entertainment. They also became a vehicle for social inclusion, especially in rural communities, where bands helped bring together people from diverse social classes and backgrounds (Ministerio de Cultura, 2005). The training of musicians in the context of bands, through informal pedagogical methods, allowed children and young people from poor backgrounds to have access to a musical education that would otherwise have been inaccessible to them. Thus, bands contributed to democratizing access to musical culture and, by extension, to culture in general (Bulloni, 2013).

BANDS AS A FORM OF PRODUCTIVE ORGANIZATION

Music bands in Latin America have played a crucial role not only as cultural and educational actors, but also as a productive organization within the social and economic structure of their communities. Throughout their evolution, these musical groups have evolved from being a tool of military discipline to become an organized way of generating cultural goods, educating youth and contributing to local economic development. This process has involved both an organization of human resources and a strategic management of instruments, repertoire and, in many cases, interaction with public policies and local governments (Bulloni, 2013).

The productive organization of bands can be seen in their structural functioning. Since their origins, bands have required a series of well-defined roles: the conductor, the musicians, the teachers and more recently, the arrangers and composers, who are responsible for the creation of new repertoires (Bulloni, 2010). The organization of an orchestra or band is a complex process that involves the efficient allocation of roles and responsibilities within the ensemble, with the goal of achieving an artistic production that is coherent and of quality (Peralta-Farak & Espinosa-Espinosa, 2023). In bands, this organizational approach extends to the way

instruments, scores and rehearsals are managed, transforming into a dynamic in which each member contributes to the musical production (Castillo, 1984).

In Latin America, this organizational model has not only been musical but has also had a social and educational component. In Colombia, for example, bands have been key tools in educational training, promoting the teaching of music at various levels (González, 1988). School-band programs promoted by entities such as the Ministry of Culture and local governments have generated an organizational structure that fosters the integral development of young people through music (Zambrano, 2008). These programs not only teach musical skills, but also values such as discipline, teamwork and responsibility, essential elements in any productive organization. The redirection of these programs towards an integral approach has allowed the bands to become an engine of social and economic development, especially in rural or low-income communities (Ministerio de Cultura, 2005).

One of the most notable characteristics of bands as a productive organization is their ability to adapt to regional contexts. In different parts of Latin America, bands have absorbed influences from diverse musical traditions, adapting their repertoire to local tastes and needs. This phenomenon of “productive adaptation” is clearly observed in the Colombian Caribbean region, where bands have fused elements of traditional music such as porro and fandango with the orchestral structures of the wind. Wind bands have evolved from a collective creation to a more organized structure, with specific arrangements for each band member, reflecting greater specialization within the organization (Ministerio de Cultura, 2012).

The bands' organizational process is also reflected in their ability to generate a cultural product that transcends the local level. The production of repertoire, the training of new musicians and the creation of original works require coordination involving various actors: from the band director to the composers in charge of creating specific pieces for each group. Participation in band competitions and festivals has been a way to make the productive work of these ensembles visible at the regional and international (Peralta-Farak & Espinosa-Espinosa, 2023). These events contribute significantly to the expansion of bands as a cultural industry, while strengthening the sense of identity and belonging in the participating communities (Montoya Arias, 2011).

The management and organizational system within bands also reflects an economy of time and resources. The “all-around conductor” model, where the conductor not only conducts, but also organizes, teaches, composes and arranges music, is a clear example of how the organizational structure of a

band can maximize its human and material resources to generate a quality musical product (Montoya Arias, 2011).

The encouragement of community participation in musical training and performance through school-bands, coupled with public policies that support the creation of new groups, has allowed bands to continue to be a relevant form of productive organization today. The expansion of the school-bands has favored access to musical education in various regions, establishing a network of community work that strengthens both social cohesion and cultural production at the national level (Ministerio de Cultura, 2005).

METHODOLOGY

The study was developed under a qualitative approach, aimed at understanding the internal dynamics of wind bands in Sincelejo, Sucre, and the factors that affect their productive organization, collaborative structure and sustainability. Qualitative research allows capturing the perceptions, experiences and relationships among the actors of the musical community, highlighting the cultural and economic meaning that these groups represent in the region (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

The study design was of a case study type, which facilitated a thorough analysis of the specific characteristics of the study phenomenon in a particular context (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The participants in this study were the members of two wind bands from the city of Sincelejo, Sucre, (Colombia). For the collection of information, the semi-structured interview technique was used, which provided flexibility in the inquiry of topics related to leadership, labor relations and growth challenges. Two wind band groups were interviewed, including leaders, musicians and collaborators.

The data analysis was carried out through thematic categorization, where patterns of responses were identified and organized according to six predefined categories: organizational structure; work practices; management and leadership; economic support; cultural recognition and sustainability. This categorization made it possible to systematize the information and obtain solid conclusions about the productive and collaborative elements of wind bands in Sincelejo.

RESULTS

Wind bands in Sincelejo constitute a cultural and social expression in Sucre - Colombia, characterized by a collaborative and communitarian organization

that allows them to adapt to the local context. As the results of the study reveal, these groups have internal structures based on family and friendship networks that guarantee their cohesion and continuity, allowing them to operate effectively within a framework of constant collaboration. This organizational approach has been crucial for the preservation of their cultural legacy and the strengthening of their identity over the decades.

At the labor level, wind bands present a combination of formal and informal practices in their working relationships. Although the absence of established contracts and the rotation of musicians is common, there are efforts to formalize these ties through verbal agreements and advance payments. In addition, some groups have implemented economic support systems, such as internal cooperatives, to support musicians in emergency situations, which is evidence of a management model oriented towards cooperation and solidarity among its members. The analysis of the interviews highlighted categories such as: organizational structure, labor practices, management and leadership, economic support, cultural recognition, and sustainability.

Tabla 1

Categories of analysis from the interviews

Category of Analysis	Description
Organizational structure	Organizational structure Wind bands operate with family and friendship structures that maintain their cohesion and cultural legacy in the local context.
Working practices	They combine formal and informal practices; working relationships are mostly verbal and of short duration, with frequent rotation of musicians.
Management and leadership	Leaders, often relatives of the founders, manage the band and reinforce internal cooperation through informal agreements and economic solidarity.
Economic support	Some bands implement internal cooperatives to support musicians in emergency situations, promoting mutual aid among members.
Cultural recognition	They are highly valued in regional festivities and have gained regional and national visibility as representatives of Sucre's traditional music.
Sustainability	The lack of institutional support and formalization limits their development as business units and their possibilities for improving

From the interviews it became evident that the wind bands of Sincelejo, Sucre, have a history that dates back to the mid-seventies and have become an integral part of the cultural identity of the region. These bands emerged with the purpose of accompanying local festivities and typical cultural expressions, especially the January celebrations in Sincelejo, which marked their beginning in the local music scene. According to those interviewed, the creation of these groups was a response to the enthusiasm of the community and the support of influential figures who encouraged their consolidation. One interviewee recalled: "They told us, 'Why don't you organize a band and dedicate it to our festivities'... that's how we started rehearsing, until we heard something that sounded like a band.

The growth of these bands was rapid, as they were among the few musical groups in the area and quickly gained relevance in the festivities of neighboring municipalities. Their presence in emblematic events such as "corralejas" and "fandangos" in Sincelejo and other localities gave them significant popularity and cultural value, and they were sought after by different communities to liven up their celebrations. The expansion of the wind bands in Sincelejo represents the development of a regional musical tradition that continues to this day. "We were almost the only band back then, we were sought after to play in Sincelejo, Corozal, Sampués...", shared one of the veteran musicians.

The organization of wind bands in Sincelejo has traditionally remained in the hands of families, who pass on leadership from generation to generation. This family structure not only ensures the continuity of the bands, but also strengthens the bonds among its members, who feel that they are part of a collective project with deep historical roots. One of the veteran musicians explained, "The band leader has always been someone from the family...that ensures that things are done with respect for the history and the work that represents us."

This form of organization also contributes to internal stability, as musicians often feel identified with the leadership and committed to the goal of preserving Sincelejo's musical tradition. This family leadership dynamic helps bands establish a stronger connection with their community and face challenges together. "There are musicians who have been in the same band for five or seven years, they feel good because they know that tradition is

respected here,” said another member, highlighting the sense of belonging that this leadership structure generates in wind bands.

Labor relations in Sincelejo's wind bands tend to be informal, characterized by verbal agreements and based on trust. However, over time, some bands have incorporated certain formal elements, such as signing commitments before important events to ensure musicians' attendance and avoid last-minute changes. One musician explained that, although the relationship is not completely formal, there are agreements that seek to ensure the responsibility of each member: “Before an event, we sign a verbal commitment... this helps us to fulfill the gigs”.

Despite the lack of formal contracts, the bond between musicians and bands is often stable and loyal, with many staying with the same group for several years. The stability of the members depends on how comfortable they feel in the band and the flexibility it offers them to explore other opportunities when they need to. ‘The musician here knows that they can leave if they want to, but they almost always come back. “We have a relationship based on trust,’ commented one band leader, highlighting the importance of flexibility in working relationships in this context. Another element that became evident was that wind band musicians in Sincelejo face complex working conditions, with limited remuneration organized on an hourly basis, which is often not enough to cover all their expenses. The hourly compensation reflects the economic difficulties faced by the ensembles, as the total income is divided among several musicians, reducing the amount each receives. One of the leaders explained: ‘We get paid by the hour, but when we divide it up, it's barely enough to cover the essentials.

In addition, the musicians must cover additional expenses such as transport, which further reduces their income. These costs are often shared by the band members, which means that everyone contributes to ensuring their presence at events. ‘Sometimes we have to spend money on transport... in the end what is left is little, but we do it because we love the music and the tradition,’ said one musician, underlining the dedication that wind band members have to their craft, despite economic constraints.

Despite the recognition they have gained, Sincelejo's wind bands face several challenges to ensure their growth and sustainability. One of the biggest challenges is the lack of institutional support to promote music education and the creation of music schools in the region. One of the leaders mentioned: Music schools are needed... we are fighting for that support, because we need to train new musicians who can continue this tradition. The absence of music

training programmed limits the bands' ability to renew themselves and attract young people interested in this type of music.

In addition, many of the musicians see the need to formalize the organizational structure of the bands so that they can function as sustainable business units. Some leaders have said that professionalizing the bands could improve their income and secure a future for the musicians. 'If they are organized as micro-enterprises, they would have better earnings and recognition,' said one interviewee. Formalization could offer economic and employment stability for the musicians and strengthen the preservation of the cultural tradition of wind bands in Sincelejo, fostering their growth and continuity in the region.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Wind bands in Sincelejo represent a musical tradition rooted in local festivities, similar to the cultural impact observed in other regions of Colombia, as mentioned in studies on symphonic and "pelayera" bands in Antioquia and the Atlantic Coast (Valencia, 1999). Banda music in Colombia has been a means of social cohesion, providing a space for expression and belonging in communities (Fortich, 1994). In Sincelejo, the foundation of wind bands responds to a similar social need, in which the groups consolidate themselves as a symbol of regional identity. This process of consolidation, facilitated by community support, mirrors what has been observed in the Colombian Caribbean, where bands serve as vehicles for cultural expression and unity (Gutiérrez Calderón & MENDÍVIL Hernández, 2024).

The growth of bands from their creation in the 1970s to the present demonstrates a capacity to adapt to the demands of local and regional communities, similar to the model of bands in Antioquia (Valencia, 2009). This growth also allows the bands not only to maintain their traditional practices, but also to expand their influence regionally and nationally, aligning themselves with the historical evolution observed in other groups in Colombia (Montoya Arias, 2011).

As for the leadership structure in Sincelejo's wind bands, which is generally family-based, it resembles the organization of other community bands in Latin America, where leadership tends to be a cultural and family inheritance (Briceño, 2007). This type of structure is key to ensuring the continuity of the groups, allowing traditional and cultural values to be preserved. The importance of maintaining strong and cohesive leadership in the bands as a way of safeguarding musical identity, a fundamental aspect of the Sincelejo

bands that is still present in their functioning (Fortich, 1994). However, this family structure may limit innovation in organizational and managerial aspects that could improve the bands' efficiency. Gangs that diversify their leadership structure and professionalism their management can better adapt to the demands of new contexts (Peralta-Farak & Espinosa-Espinosa, 2023). Despite these limitations, family leadership in Sincelejo allows for a relationship of trust and closeness among members, a crucial element in its operation, as is also evident in the Medellín bands, where hybrid organizational models that combine tradition and formalization have been adapted (Valencia, 2009).

Labor relations in Sincelejo's wind bands tend to be informal, characterized by verbal agreements, an aspect common to most community bands in Colombia and observed in other traditional musical practices in the country (Machado, 2007). The informality of contracts, while allowing for flexibility and adaptation, limits the musicians' employment and economic stability, a reality observed by other community band models in Antioquia and Caldas (Loaiza, 2008). Despite the leaders' attempts to formalism certain aspects, such as the use of written commitments for specific performances, the lack of a stable contractual system prevents musicians from developing a formal career in the band.

This reality underlines the need to implement policies that professionalism the work in wind bands, as suggested by the (Ministerio de Cultura, 2005) in its proposal for the National Band Programme. The creation of stronger contractual systems and working arrangements could improve the quality of life of musicians, helping them to see band music as a sustainable career option. Working conditions and remuneration in Sincelejo's bands face similar challenges to those of bands in Colombia, where compensation is often insufficient and musicians must cover additional expenses, such as transportation (Machado, 2007). These economic problems limit the musicians' possibilities to dedicate themselves exclusively to the band, forcing them to supplement their income with other activities. This situation mirrors the working conditions of musicians in other regions, such as the bands of Caldas, where musicians are reported to have additional jobs due to the low income, they earn in the bands (Loaiza, 2008).

CONCLUSION

Wind bands in Sincelejo, Sucre (Colombia) have demonstrated a remarkable capacity for adaptation and resilience, consolidating themselves as a reference in the region through their participation in local festivities and

prominent cultural events. The family organization and internal leadership structure have been essential factors for their continuity and cohesion, although they also limit in certain aspects the development of more formal organizational practices. The stability and commitment of its members reflect a sense of belonging that strengthens community ties and ensures the preservation of their cultural heritage.

However, the study also highlights important challenges for the sustainability of these groups. Working conditions and the informality of contractual relations, together with economic constraints, impact the musicians' quality of life and make it difficult for them to dedicate themselves exclusively to the band. In addition, the lack of institutional support and training programmes in the region limits the bands' capacity to train new musicians and professionalise their management. Despite the multiple recognitions and social acceptance, they have achieved, Sincelejo's wind bands require support policies that include funding, training and formalisation, key elements to strengthen their cultural and social impact.

In short, the study suggests that strengthening these bands, both in terms of organisation and economic sustainability, is a necessary step to ensure their growth and preservation. The creation of music schools and institutional support can help to renew and expand this musical tradition, promoting an environment that values and dignifies the work of musicians. Thus, strengthening Sincelejo's wind bands would not only contribute to their development as cultural and economic units, but also consolidate their role as ambassadors of folklore and the regional identity of Sucre, preserving a significant cultural heritage for future generations.

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