



REVIEW | Unsichtbare Landschaften: Populäre Musik und Räumlichkeit / Invisible Landscapes: Popular Music and Spatiality

Giacomo Bottà Ed.

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As much as it is a global phenomenon, popular music still is deeply rooted in its national, regional or local contexts, and often artists and even genres are inextricably linked to certain places or cities. Thus, it is hardly surprising that apart from popular music and ethnomusicology scholars (for example Cohen 1991; Du Noyer 2002; Crossley 2015), academics from the emerging interdisciplinary field of urban music studies (such as Leyshon et al. 1998; Krims 2007; Holt and Wergin 2013) have focused on the connection between place and popular music.

This multilingual collected volume emerged from a two-day seminar at the former *Deutsches Volksarchiv* (now the Centre for Popular Culture and Music, Freiburg) on “Popular Music and Urban Space” in 2013. Experts from ethnomusicology, cultural, urban, and popular music studies discussed the city experience by drawing upon its lyrics, images, and sounds. While most research in these disciplines has widely concentrated on national, local or urban scenes, as the editor Giacomo Bottà notes, this book intends to focus on the intra-European networks and the special status of certain cities. To achieve a European perspective, Bottà in his editorial introduction argues that languages respond to academic traditions, and that meaning can be lost in translations (Gregson et al. 2003).

Consequently, half of the ten chapters are in English and half in German, making the volume in fact a *bilingual* and not a multilingual book. This decision gives rise to several questions. Having emerged from a seminar at a German institution, the concentration on English and German languages is understandable. Yet, other European languages are excluded without an explanation. Thus, it remains unclear which readership is addressed, and one might ask what language competences can generally be expected of European scholars? Quotes other than in English or German have been translated in most chapters, yet Daniel Tödt refrains from any translations in his chapter on French *banlieues*. Regarding Bottà's argument of languages being tools of academic traditions, it also might be necessary to reflect on culture-dependent and language-specific understandings of important terms, rather than agreeing on two European languages as academic lingua franca.

Further means for addressing a European perspective are analyses of political struggles on the European continent and its former colonies, music in urban settings, and the role of popular music within the European understanding of cultural heritage. These issues are covered in the chapters, but the blurb and part of the editorial introduction point to contents that are hardly provided by the contents of this edited collection:

Popular music as sound is without doubt deeply embedded in many places. Its production is forged in studios, rehearsal areas and bedrooms, places often mythologised in popular music history. Names such as Sun, Abbey Road and Hansa Studios resonate widely and still attract musicians and tourists, willing to exploit a certain aura of space. Popular music is also recorded through studio techniques apt to recreate space, through reverb and other effects. (Bottà 2016: 7)

Music production oriented analyses of studio work, spatial staging or performance practices are not included in the book, which might stem from the fact that the authors mainly come from ethnomusicology or cultural and urban studies. The chapters thus focus on the artists' personal backgrounds, their biographies and intentions, music as a means of political expression, ties between genres and cities, and representations of cities through music and imagery rather than on the art of record production, as indicated in the blurb and introduction.

A common subject of several chapters is the close connection between city districts and their music, ethnicity, and politics. Christina M. Heinen's (in German) chapter on Berlin-Neukölln provides insights into the district's disparate image of a failed integration policy and its reputation for being a trendy place for experimental artists nonetheless. Based on a live Fluxus performance, Heinen, in her multifaceted chapter, describes improvisation as a metaphor for the social development of Neukölln, and the district as a catalyst for creative energy. Similarly, Daniel Tödt's (in German) investigation of "global ghettos" in France emphasizes the connection between rap and the urban experience. Focussing on the *Quartiers Nord* of

Marseille and deprived areas (*Zone urbaine sensible*) of Paris, Tödt describes these places (*banlieues*) as the creative and cultural ground for rap music. By reconstructing migration histories of exemplary artists using case studies, Tödt reveals transnational networks connected not only to the Bronx but also to Senegal, Mali, Algeria, and the Comoros.

The issue of globalisation is also present in Thomas Burkhalter's (in German) research on the artistic and symbolic strategies of Swiss musicians in transnational music productions. As Burkhalter demonstrates, Swiss musicians of today no longer limit themselves to using music samples from Europe and the USA, but increasingly collaborate with artists from Africa, Asia, and Latin America, re-appropriating cultural references. Based on case studies, his chapter analyses the musicians' use, personal relevance, intentions and political dimensions of sampled references. Besides providing insights into the wide topic of "global niches", Burkhalter convincingly discusses a methodological approach for analysing such complex practices in transnational music making. By drawing upon Philip Tagg, amongst others, his three main perspectives comprise the integration of music-making as practice, music as media products, and musicians as auteurs.

Other chapters focus on the connection between cities and their genres and artists. Philipp Rhensius' (in German) ethnographic study traces the emergence and development of the dubstep genre in London. By drawing upon the club experience, important artists, record stores and radio stations, Rhensius claims the music having been a reaction to the people's needs in the English capital. Likewise, Leonard Navarez' (in English) insightful chapter on the European Urbanism of Simple Minds links the band's early urban aesthetic – found in lyrics, song titles and album covers – with the band's touring activities. Giacomo Bottà (in English) regards popular music as a form of cultural heritage in industrial cities, and vividly describes how popular music heritage communicates meanings, ideas, and desires. By highlighting similarities between industrial places, factories, popular music production and dissemination as well as aesthetics, Bottà shows how musical processes can respond to the needs of cities or private brands for marketing purposes. With a cultural studies oriented approach, Fernand Hörner (in German) interprets the video of "Sag mir Quando, sag mir wann" (1962) by the Kessler twins. Based on a multi-dimensional analysis of the music, lyrics, cultural context, performance and video montage, Hörner concludes that Rome is represented iconically.

Another thematic focus of the book is placed on the political power of music, sound and language. Meri Kytö and E. Şirin Özgün (in English) examine the Gezi Park protests of 2013 in Istanbul, and the ways that sound making are used to sonify resistance. By analysing data from social media, Kytö and Özgün identify forms of political communication like rearticulating football chanting, creating noise with "pots and pans", and silent standing protests. In an ethnographic case study on the chamber choir of the South African Rhodes University, Carlo Nardi (in English)

illustrates how a multiracial group of students articulates political dynamics of race, and how it renegotiates spaces of power by taking advantage of the polysemic character of music. Similarly, David-Emil Wickström's (in English) ethnographic study of the Russian and Ukrainian ska punk band Svoboda demonstrates the complexities of band identities in post-Soviet music, and the ways in which these are embedded in local, national and regional discourses. In passing, the reader becomes acquainted with Eastern European music cultures otherwise underrepresented in popular music studies.

In total, this edited volume provides valuable insights into the interrelation of music and its places of production and performance. One central contribution to popular music, cultural, and urban studies is its explicit European focus, including post-colonial strands. As most chapters are based on ethnographic fieldwork, one drawback of this volume is its lack of disciplinary breadth. The work mainly draws upon interviews and participatory observation, yet including the actual music could significantly have broadened the methodological compass and have deepened the understanding of the subject. In this respect, some of the music would commonly not be considered 'popular' either. Besides, in some of the presented studies the methodical framework is rather unspecific. Positive examples of theoretical and methodical grounding can be found in Kytö and Özgün's application of sonic ethnography, Nardi's postcolonial aural theory and Burkhalter's analytical framework for transnational music production. Uncommon but likewise innovative and informative is also Navarez' method of relating music and imagery to touring activities.

This edited collection offers many interesting case studies for urban and popular music studies that can be valuable for further theoretical work. With the ethnomusicological and cultural studies emphasis described above, further research with a greater focus on the musical structures and compositions should address these shortcomings. In this respect, the issue of music and place seems to be well suited for bridging the gap between musical and cultural studies oriented research (see Tagg 2011).

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