

Call for Papers

Pop – Power – Positions

Global Relations and Popular Music

3. IASPM D-A-CH-Conference

University of Bern, Institute for Musicology
Bern University of the Arts, Research Area Interpretation
Partner: Norient – Network for Local and Global Sounds and Media

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In Nigeria, the high pressure to follow the copyright rules of the globalized pop music market restrains the use of samples in hip hop culture. In Egypt, young musicians have no credit cards, leaving them without access to the online music market. In Europe, second and third generation migrants discuss their non-European backgrounds and European identities in songs and tracks. And U.S.-produced Korean pop music (K-Pop) increasingly rivals Korean-produced K-Pop in its concern for authentic presentation.

Issues of power, position, access, and representation have shaped the production, distribution, and reception of popular music and continue to do so today. The three-day interdisciplinary conference *Pop – Power – Positions* highlights popular music's embeddedness in a global world. It seeks to uncover and scrutinize the risks, challenges, and potentials of power structures, positioning, and (re)presentations in popular music. The analysis of global, postcolonial structures plays a central role in this endeavour. To date, however, music- and popular music in particular – has only rarely been studied using postcolonial perspectives.

Postcolonialism refers not only to the historical fact of colonialism and its political, geographical, cultural, and economic impact on the countries and regions involved. Rather, postcolonial studies deal with all aspects of cultural diversity, ethnic and cultural difference, and their related power structures. Colonialism as well as postcolonialism refer to hierarchies that are enacted and produced through the construction of the Other and bring about and enforce debateable concepts of representation such as gender, race, ethnic group, nation, class, and culture. In this regard, the effects of (post)colonialism can be detected not only in former colonized and colonising countries and regions, but also in those which at first sight do not have a colonial heritage, for example Switzerland.

From its beginnings, popular music has been produced and performed in and with-in (post)colonial (power) structures. Postcolonial traces are, according to Johannes Ismaïel-Wendt, inherent in any popular music (2011). Current productions of popular music in different countries show that (post)colonial conditions live on in popular music, especially in a globalised world, and that musicians as well as recipients react in various ways to this situation.

The conference focuses on (global) power relations and representations of race, cultural difference, ethnicity, gender, class, and nation, including the changes and subversive strategies these may involve. Ethnographic and analytical studies of popular music in and from (former) colonised countries and regions are also welcome. We invite papers that address the following range of topics and questions:

Power

- Who speaks in popular music? What kinds of power structures shape the production, distribution, and reception of popular music? What is the impact of the Anglophone music business on other music markets? Who speaks about popular music in the areas of marketing, advertising, journalism, fan cultures, (global) politics, and educational institutions – and what vocabulary do they use?
- Have digitalisation and digital networks led to a democratisation of musical processes, or the contrary?
- What sounds and music(s) are processed in what contexts by whom and how, and to what aim? How does the use of certain sounds/music(s) point to existing power relations, dependencies, and availability?

Place

- What role do geographies and geopolitics play in popular music-making? How do geography, world order, and power structures relate?
- In what ways can popular music exist beyond cultural, ethnic, and national geographies? What role does the relation between the Global North and Global South have in popular music?

Positions

- How do structures of power and distribution limit the access to the production and reception of popular music?
- What relevance, usability, and impact do technologies (like Digital Audio Workstations) or legal regulations (like the copyright laws) that have been developed in Western contexts have for popular music? In what ways are (post)colonial structures and power relations (re)produced therein?
- What kinds of representations do musicians use for their marketing? What traits are ascribed to music?

Postcolonialism

- What potential does popular music hold for detecting and changing (or enforcing) colonial and postcolonial power structures?
- How can postcolonial theories be made fruitful for an up-to-date understanding of popular music?

- How do musicians of different forms of popular music process a „(post)colonial experience of the world“ („(post)koloniales Welterleben“, Ismaiel-Wendt) in their music?

Popular Music Studies

- How marginalised are specific popular musics within the history of popular music?
- Should or can we write a Global History of Popular Music?
- In what way is the concept of popular music in itself (post)colonial?
- What hierarchies, asymmetries or restraints can be found in inter-/transdisciplinary Popular Music Studies?

Keynote: Dr Jenny Fatou Mbaye (City University London)

Contributions on popular music that lie outside the scope of these topic areas are welcome and will be considered if possible.

The conference invites researchers of Popular Music Studies from all disciplines to take part, for example from musicology, ethnomusicology, anthropology, cultural studies, history, global studies, media and communication studies, postcolonial studies, or sociology. In order to submit a paper or a panel proposal, speakers must be a member of IASPM, respectively of one of its branches (for information on membership see iaspm-dach.net or iaspm.net).

Papers may be given in German or English. Proposals can be made for panels on a special topic including three presentations (60 minutes + 30 minutes discussion) or for single papers (20 minutes + 10 minutes discussion). Please include title, an abstract of 250 words, five keywords, name, academic affiliation, a short biographical note of no more than two sentences, and your contact information.

Please email your abstract to daniel.allenbach@hkb.bfh.ch by 28 February 2018.

Papers will be anonymized before selection. You will be informed about the selection by 31 March 2018.

Depending on the financial situation, the organisers hope to contribute to travel and accommodation costs of those speakers who have no other sources of support.

There will be arrangements in place for child care.

IASPM D-A-CH will award the Maria-Hanáček-prize for the best presentation held by a doctoral student at the conference.

Partner