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Pop–Power–Positions: Engaging with the (Post)Colonial in Popular Music Studies. An Introduction

Our world is full of connections spanning rivers, mountains, and oceans. Networks of people, things, and sounds exist across institutions, nations, and states; across interest groups, scenes, and ethnically defined groups. In short: We live—and have lived for a long time—in a globally connected world. This fact could not even be changed by the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions in place while writing these lines. Of course, restrictions to contain the spread of the virus has limited travel and re-affirmed borders. But the global connections remain nonetheless.

Popular music has always been embedded in and connected to this globalized world. Popular music not only travels but has travelled around the world with people, instruments, and on recordings—now within seconds online—and is and has been an integral part of daily life (e.g. quoted in adverts, memes, or films). Popular music has habitually included influences from different parts of the world; it has consistently mixed and remixed genres, styles, noises, and sounds. In this volume, we want to highlight popular music's embeddedness in our globally connected world.

This world, however, is not an equal and fair one. On the contrary, issues of power and positionality play a fundamental role in all aspects of life. The context, world region, class, or ethnicity in which a person, institution, or music is situated matters. Historical developments have fostered the exploitation and unequal control over and distribution of (natural) resources, money, and land, and have created uneven power structures that provide uneven access to social, economic, political, and cultural participation. Consequently, issues of power, positionality, access, and representation have shaped the production, distribution, and reception of popular music around the world and continue to do so today.

At the same time, popular music has always initiated, debated, and represented questions of place(s), power, and positions, and still does. Popular music, in short, does not exist in a world free of power structures and inequalities. When looking at the popular music practices and performances—no matter if mainstream or niche, produced in a studio in Accra, in a bedroom in New York, or in an underground rehearsal room in Paderborn, Germany—we are inevitably confronted with the reality of colonial and postcolonial power structures and dependences. To mention only a few examples: In Nigeria, the high pressure to follow the copyright rules of the globalized pop music market restrains the use of samples in local 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. U.S.-produced Korean pop music (K-pop) increasingly rivals Korean-produced K-pop in its concern for authentic presentation. At the same time, Western "mainstream" pop music has for long been able to get to most corners of the world, but pop music from other regions hardly ever reached global popularity—happily, this seems to be slowly changing in the 21st century. The keywords pop, power, and positions connect these observations, and they immediately point to the theoretical thread of postcolonial studies.

The (post)colonial heritage of popular music and the related need to decolonize the field have not been considered widely in popular music studies. This lack of attention was our motivation to take up the topic *Pop–Power–Positions: Popular Music and Global Relations* (*Globale Beziehungen und populäre Musik*) for the third conference of IASPM D-A-CH, the German-speaking branch of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music (iaspm-dach.net). We wanted to uncover and scrutinize the risks, challenges, and potentials of power structures, positioning, and (re)presentations in popular music, with a special focus on the analysis of the role of global, postcolonial structures in popular music around the world and the academic field of popular music studies. The conference successfully took place at the University of Bern and the Bern University of the Arts in Switzerland in October 2018.

During the time since the conference, a lot has happened in this world that illustrates the relevance of the questions we ask here: The #MeToo movement unmasked the dimensions of sexual harassment of women worldwide; the #MeTwo movement followed shortly after, especially in Germany, trying to raise awareness for the extent of racist harassment in the daily life of non-White[1] people. The Black Lives Matter movement, fighting against racist attacks and police brutality against Black people since 2013 in the U.S., created worldwide momentum in 2020 following the murder of George Floyd by a White police officer in Minneapolis. These protest movements clearly indicate that we are and have been far away from equality and fairness, and that the heritage of colonial times still affects the lives of all of us—only, that some have been on the privileged side of silencing these inequalities, whereas others have been experiencing them in their everyday lives without being heard.

With this volume, consisting of articles based on presentations from the conference, we want to put (global) power relations and representations of race, cultural difference, ethnicity, gender, class, and nation—including the changing dynamics and subversive strategies against differentiation these may involve—on the immediate agenda of popular music studies. In this introduction, we outline the field of research that we believe popular music studies needs to confront: the inclusion of postcolonial critique and questions of decolonizing academia. To do so, we briefly discuss the theoretical foundation of popular music and postcolonial studies in the next section, followed by a section full of issues and questions that open up on this basis—without raising the claim to answer them immediately, but as a possible starting point for future research.

To put postcolonial thought into theory and practice of popular music studies is a big demand, and we are aware that it comes with many challenges, as we ourselves are part of these (post)colonial entanglements and structures, particularly as academics, organizers of a conference, and editors of a peer-reviewed publication. We are thus people speaking from a privileged position. With this background, in the last section we critically discuss some of the postcolonial demands and barriers in our research field and academic practices, including reflection on our experiences in the organizing of the conference and the editing of this publication, calling for a conscious move toward decolonizing popular music studies.

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1   We use Black, Indigenous, and People of Color to point effectively to the political positioning of humans within our postcolonial, racialized world, and not in terms of naturalizing. In the same way, the term White is used consciously to highlight the privileged position of White people within this system.

Postcolonialism and Popular Music—A Brief Overview

Popular music, in our understanding, has to be conceived of as a discourse rather than a fixed representation of a particular music (Wicke 2004, 119). We understand popular music to be a wide umbrella term that incorporates musical phenomena that are popular among their audiences, use popular channels of distribution on- and offline, connect to the rich heritage of Black music traditions, evolve and thrive in various niches and scenes, and are learned and appropriated in contexts far beyond any (traditional art music) institutions but also therein.

What does "postcolonialism" mean? Postcolonialism can be considered as a chronological term describing the era after colonialism; in the academic context, however, postcolonialism is widely synonymous with postcolonial studies and refers to critical engagement with the legacy of colonial and imperial practices, ideologies, and politics. Approaches and methods in postcolonialism are diverse and manifold, as postcolonial studies spans various disciplines. The foundation was made by theorists and thinkers in the 20th century, who revealed the mechanisms of colonial structures and how they live on even after colonial times formally ended. Often cited as a starting point are the thinkers Frantz Fanon and Aimé Cesaire. Out of their embodied experience, they vividly described the violence of White people on Black people's identities and bodies, denounced the exploitation within (post)colonial structures, and called for the process of decolonization (Fanon 2004 [1961]; Cesaire 2000 [1955]). These thoughts were increasingly taken up in academia in the 1970s and 1980s.

Edward Said's analysis of the binary of the "Orient" and the "Occident" showed the mutual but clearly hierarchical dependence between the "West" and the "East." Said introduced the concept of "Orientalism" to describe the construction of the "Orient" and thus the "Other" by colonizing empires (Said 2003 [1978]). Ten years later, Gayatri Spivak asked provokingly "Can the subaltern speak?" and demonstrated not only the silencing of people without power due to the continuation of postcolonial structures, but especially the muting of women therein (Spivak 1988). She was one of the main thinkers founding postcolonial feminism, arguing for a "strategic essentialism" for colonized and subordinated people in order to gain a voice and be heard. Another concept that was vividly discussed was Homi Bhabha's concept of hybridity, which he proposed as a challenge to existing binaries. He argued that there is always a "third space" "in between," and that binaries are never as fixed as they seem to be (Bhabha 1994). Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o showed that colonial structures live on after the end of colonialism in former colonized countries, in the institutional structures, in the minds of elites in former colonies, and in language use (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o 1986). And Dipesh Chakrabarty called for a new historical thinking that writes Europe out of its acclaimed central role in the history of the world's different regions (2000).

A different, but complementary strand of critical theoretical thinking originated in the 20th century from scholars based in Latin America, for example Aníbal Quijano (2007), María Lugones (2003) and Rita Segato (2018). They contest and analyze the colonial world order and its heritage but in a much longer time frame that reaches back to the late 15th century, and focus on the colonial practices of Spain and Portugal and their effects and consequences in Latin America. Furthermore, they point towards the epistemic factor in coloniality, that is, the supposed superiority of the Western knowledge system, and highlight the activist dimension of decoloniality. They call for a decolonizing of knowledge, for the recognition of different epistemologies around the world.

These are only a few important works of postcolonial/decolonial criticism in academic thinking; an overall discussion goes beyond the aim of this introduction and has been done in well elsewhere (e.g. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 2007, Young 2003, Moraña, Dussel, and Jáuregui 2008, Loomba 2015, Castro Varela and Dhawan 2015, Kerner 2012).

Postcolonial studies push—no matter in which field or discipline—awareness of global imbalance and power relations as an outcome of colonial exploitation, domination, and control by some regions of the world over others. The general aim in postcolonialism can be summarized as such: To make power relations, social positions, and representational strategies that have their roots in colonial thinking and doing visible, and to work towards empowerment and equality for marginalized (possibly, but not necessarily, colonized) people. Postcolonial studies work towards the decolonization of our highly colonialized world. There is a general understanding in postcolonial studies that the legacies and effects of colonialism and post-colonialist inequalities live on everywhere, often unnoticed, and have still to be uncovered, analyzed, and treated in appropriate ways—not only in former colonialized and colonizing countries and regions, but also in those which at first sight do not have a colonial heritage, for example Switzerland or Austria. As already mentioned, colonialism as well as postcolonialism refer to hierarchies that are enacted and produced through the construction of an inferior Other, thereby creating and enforcing highly contested concepts of representation along categories of, race, cultural difference, ethnicity, gender, class, and nation.

With (post)colonial legacies continuing to exist within structures, representations and epistemologies around the world, though in different ways, the contexts of production, distribution, and consumption of popular music are therefore always entangled within (post)colonial (power) structures. Postcolonial traces are, as Johannes Ismaiel-Wendt (2011) has demonstrated, inherent in any popular music. Popular music is always embedded in postcolonially inherited structures. Current productions of popular music in different countries indicate that (post)colonial conditions live on in popular music, and that musicians as well as audiences react in various ways to this situation.

Nevertheless, popular music studies have not yet widely taken up postcolonial critique and awareness (in contrast to postcolonial theories, in which popular music has often served as case study, see James 2005). Of course, there are books and articles that take up aspects of postcolonialism on the go, but rarely is it made explicit. The influential collection *Western Music and Its Others: Difference, Representation, and Appropriation in Music*, edited by Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh (2000), has been an early attempt to take up postcolonial theory in (popular) music studies. Further examples are the collection *Audible Empire: Music, Global Politics, Critique*, edited by Ronald Radano and Tejumola Olaniyan (2016), the collection *Postcolonial Piracy: Media Distribution and Cultural Production in the Global South*, edited by Lars Eckstein and Anja Schwarz (2014), and the special issue of *Popular Music and Society* in 2017 on "Popular Music and the Postcolonial", edited by Oliver Lovesey. Moreover, Daniel Hernandez and Kirsten Zemke are currently preparing a special issue for the IASPM Journal entitled "Popular Music, Decolonization, and Indigenous Studies". In German-speaking literature, the works of Ismaiel-Wendt (2011, 2016) have to be mentioned as important milestones. Contributions from ethnomusicology (e.g. Ramnarine 2007, Solomon 2012, Mackinlay 2015) also need to be taken into account when considering postcolonial critique in popular music studies.

While these works show important postcolonial perspectives on popular music, many questions still remain unasked and unexamined; below we present the questions that arose within our symposium and book project which we believe to be of immediate relevance. In short, we see in popular music studies an urgent need to increase our efforts to work towards revealing and laying bare postcolonial dependences, structures, and ideologies within and around popular music of any sort, no matter the genre, musician, or region, and to put our energy towards gaining more and more consciousness of the necessity and possibilities of decolonization.

Power, Place, and Positions: Issues to Tackle in Postcolonial Popular Music Studies

In the following, we present some questions about the keywords "power," "place," and "positions" that we believe important to ask. While also a welcomed alliteration for a catchy conference title, reflecting upon "power," "place," and "positions" when thinking about popular music is a useful first step toward including some of the main aspects of postcolonial thought in academic research. The questions may be read as suggestions for future research and debate, and are our proposal for possible further steps towards a research field of postcolonial popular music studies.

When thinking about "power" in popular music, questions arise around the issue of "who speaks," meaning whose voice is heard? On the sound file and beyond: Who is heard, who is silenced, and why? What kinds of (colonial) power structures shape the production, distribution, and reception of popular music? What is the impact of the Anglophone music business on other music markets? And who speaks—and is heard—about popular music in the areas of marketing, advertising, journalism, research, fan cultures, (global) politics, and educational institutions—and which vocabulary do these actors use? Further questions arise around sound processing: What kind of sounds and music(s) are processed in which contexts, by whom, how, and to what aim? How does the use of certain sounds/music(s) point to existing power relations, dependencies, and availabilities? And, of course, in terms of digitization, have digital networks, techniques, and tools led to a democratization of musical processes or not?

Second, "place" is highly relevant in postcolonial thinking and theory. It matters if someone is born and raised in a town or a village, in the Northern hemisphere or the Southern hemisphere, in Germany, in China or in Uganda. What role do geographies and geopolitics play in popular music-making, and how do geography, world order, and power structures relate? In what ways can popular music exist beyond cultural, ethnic, and national geographies? And what role does the relationship between the Global North and Global South have in popular music?

"Positions," finally, marks the third important approach for tackling postcolonial issues in and around popular music. Positions is meant here as an umbrella term for discussions about resources, regulations, and representations, where positioning becomes relevant. These discourses often make use of dichotomous terms for differentiating the West from the Rest. Questions that arise in this approach are, for example: How do structures of power and distribution limit the access to and control over the production and reception of popular music? What relevance, usability, and impact do technologies (like Digital Audio Workstations) or legal regulations (like copyright laws), developed in Western contexts, have for popular music? In what ways are (post)colonial structures and power relations (re)produced therein? Who has access to and control

over relevant technologies? Who has the power over representation, of the music and of music history? What kinds of representations do musicians use for their marketing? What traits are ascribed to music, and by whom? How are specific popular music genres marginalized within the history of popular music? Should and can we write a global history of popular music?

In general, and connected to all three sets of questions about "place," "power," and "positions," a very important endeavor is to highlight and analyze how musicians of different forms of popular music process a "(post)colonial experience of the world" ("(post)koloniales Welterleben", Ismaiel-Wendt 2011) in their music. This can sensitize us for the manifold ways in which popular music tells of this world and can unlock new and highly relevant fields and questions of research.

With this matrix of questions around the keywords power, place, and positions, we want to evoke new perspectives in popular music studies that may lead to further questions on a more general, disciplinary level. We have to ask ourselves how the concept of popular music (as a category developed in the West) is in itself (post)colonial. And we are urgently called to discuss openly what kind of hierarchies, asymmetries, or restraints can be found in the inter- and transdisciplinary field of popular music studies.

We are convinced that popular music provides highly rewarding objects for postcolonial analyses, and that there is enormous potential for detecting and changing (or enforcing) colonial and postcolonial power structures. For an up-to-date understanding of popular music, postcolonial theories must be made fruitful for analyses and studies around the issues raised above. The already rich oeuvre of postcolonial thinkers, scholars, and performers indicates at least one thing: adequate methods, strategies, and approaches exist. We have to continuously put them in our work, to apply, rethink, and adapt them in useful ways to the manifold topics and research questions in popular music studies.

Challenges to Decolonizing Academic Practice in Popular Music Studies

Yet, by adopting a postcolonial theoretical foundation and raising questions addressing postcolonial dependencies and legacies in our research, the need for postcolonial critique does not end. Academic practices themselves urgently need to be revised and altered towards more postcolonial awareness and decolonial efforts. This does not happen by itself. We, the authors and other, commonly White, privileged Western academics are called on to create possibilities that make positions and perspectives from beyond our privileged perspectives visible, and to work consciously towards changing our academic system. It is urgent that it becomes a matter of course that currently marginalized scholars actively perform within Western academia. Based on our experience during the symposium and book publishing process, we suggest three immediate types of action: First, when developing topics, research projects, and conference structures, do this together with non-Western scholars and musicians, scholars and musicians of Color, and/or Indigenous scholars and musicians. Second, find ways to include various epistemological perspectives and formats of knowledge production when considering whom to invite to contribute to academic publications. And third, when teaching and doing and presenting research, decolonize the canon of literature and music and open the Western academic world to further, not necessarily text-based epistemologies. The issues of place, power, and positions, as discussed above are also relevant here.

Let's start with the first aspect of consciously re-working topics, research projects and processes, and conferences structures together with marginalized scholars in order to confront the inherently racist modes in the structures of Western academia. We feel that this has not yet been the case in (German-speaking) popular music studies and we hope that such activities will increase greatly in the next years and will foster consciousness among popular music scholars. When organizing the third IASPM D-A-CH conference in Bern 2018, our own awareness was not yet in this direction. While we did put global relations and postcolonial implications in the focus for conference presentations, it did not occur to us to challenge and re-think the conference organization per se. Nonetheless, we actively worked to invite musicians from non-Western countries to participate. And already this small move showed what kind of obstacles we face due to the borders built by nations, states, and institutions, as we want to recount in detail here.

Together with our partner, the platform for music research Norient, we invited both the South African multidisciplinary artist Umlilo and the Pakistani rapper, comedian, and activist Ali Gul Pir to attend our conference. Both accepted our invitation. We wanted to offer an immediate starting point for a broader discussion on dependences and postcolonial structures to initiate further critical debates and research. While there was no problem with South Africa, the Swiss Embassy in Islamabad at first refused the visa for Gul Pir. The justification was that it was believed he would not return to his country after his visit in Switzerland. After making all possible efforts, including an appeal to the authorities, without much hope due to our tight schedule, only one and a half weeks before the conference we suddenly received a letter that the visa would be granted after all. Until today, we do not know why the authorities changed their minds. This incident vividly shows that there are borders and boundaries to overcome in order to enable personal and direct exchange that have nothing to do with music and academia, but are conditions within a world organized along inequalities. Issues of place, power, and positions become immediately relevant. These conditions affect our art and our research.[2]

Now, in 2021, matters of mobility and travel have changed and will have to be negotiated anew, especially when working towards decolonization of academic practices. We are living in times of the global COVID19-pandemic. Borders that were no longer policed have been re-established with border control, and airplanes are inactive because travelling has become nearly impossible. Meeting people from other countries or even continents in person is currently—and possibly still for some time in the future—nearly impossible. However, people and institutions around the world have gotten accustomed to using online communication tools during the last year. Online meetings have been included in daily academic routines to an extent that nobody imagined before, including conferences being organized entirely online. This change makes the collaboration with scholars and artists all over the world at the same time easier and even more urgent. There is no longer an excuse for not doing so. In the case of online conferences, the collaboration can even happen on the same level of representation (which would not be the case when someone is presenting online at an offline conference)—provided that all the collaborating scholars have the necessary infrastructure and a steady internet connection at their home or institution, which is not always the case in some countries.

And there is yet another important matter: the ongoing and alarming climate crisis. Offline conferences eliminate travel costs, and the heightened CO_2 production of plane travel. Re-thinking conference structures in order to find a way to slowly but steadily decolonize the academic

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2   Ali Gul Pir produced a video with footage from his visit to Switzerland and his own comments in Urdu. He shared the video on Facebook and YouTube after the conference (Gul Pir 2019).

world might thus go together with climate politics and the changes in online communication brought about by the COVID 19-pandemic. Of course, the electronic technology necessary for digital communication has its own CO_2 issues, and is lacking postcolonial consciousness concerning exploitation of human and natural resources.

Of course, the issue of consciously re-working academic practices towards decolonized structures does not end at conferences. It goes without saying that beyond including people of non-Western background, of Color, and/or Indigenous background in the organizational structures and the programs of conferences, the most important part is to work towards structures that provide space for dialogical research as a matter of course. Again, the academic structure itself needs to be fundamentally changed, in this case in terms of the research design to acknowledge equal partnerships. The restraints mentioned may pop up again, but with some serious effort, such research projects in popular music studies are possible. They would definitely broaden the general perspective of popular music and popular music studies, and would be an important contribution towards decolonizing the field.

The second aspect of working towards the decolonization of popular music studies is to include diverse and decolonial perspectives in academic publications. Here, institutionalized epistemological barriers become visible and may put editors into a real dilemma. This also happened in the context of this publication. A non-Western scholar submitted an article, which fit perfectly in terms of its topic and the aim of this publication. However, looking at the text, we, the editors, immediately found that it diverged from the standardized academic demands that we are used to in terms of length, referencing, and "academic" style. We were sure that it would not pass the single-blind peer-review process[3] we had established for all articles. We had long discussions within the editorial board of this series about whether it were feasible to ask for a revision of the text before peer review. Finally, we did not think that the necessary changes, which required a lot of reading, were manageable by the latest possible deadline. Therefore, we rejected the article with a lot of discomfort.

This incident demonstrates that academic writing works with rules made by Western (and Westernized) academic institutions, and that following these rules is required for inclusion. Articles that do not meet these demands do not get published in the (Western) academic arena. Unfortunately, this is probably the case for many scholars with non-Western(ized) educations. Academic standards are thus an almost insurmountable barrier to including non-Western thought in academic discourses—a fact that needs an open debate. If we want to increase the visibility of and collaboration with currently marginalized scholars in popular music publications and to make their expert voices heard, we need to alter the criteria, the peer-review procedures, and possibly even the concept of scientific knowledge and epistemic fundamentals. This means to continuously and consciously re-think and re-work the often taken-for-granted basics about which knowledge counts as scientific, useful, and valuable, and which formats are required and accepted for/as knowledge production. Such reflection and reconsideration need to be done in collaboration with colleagues from various educational and regional backgrounds.

The third aspect, then, is the need to reconsider the eurocentric canon in popular music studies and to include more perspectives and content in our popular music research and teaching. We all know that popular music not only happens in the Western hemisphere. As briefly outlined

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3   A double-blind peer-review process was not reasonable as the names of the conference speakers could be retraced online at any time.

above, popular music is almost always connected in some way to global networks. Material and information on popular music outside the eurocentric mainstream canon is easily available and can be integrated into courses. Even if these sources are often provided or even produced by Western-educated scholars, they do help to broaden the perspective of the students. Beyond academic texts, other formats of knowledge production such as interviews, videos, podcasts, and sounds can be used in lectures and seminars in order to show the diversity of popular music and discuss the inherent aforementioned inequalities. The materials provided by the online platform Norient, for example, can be used with the aim of discussing and presenting popular music from around the world and beyond mainstream categories. It is perfect for discussions of (non-)traditionalization, stereotypes, racialized, postcolonial practices, and counter-acts.

The Articles in this Volume: An Overview

The authors in this volume address the keywords "power," "place," and "positions" in various ways. The articles are all based on papers held at the aforementioned 2018 conference in Bern. They combine a wide variety of approaches from different disciplines, discussing education, economics, globalization and politics. Let us give you some short insights to the articles that we hope you enjoy reading in full-length.

Thade Buchborn and Verena Bons discuss the power relations in the educational system in Germany as structures that cause social injustice. They demonstrate that music teachers still tend to ignore the musical worlds their learners live in, focusing on Western classical music instead. Meanwhile, Beate Flath shifts the focus to the field of economics: In her paper, she shows that in today's music business, significant power lies within a new form of co-creation, that is the participation of users in creative processes, based on data generated by themselves.

Three authors then focus on phenomena of globalization in pop music cultures. Steffen Just analyzes the performance of Black performers in English, German, and American popular music theatre in the early 20th century, showing that while there were exoticizing mechanisms at place, performances could also contribute to the deconstruction of stereotypes (article in German). Dietmar Elflein discusses soul music in Germany in the 1960s. In his discourse analysis he illustrates that Germans actors at the time perceived soul as "Black music", without relying on extensive knowledge on the modes of soul music production in the U.S. (article in German). Christina Richter-Ibáñez analyzes multilingualism and translation in the work of the popular musician Shakira as a conscious and meaningful tool of addressing various audiences.

Finally, two contributions to this volume emphasize political aspects in popular music. Chelsea Oden analyzes two choreomusical responses to the Orlando shooting, when a man shot 49 people in a gay bar and nightclub in mid 2016. Oden presents the moving body as a political force and discusses the relationship between political message and music. Helena Simonett, César Jesús Burgos Dávila, and David Moreno Candil examine different power relations along censorship practices in Mexican narcocorrido, analyzing censorship as a social practice and not solely in its legal aspects. They show that censorship does not prevent young people from producing, performing, and enjoying narcocorrido.

Outlook: Towards Postcolonial Awareness in the Field of Popular Music Studies

With the past conference, the articles collected in this volume, and this introduction we aim at calling the attention of researchers in popular music studies for the need of re-thinking and re-considering global power relations, colonial legacies, and postcolonial dependences that affect popular music practices, no matter which, where, and performed by whom. We want to raise awareness of these issues so that perhaps one day any study on any popular music will include postcolonial reflection as a matter of course. We believe this to be a necessary and important way of thinking in order to broaden and equalize our understanding of popular music—on the way to decolonize academia, and popular music studies.

Furthermore, we wanted to highlight the global inequalities inherent in our Western academic system and put forward the need to consciously and actively work towards the theoretical and epistemological acknowledgement of currently marginalized and invisible perspectives and people—to make research, topics, and understanding in popular music studies more diverse and more equal, and to work towards a broader understanding of popular music, of knowledge and knowledge production, and of academic practices.

Please do join the discussion.

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Abstract (Deutsch)

Populäre Musik ist intrinsischer Teil unserer globalisierten Welt. Eine Welt, die längst keine gerechte ist. Machtverhältnisse («power»), Verortungen («place») und Positionen («positions») bestimmen alle Aspekte unseres Lebens fundamental: Es spielt eine Rolle, in welchem Kontext, welcher Region, Klasse, oder ethnischen Zugehörigkeit eine Person, eine Institution, oder eine Musik positioniert ist. Der erste Band der IASPM D-A-CH-Reihe ~*Vibes* betrachtet (globale) Machtbeziehungen und Repräsentationen der Differenz in populärer Musik und den Popular Music Studies. In der Einleitung argumentieren die Autor*innen für den Einbezug von postkolonialem Denken und Fragen nach der Dekolonisierung der Wissenschaft in die Popular Music Studies. Basierend auf Vorträgen der IASPM D-A-CH Konferenz 2018 versammelt dieser Band Artikel aus verschiedenen Disziplinen mit Fokus auf die Bereiche Bildung, Wirtschaft, Globalisierung und Politik.

Abstract (English)

Popular music is embedded in and connected to our globalized world. A world that is, however, not an equal and fair one. Issues of power, place, and positions play a fundamental role in all aspects of life: It matters in which context, world region, class, or ethnic belonging a person, an institution, a music is situated. The first volume of the IASPM D-A-CH series ~*Vibes* looks at (global) power relations and representations of differences in popular music (studies). In the introduction the editors argue for the inclusion of postcolonial thought and questions of decolonizing academia into popular music studies. Based on papers held at the IASPM D-A-CH conference in Bern 2018, this volume presents seven articles from various disciplines, discussing education, economics, globalization, and politics.

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