Original Article

Nation-states, transnational corporations and cosmopolitans in the global popular music economy

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Abstract

This article assesses changing debates about globalisation in light of the growth of digital media. It stresses how popular music is shaped by enduring tensions between nation-state attempts to control territorial borders, the power of transnational corporations aiming to operate across these borders and emergent cosmopolitan practices that offer a cultural challenge to these borders. It outlines how popular music is influenced by physical place and highlights the cultural and political importance of the nation-state for understanding the context within which musical creativity occurs. It explains how transnational corporations use financial power to work across and to gain entry to national boundaries, and assesses claims that cosmopolitanism musical encounters offer more inclusive and alternative spaces to that of bounded state control and unbounded capitalist competition. It concludes by arguing for a more music-centred approach to the powers and pluralisms through which popular music moves at the meeting of states, corporations and cosmopolitans.

Keywords

Cosmopolitanism, digital music industries, musicians, nation-state, popular music, transnational corporations

For over 30 years, discussions of popular music culture have been framed by the entwined dynamics of digitalisation and globalisation. During the 1980s, digital recording and Musical Instrument Digital Interface (MIDI) began to be incorporated into production, as new albums and back catalogue were purchased on compact discs (initially in Japan in 1982, followed by Europe and the United States). The CD era turned out to be a passing moment in the history of recorded music. With the introduction of mp3 files and players, along with the widespread adoption of Internet

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computing during the 1990s and into the 2000s, digitalisation facilitated further changes in production, circulation and listening, allowing the confluence of Internet, social media, mobile phones and the information and communications technology (ICT) business, and the growth of big tech corporations (Lee, 2009).

Digital technology was first engaged to make, share and sell popular music in world where predominantly north Atlantic commentators were arguing that cultural pluralism, postmodern blurring and benevolent globalisation were breaking down previous patterns of affiliation and belonging, opening up new possibilities, and animating more inclusive, connected and tolerant sensibilities. The 1990s saw a growth of English language writings about global connections, cultural encounters and the dynamic qualities of places and identities (Mitchell, 1996; Whiteley, Bennett, & Hawkins, 2004). These ideas resonated with optimistic and occasionally romanticised narratives about the role of music and musicians in the thaw that led to the collapse of the Cold War, the struggles that bought an end to Apartheid, and the various concerts by star musicians that were making a difference by supporting Amnesty International or charity fundraising mega-events such as Live Aid (Garofalo & ed, 1992; Street, 2012).

By the turn of the new millennium, globalisation, digitalisation and the Internet were being celebrated more widely for facilitating new dialogues and creative exchanges between musicians dispersed across distance, and for allowing direct reciprocal communication between creative artists and their fans. For some commentators and advocates, digital circulation and the Internet were revitalising artistic freedom, allowing musicians to create and connect to listeners without interference from music industry intermediaries, or the need to negotiate the physical geography and institutional barriers at national borders (for discussion of these debates see Azenha, 2006; Leyshon, 2014; Rogers, 2013).

Yet, a counter-narrative, contradicting this upbeat tale could be detected in a growing scepticism about the unequal power relationships underpinning globalisation (articulated by the anti-globalisation movement), doubts about superficial representations of a global world as one, and recognition that old and new nation-state boundaries could be violently enforced. The Balkans, during the 1990s, was just one region where songs became weapons of sectarian hatred and political mobilisation as new boundaries were etched on to the map (Baker, 2013; Johnson & Cloonan, 2009). Meanwhile, the suppressing of various protests across Asia through to 1989 suggested that the possibilities for resistance offered by traditional folk forms or rock styles in Asia appeared as ineffective as the efforts of liberal rock, r'n'b and soul musicians in North America calling for peace and understanding following the attack on the Twin Towers in Manhattan in 2001 (Cloonan & Garofalo, 2003; Jones, 1992; Korpe, 2004).

As industrially produced culture and the creative arts continue to link and unite people across the world (whether at the DIY margins or in the corporate mainstream), the planet is being further divided by the redrawing of essentialist boundaries around people and 'their' culture. A resurgence of assertions about the exceptional can be found in the formal institutional use of exceptionalism at home and in foreign policy by Mr Trump in the United States and Mr Putin in Russia, or in populist challenges on behalf of the 'people' against 'elites' among UK supporters of Brexit, and other calls that evoke exceptional identities in movements for regional independence (Nymalm & Plagemann, 2019). Apparently radical voices have also been framing their claims on behalf of people experiencing oppression and marginalisation according to categories of race, colour, ethnicity, sexuality or citizenship. Against postmodern blurring and hybrid identities, we have seen a reassertion of local, regional, ethnic or national essentialisms, and resurgence or revival of patterns of prejudice (the new anti-Semitism being one example).

Within this broader social, political and technological context, I will argue that the creative and communal possibilities offered by post-digital popular music culture – within which the digital is taken for granted as a continuum of practices rather than treated as novel – will continue to be bounded by tensions between state attempts to control and regulate national territorial borders; the power and influence of transnational corporations seeking to operate across these borders; and the collusions, conflicts and compromises between states and corporations.

In light of the tensions between nation-states and transnational corporations, I will assess claims that musical cosmopolitanism can contribute to patterns of exchange and more pluralised identities that may facilitate political cosmopolitanism. These are issues that touch on a large body of literature, and I will signal this indicatively rather than comprehensively as I move through three sections to map out these tensions. First, I will focus on how music is strongly associated with physical location and highlight the cultural and political importance of geographical place and the nation-state for understanding the context within which musical creativity occurs. Second, I will emphasise the way transnational corporations seek to cross national boundaries as they shape how popular music is commercially produced, circulated and consumed. Third, I will consider how cosmopolitanism introduces further enduring questions about the cross-border politics of popular music in the way that it imaginatively can erode the boundaries of nations and nationalist belief, opening up a more inclusive alternative space to that of bounded state control and unbounded capitalist competition.

Nation-states and territories: the protection and promotion of places

A belief in the potency and defining characteristics of place has been central to discussions of music for many years. Scholars and critics, along with local or national governments, have assumed that a location directly impacts upon the people, styles and sounds associated with that place. This is apparent in accounts ranging through and beyond Mozart and Vienna, The Beatles and Liverpool, Gloria Estefan and the Miami sound, Sigur Rós and Iceland, Béla Bartók and Hungary, Ravi Shankar and India, Salif Keita and Mali or Shonen Knife and Japan, or in the varieties of planetary pop that have been prefixed with a national, regional or linguistic signifier to mark superficial local qualities – K-pop or J-pop; Brit-pop, Euro-pop or Latin-pop.

The psychological and sociological ties that bind musicians to places has been illustrated by Murray Schafer (1994) in detailed studies of how soundscapes we inhabit can instil a profound sense of existential self, connection to landscape and built environment, and relationships with other individuals and groups. Tia DeNora (2000) drew on neonatology to argue that sound is fundamental to the first experiences of life. Before a newborn can focus on people and things, sound is essential for responding, adapting to and synchronising with stimuli in the environment. Surroundings impart a profound sense of the materiality of sound – the physical sensation of sound waves received on the body (van Leeuwen, 1999) – mediating our sense of rhythm and comprehension of the meaning of sounds (the sound of pleasure, of anxiety, of comfort, of fear etc). Philip Tagg (1987, 1994), drawing on Schafer, suggested that our location in space and time defines the sounds we will hear around us (church bells, bleating sheep or beating drums; motorbikes, gunshots or sirens) and directly influences the melodic, harmonic and rhythmic, and timbral choices made by musicians and songwriters. This, in turn, informs cultural beliefs about the meaning and value of various sonic signifiers: the music of 'us' and 'them', the music of the nation or tribe and the sounds of east or west, north or south. Sonic experience of the world is filtered and framed by culture and language, along with the sociological and political contexts through which musical

sounds are associated with specific meanings (whether the sounds that tell us that we should attend an event, purchase the shoes or medicines presented in adverts and movies, or respect the sounds of the nation at a military parade).

The relationship between music and place has been recognised for centuries, and is apparent in the thought of Confucius. The anxiety that identities social relationships and habits can be undermined by music from outside and can be traced back at least to the arguments of the Greek philosopher Plato. The protection of a place is now largely the preserve of countries through the apparatus of the modern state, a model that in many parts of the world (Africa, Asia, western Eurasia – or 'the middle east') was imposed during European colonialism in the late 19th and early 20th century. The state is comprised of the institutions of domination through which legitimate control of boundaries and the use of violence is maintained, to draw from Max Weber's still influential writings on the state (Weber, 1919/2004). The state as the established legal institutions of control (systems of policing, military, education, healthcare, incarceration and law) can be distinguished from forms of government (the regime or administration of these state structures). Governments or administrations may change but state structures can endure.

State institutions are used by governments to protect and police the cultural and musical life of a nation according to specific political principles and ethical values (as these are negotiated by different administrations), practices that are often acknowledged but have received surprising little direct attention from scholars of popular music (see Cloonan, 1999; Cloonan & Frith, 2008). The structures of the modern nation-state are used to represent the interests of members of the country, encouraged by ideologies of nationalism and national identity, even if such structures do not represent (or even seek to represent) all citizens or 'the people' within a territory. State structures may be used to exclude and oppress as much as they might be deployed in an inclusive way (Agnew, 2017).

The political principles guiding nation-states vary around the world and in different periods. Although it is possible to categorise state approaches to popular music according to a typology ranging from 'authoritarian' to 'benign' (Cloonan, 1999), in practice states operate along a continuum according to circumstances, political expediency and *realpolitik* at any moment. This has ranged from attempts to resist the social influence of 'American' jazz across Northern Europe during the 1930s, or rap and hip hop during the 1980s, the censorship of specific performers (such as Pussy Riot in Russia), through to the violent suppression of the musical expression of minority groups, imprisonment and censorship. A fear of jazz and rock music informed totalitarian policies in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and Nazi Germany in the early part of the 20th century. The violent oppression of folk instruments, sounds and styles *within* a territory was evidenced in Chile under the dictatorship of Pinochet during the 1970s. Authoritarian state control of music and musicians within national borders has been regularly illustrated by the organisation Freemuse and the Index on Censorship (1998, 2010).

The fear that musicians from *outside* may pose a threat has also been used to enforce restrictive immigration and visa laws, physically stopping a musician entering a territory, whether in the guise of musical quality to stop post-punk bands playing in the United States during the 1980s (Jones, 1993), or by questioning an individual's legitimacy as a musician when denying performers from Tunisia and Mozambique the opportunity to appear at the WOMAD festival in England (Hutchinson, 2018). In recent years, these controls have been maintained by attempts to limit the flow of digital images, sounds and information, an example being the blocking of YouTube and Facebook with the so-called Great Firewall of China; a barrier maintained for reasons of morality and ideology, and to protect the commercial interests of business and markets within the mainland.

Governing regimes do not only use state structures to restrict and censor musicians, they have also sought to support and to promote musicians. On occasions, this has been highly ideological as in the way the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and US government supported popular culture during the cold war, financing and promoting international tours by Louis Armstrong (a 'Goodwill Ambassador'), Dizzy Gillespie and Duke Ellington, and supporting Radio Free Europe broadcasting into Eastern Europe and Central Asia (Berkeley, 2018; Saunders, 2000), and United Service Organizations (USO) Voice of America across Asia after the Second World War.

Nation-state support for popular music is always ideological. Yet, it is also deployed pragmatically for the way musicians can generate revenues from exports; boost domestic economies through employment in production, management and performance; contribute to 'heritage'; and via direct and indirect taxation. Le Bureau Export (French Music Export Office), a collaboration between state and industry, has promoted French music and musicians around the world. The UK Music Export Growth Scheme (MEGS), a similar collaboration between recording industry and state, distributed grants of between £5000 and £50,000 to support UK musicians who undertook to contribute to the international profile of the United Kingdom and generate export income (British Phonographic Industry (BPI), 2017). In the past, the Chinese state has supported the development of a music industry through economic investment in infrastructure and by restricting foreign companies and musical styles as a way of limiting external market competition and any ideological challenges to national popular music making (Morrow & Li, 2016). The South Korean state invested in K-pop to increase tourism, encourage investment into the country, facilitate international demand for Korean manufactured products and boost rights income from recordings and performances (Lie, 2014; Seo, 2012).

It is important to recognise that musicians are not always passive victims of state restriction and censorship, nor naïvely complicit or willing participants in cultural promotion on behalf of the nation-state. A musician, songwriter or composer may wish to affirm a sense of psychological affiliation to a place. For example, a patriotic attachment to England was apparent in the 1960s rock of the Beatles, Kinks and Who; the ambivalences and contradictions of national belonging in the United States was articulated by James Brown and Bruce Springsteen in the 1980s; and national pride was apparent in 21st century K-pop.

A sense of belonging to the nation as an 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1983) is an attachment that an individual endorses even though she or he will never meet or encounter all other members or citizens of a country. Musicians have composed songs to assert their emotional attachment to a nation. Yet, musicians may also use their performances and songs to proclaim a sense of imaginary belonging in regional struggles for independence or autonomy against or contrary to a nation, as in Cataluña (van Liew, 1993), or as a means of using globalising musical styles to demonstrate a commitment to a city or neighbourhood, as in Shibuya in Tokyo (Roberts, 2013; Yasuda, 2001).

The expression of imaginary belonging in songs and performances is produced in specific geographical locations where a musician's ability to create, collaborate and communicate is facilitated or restricted by the jurisdiction and coercive power of state structures as these are administered by specific regimes, parties or governments (Du Gay & Scott, 2010). These material circumstances and their associated values and beliefs will have consequences for musicians, for producing organisations and for dedicated fans or casual listeners.

Transnational corporations, finance and commerce: global repertoires and rhetorics

Musicians using songs and performances to express, disseminate and sonically preserve the musical characteristic of a place may do so for a variety of principles, beliefs and values, and from varied political positions. Since the growth of nations and nationalism during the 19th century, patriotic or nationalistic songs and compositions have been used in contrasting ways, to encourage loyalty and foster consensus among a populace, and to agitate and raise consciousness as part of radical movements for revolutionary social change. Patriotic songs and music have been created to support and to oppose existing elites in struggles for political independence, or to support conservative agendas upholding existing routines, hierarchies and rituals. The use of songs and music to build or to contest allegiance to geographical location may involve composers and performers, government and state institutions (ranging through the armed forces, education systems or tourism departments), and may be supported or contested by journalists and critics, museum curators and scholars.

The desire for musical preservation and place promotion cannot easily be collapsed into any simple set of sentiments or aligned with a particular political philosophy. Yet, a recurrent finding of research with musicians over many years (D. Robinson, Buck, & Cuthbert, 1991) has suggested that a regional or national sense of place is often articulated in reaction to pressures from an externally imposed culture. Localised creativity can then become imbued with an ethics of small countries defending their musical creativity against the perceived threat from more powerful countries (Wallis & Malm, 1984). Or, local and national music making may offer resistance to imperialist culture from elsewhere, whether the co-optation and political use of music and recordings during Japanese colonialism in Taiwan, Korea and Manchuria in the early to mid part of the 20th century, or attempts to contest state supported US cultural imperialism or 'Americanization' in Latin America and across East Asia during the 1970s and 1980s (see Tunstall, 1977).

Since the 1980s, one of the most recurrent struggles to assert a sense of place has been articulated against the perceived threats posed by the globalising impact of major corporations, often explained as a danger to musical activities variously described as local, traditional or indigenous. As Martin Cloonan (1999) wrote when explaining the supportive role of the state: 'fans, musicians, academics and other grassroots supporters of popular music can often feel powerless in the face of globalisation and multi-national corporations, but nation-states retain the potential for intervention' (p. 204). States may intervene to support traditional or folkloric practices, recognised by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as 'intangible cultural heritage' requiring protection. Yet, many local activities perceived to be threatened are commercial popular music styles that fuse traditional forms with the international aesthetics of rock, pop or soul, not neatly slotting into national definitions of folklore in need of protection, nor the genres preferred by the major music companies when producing, promoting and marketing popular music (Laing, 2009; Negus, 1999).

During the 1990s, the major transnational music companies (containing record labels) set a dominant agenda that defined the criteria by which talent and repertoire were evaluated and contracted (Laing, 2009; Negus, 1992/2011) by prioritising what they categorised as 'international repertoire' (Negus, 1999). This referred to artists singing in 'global English' and performing a melodic ballad style that could be accommodated to varied genres, and that crossed linguistic and cultural barriers with the assistance of considerable investment and promotion. International popular music repertoires were integrated into 'global' strategies of entertainment corporations, with the world divided into 'regions of supervision and control' such as 'Asia Pacific' or the somewhat

arbitrary category of 'Mediterranean, South America and Middle East Region' managed by a senior executive at Universal (Laing, 2009, p. 24).

Those seeking to protect and promote localised music making and alternative forms of expression are no longer only concerned about the major music and entertainment corporations, but have been increasingly aware of the power and influence of 'Big Tech', data corporations and digital conglomerates (Mosco, 2014, 2017). As digitalisation, Internet distribution and streaming have reduced revenues for musicians and record labels, it has also allowed digital conglomerates and data companies to challenge the position and influence that was once held by recorded music companies (Negus, 2019). With control over access to platforms for downloading and streaming music, and the construction of playlist via data analytics, their influence can be detected not only in consumer behaviour but as musicians modify musical productions to make them more sonically suitable for incorporation into playlists defined by activity and mood (Hogan, 2017). Popular music and cultural production has become 'increasingly platform dependent' (Nieborg & Poell, 2018), and part of 'a digital infrastructure of governance' (Schwarz, 2017) that has impacted on social life across the world. The circulation and streaming of recorded and live music is integrated into platform infrastructures that incorporate the circulation of information, along with state and private education providers, banking systems, transport networks, health care services and so on (Helmond, 2015).

The era when music corporations such as Sony or PolyGram (as was) were presenting themselves as 'global' has given way to the universalising ambitions of Google to 'organise the world's information', of Facebook 'to give people the power to build community and bring the world closer together', of Microsoft 'to empower every person and every organisation on the planet to achieve more' and of Amazon 'to be the earth's most customer-centric company'. As Vincent Mosco (2017) has noted, Alphabet (Google, YouTube), Apple, Amazon, Microsoft and Facebook rapidly became the top five companies of any type in the world, measured by market value. These platform conglomerates have been joined by the increasingly influential trio of Baidu, Alibaba and Tencent, operating out of headquarters in China (just as the companies cited above operate from HQs in the United States) and with less grandiose but equally benevolent missions to 'improve the quality of life through internet value-added services' (Tencent) and 'to make it easier to do business anywhere' (Alibaba).

These platform corporations are integrated into transnational networks of finance capital and corporate shareholding interests that form chains of investment connecting the interests of platforms and finance around the world (Jia & Winseck, 2018; Keane & Wu, 2018). For example, key investors in Spotify are Tiger Global Management (a hedge fund), Goldman Sachs (investment bank), the venture capital companies Accel and Technology Crossover Ventures (the latter with stakes in Facebook and Netflix) and Tencent. In turn, Tencent is supported through similar chains of finance capital, its largest shareholder being Naspers (33.5%) a South African global Internet investment business that has become the biggest company in Africa through its investment in Tencent (Jia & Winseck, 2018).

These powerful corporations have the ability to influence government employment and copyright legislation, tax laws, and regulations on access to information, to shape the spread and circulation of knowledge and news through search engines, and to act upon and trade in the data that they generate through their access to vast quantities of personal details. Yet, the massive profits being made from commercialised surveillance, the control of information and pursuit of 'data capitalism' is concealed behind a gloss of empowerment and a semantic shift away from any pejorative associations of the 'global' (anti-globalisation) and towards the earth, the world and the planet.

The arguments posed by those critical of the discourse of global media corporations during the 1990s have been echoed in the endurance of arguments about transnational corporations and their rhetoric of empowering and educating the world or planet earth in the 21st century. It was the mask through which major corporations presented themselves as global while operating within and across particular locations, and privileging specific territories that led critics such as Leslie Sklair (1991, 2016) to identify a 'transnational capitalist class'. This class constitutes a worldwide 'power elite' engaged in 'transnational practices' that look outward towards their shared global interest rather than inward towards the nation-state or local territory (W. Robinson, 2017; Sklair, 2016). Herbert Schiller (1991) argued that this led to a media characterised by 'transnational corporate culture domination' (1991) entailing specific ways of working and structures of organisation, dominant models of business practice, production and circulation, an emphasis on advertising and marketing, and models of investment and profit making that benefit this transnational capitalist class. Such concerns have been echoed by those writers and commentators critical of how the economics and culture of 'data science' has come to dominate 'surveillance capitalism' (Zuboff, 2019).

Theorists of globalisation since the 1990s have often assumed that this transnational capitalist class would increase its power and be able to operate across geographical boundaries as the influence and authority of the nation-state declined. In scholarship and in popular commentary, a belief in the impact of globalisation also led to claims that individuals and groups, organisations and corporations, would no longer be limited by the boundaries of nation-states and would operate within a new 'network society' of 'interconnected nodes' facilitated by IT, telecommunications, Internet and digitalisation (Castells, 1996). Big companies would assert their power and influence over nation-states and would dominate through 'global networks of the corporate elite' (Heemskerk & Takes, 2016). Yet, within this networked popular music world, opportunities would arise for musicians and music producers to take advantage of new creative environments that are both decentralised and centralised, one of alliances and antagonisms, of competition and collaboration. In both industry forecasts and academic study, it has been optimistically claimed that networks of firms, sectors and entrepreneurs will challenge nation-state boundaries and co-exist with transnational corporations. The importance of fixed geographical location would decline as musicians reorient from production in place to networked creation across spaces; from local to trans-local scenes (Hracs, Seman, & Virani, 2016; Leyshon, 2014; Nowak & Whelan, 2016).

The power and influence of the nation-state has not declined. Yet, it has accommodated to the network and to the 'neo-liberal' agenda of transnational finance capital by allowing greater marketisation and relaxing various financial regulations, while also benefitting from commercial investments in infrastructure, technology, manufacturing and services. Theorists attempting to make sense of this latest phase in the narrative of globalisation have been grappling with enduring issues, and questions that trace back to attempts to understand the dynamics of capitalism and the nation-state since the latter part of the 19th century. On one side of this tension is the way capitalist corporations seek to globalise and transcend geographical boundaries, supported by an ideological belief in unfettered principles of market competition and profit maximisation without restriction and regulation. Counter to this are the structures of the nation-state that seek to maintain and legitimate (through force and ideology) an affiliation and sense of belonging to a unified national place, and which seek to protect its own producers, workers and people (not all equally and fairly) from transnational corporations by various forms of regulation. Across the tensions between corporations and countries are divisions between country and country (trade disputes between the United States and China, for example); competitive struggles between corporations (the private equity

firm JC Group and Fantagio Entertainment, for example); and deals between nation states and corporations (notable in the business of arms sales and pharmaceutical industry).

The broader debates that I am touching on here, about the tensions between states and corporations, are beyond the full scope of this article and concern the extent to which a transnational capitalist class and a capitalist mode of commodifying data are confronting a contrasting set of principles, values and beliefs in those of large individual nation-states, and in the collective organisation of supranational state organisations such as the European Union or United Nations. A further question concerns the extent to which capitalism is an ideological belief system that appeals to people in anything more than pragmatic terms as a way of doing business and of making money. While numerous songs celebrate, critique or ironically comment on commodity fetishism, consumerism and money, very few musicians have written songs in praise of global capital or to express their love for corporations. If companies have been mentioned, it has usually been in critical terms (even as rock stars invest their gains in property, land and digital platforms behind the scenes). This can be contrasted with a vast archive of songs that celebrate human belonging to geographical place, whether the nation, the city, the neighbourhood or street, landscape or occasionally the planet. It can also be contrasted with music that celebrates movement across places and a less rooted spatial imagination.

Cosmopolitan encounters and the musical imagination across borders

Digitalisation of media and music technologies has intensified the connections, dialogues and relationships across space that have influenced theories about network society and dispersed creativity, and renewed interest in ideas about musical cosmopolitanism. Although cosmopolitanism is a much debated and contested term, it has been offered as an alternative to insular beliefs and practices that are rooted in bounded places and deployed as xenophobic barriers against outsiders, or markers of independence (or both). Cosmopolitanism is also presented as a challenge to the fatalism that stresses patterns of oppressive domination and the imposition of ideologies on passive victims, whether the source of that repression is located with nationalism, imperialism and colonialism, or capitalist expansion. When arguing for a political and sociological turn to cosmopolitanism, Ulrich Beck voiced a more widespread pessimism when he characterised globalisation as 'an anonymous power. No one started it, no one can stop it, no one is responsible for it. The word "globalization" stands for the organized absence of responsibility' (Beck, 2007, n.p.). Beck, like many other writers and activists, argued that cosmopolitanism can provide a way of resisting such despair by emphasising the agency of ordinary people and a more active process of making and meeting across boundaries and divisions.

The term has a long history. The word cosmopolis can be traced back to ancient Greece, originally meaning a close relationship between the cosmos and the polis, the universe and political order of the human community. Although it has acquired a range of inflexions, a common theme is the possibility for world citizenship and a type of 'cosmopolitan democracy' (Held, 1997) or 'global civil society' (Kalder, 2003) enacted across national and continental political boundaries and cultural divisions. The modern use of cosmopolitanism in social theory can be traced back to Robert Merton's (1949) work on cities in the United States during the 1940s, which in turn drew on German sociologist Ferdinand Tonnies distinction between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*. Merton distinguished a localite perspective on the world, a preoccupation with immediate local

issues, and contrasted this with a cosmopolitan orientation that looked outside and away from an individual's immediate face-to-face encounters and physical location. When intervening in debates about globalisation, Ulf Hannerz (1990) revisited Merton's distinction and deployed cosmopolitanism to indicate 'an intellectual and aesthetic stance of openness towards divergent cultural experiences, a search for contrasts rather than uniformity' (p. 239).

One of the most insightful interrogations of cosmopolitanism in the study of popular music can be found in a study by Martin Stokes (2007) in which he uses the term to describe and analyse how 'people in specific places and specific times have embraced the music of others, and how, in doing so, they have enabled musical styles and musical ideas, musician and musical instruments to circulate (globally) in particular ways' (p. 6). Stokes identifies different outward seeking impulses and acknowledges that cosmopolitanism has been used ideologically by educated, well-travelled elites, often under colonial tutelage and with imposed western cultural forms, to elevate themselves above and to dominate a populace that is tied down to a specific territory. This has then resulted in nationalism being articulated by urban poor or working class *against* the power of cosmopolitan elites (Stokes, 2007).

Stokes advocates a critical yet constructive approach to the term. Using examples drawn from western Eurasia, he argues for the value of an ordinary cosmopolitan impulse that involves effort and cultural energy as mainly diasporic groups meet across social and geographical boundaries and create new styles of music, dance and performance via translation and versioning. For Stokes, this cosmopolitan impulse can unobtrusively contribute to patterns of change, yet it can be a fragmentary and discontinuous process. This is consonant with what Stuart Hall (2003) called 'vernacular cosmopolitanism', a phrase he used to refer to a lived experience (rather than a logically coherent theoretical construct) and one characterised by 'the traces and residues of many cultural systems, of many ethical systems . . . the world increasingly does not divide up neatly into particular, distinct cultures any longer. . . . most people, do not any longer need just one of them' (pp. 26-27).

Examples illustrating the experiences identified by Stokes and Hall can be found in numerous studies of musical encounters, whether the 'cosmoAsian transbordering' creative exchanges that occurred between Japanese and Korean musicians after the South Korean government lifted its ban on Japanese culture in 1998 (Shin, 2009), or the trans-local 'cosmopolitan sensibilities' infusing the use of artefacts, narratives and performances by marginalised communities at the meeting point of Pacific and Indian Oceans in the Sulu Archipelago south of the Philippines (Canuday, 2018). Border crossing musical encounters are also evoked in Philip Bohlman's (2011) discussion of the breakdown of old nationalisms and the emergence of a 'crisis of placelessness' in 'the New Europe' and new 'ontologies of identity' that 'depend on double, if not multiple consciousness' (p. 13).

These cross-border movements and encounters open up the possibilities for 'rootlessness and disconnectedness' and a 'placeless' musical creativity (Bohlman, 2011, p. 214). Bohlman evokes an experience of 'placelessness' or multiple consciousness – a sense of simultaneously belonging to more than one identity label or location – to raise questions about the relationship between the mental and material worlds during moments of musical creativity. Stokes (2007) argues that musical cosmopolitanism evokes 'a capacity of the musical imagination' and of the 'powers, agencies and creativities of human beings' (p. 10). Instrumental dialogues, dancing together at a musical performances, the sharing and singing of songs can allow an affirmation, a re-construction or perhaps a deconstruction of the place-based attachments I referred to earlier, offering intimations of newer identities of self and collective attachment. Across Asia, for example, music has allowed opportunities to creatively imagine alternatives to the social categories through which identities must be negotiated (Matsue, 2013).

The value of adopting this position is that it directs attention to the movement of musical ideas becoming a tangible material presence as it constitutes aspects of human understanding and identity. It amplifies my earlier discussion of how music contributes to our comprehension of place and space rather than merely being a response to geographical or material circumstances, institutional political structures or economics. As Stokes (2007) argues, music is 'an active and engaged means of world making, not simply a response to forces beyond our control' (p. 10). By implication, the creative musical imagination can contribute to the remaking of a more cosmopolitan world to that imagined by bordered nation-states or transnational corporations. The musical imagination can encourage us to re-think our awareness of place and our sense of space, and enhance bonds of affiliation to others.

The creative imagination has played an important part in social and cultural change throughout human history. In the age of global media, this has been illustrated in the 'noise uprisings' that 'decolonized the ear' in early 20th century anti-colonial struggles (Denning, 2015), the way rock was 'cultural catalyst' in the dramatic revolutions in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) analysed by Peter Wicke (1992), and in the role of musicians and songs in the mobilisation of people for democratic social change in South Korea during the 1980s (Park, 2005). But, these three examples are very specific and depended for their effectiveness on a connection being forged between musical creativity, local patterns of political organisation and the achievement of widespread civil legitimacy for movements challenging institutional structures; issues emphasised by John Street in his writings on how popular music may contribute to political change (Street, 2012; Street, Hague, & Savigny, 2007).

Musicians and fans may meet across frontiers, and creative practices and performances may be networked across space and dispersed by digital media between multiple locations. Yet, music will continue to be composed, produced and performed in specific material circumstances and concrete locales. These locations are permitted to connect due to the infrastructures of telecommunication networks, computer and mobile hardware, and social media platforms; or via the ships that transport products across seas, or trucks and trains that carry recordings over land. These systems and platforms are commercially controlled by corporations and politically regulated by nation-states.

From the perspectives of political theory and institutional politics, musical cosmopolitanism may offer little more than an aesthetic. This might be a local hybrid practice, such as when Japanese vocaloid music is appropriated and incorporated into identities in China (Yin, 2018), or a pop-rock stylistic palate that is given various cosmopolitan inflexions as it is institutionalised into regional, national and local structures of cultural production and struggles for artistic status (Regev, 2013). As an aesthetic practice, cosmopolitanism is often dismissed as naïve or superficial, as an indulgence of the cultural tourist and an orientation that evades inequalities and commercial exploitation. Yet, despite these contexts and contradictions, Stokes suggests that musical cosmopolitanism can become part of a more pluralistic, more tolerant, less divided world. It offers what Raymond Williams might have called 'resources of hope' in the face of political pessimism, indifference and ambivalence.

Coda: powers, pluralisms and possibilities

I began this article with allusions to the theoretical optimism that greeted the confluence of digitalisation, postmodernism and globalisation as leading to a more pluralistic popular music culture of dialogue and inclusivity. Noting how political conflicts and theoretical scepticism punctured this vision, I moved on to argue that the study of popular music and global media should pay more

attention to enduring tensions and collusions between nation-states and transnational corporations, and the possibilities offered by cosmopolitan practices and encounters. In this discussion and in a range of writings about states, corporations and cosmopolitans (those referenced specifically and a vast absent corpus I have implied), the issue of power has been a guiding assumption: the power to control borders and maintain order; the power to cross borders, compete in markets and generate wealth; and the power to resist, challenge or to imagine an alternative. Power as enabling and constraining is a theme that scholars of popular music often allude to, and deploy plausibly in arguments. Yet, it is an issue that we rarely reflect upon in depth. It is a concept that would benefit from much more substantive research into the specific situations within which power is manifested, wielded, experienced and contested. More detailed research could understand how the creation and cosmopolitan movement of music is shaped in specific ways by the power of and relationships between nation-states and transnational corporations.

In summarising Stokes's overview of musical cosmopolitanism, I referred to the way he evokes cosmopolitan encounters in different places and times to illustrate how these are not always inclusive and nor challenging of ruling elites. Cosmopolitanism is not inherently progressive. People may meet across borders, but this does not imply a more convivial, equal or inclusive music making. Stokes also acknowledges that the renewed interest in cosmopolitanism carries with it traces of the presumed universalisms of European enlightenment thought. A number of authors have registered this issue, usually with a degree of anxiety that cosmopolitanism is a western (sometimes specifically North American or European) vision of the world that can uncritically endorse the political values of possessive individualism, liberal democracy, pluralist political theory and representative government. Bruce Robbins (among others) has sought to confront these dilemmas, arguing that cosmopolitanism cannot be detached from its links to violence and inequality, and from questions about its beneficiaries (Robbins, 2012, 2017). Robbins in collaboration with Pauolo Horta (Horta & Robbins, 2017) advocates a pluralised approach – cosmopolitanisms – to open up discussion about the different meanings, practices, and encounters that may be understood as cosmopolitan. The aim is to encourage dialogue, exchange and debate across cultures, languages, disciplinary attachments and political systems.

One possible route in a more plural direction has been suggested by scholars seeking to develop sociological, political and philosophical dialogues between east and west, or Asian and European theorising, or Greek and Chinese thought, who have argued that the debates about cosmopolitanism can be extended through an engagement with the socially inclusive ancient Chinese or Confucian idea of tianxia – 'all under heaven' (Wang, 2017; Zhao, 2009) – and the neo-Confucian concept of tianxiawegong – 'all things under heaven belong to the public' (Han, Shim, & Park, 2016, p. 286). Seeking to revive and revitalise an older idea that was displaced through the rise of imperialism and the modern nation-state, Tingyang Zhao (2009) and Bang Wang (2017) have argued for a universalising interpretation of tianxia that emphasises co-existence (rather than individual freedom) and altruism (rather than competition). However, Chishen Chang (2011) has criticised this return to tianxia for misrepresenting a long history in which the term did not always have such inclusive applications, and for evading the way the idea has been deployed partially in politics and international relations to promote Chinese rather than universal agendas (Chang, 2011). Yet, Chang's concerns about tianxia might apply equally to the concept of cosmopolitanism. Both ideas have served specific interests, and their inclusive utopian potential may be contradicted by exclusive practical use. Acknowledging these tensions and this history, Lei Zhang and Zhengrong Hu (2017, p. 204) argue that a re-visioned tianxia can allow the 'unique historical traditions of China' to find connections with the cosmopolitanism of Beck, of ancient Greece and of Immanuel Kant,

and provide 'thinking resources' and an 'alternative practice' for international politics. The renewed vision of tianxia that is being posited by these scholars can certainly allow for plural cosmopolitan dialogues. Yet, it does not eliminate the tensions between the universal and particular, between utopian possibility and everyday *realpolitik*. As music links people when moving across boundaries, scholars of popular music are well placed to explore these tensions and contradictions, and contribute to more plural understandings of what cosmopolitanisms might actually mean in practice, attuned to the sonic, performative and linguistic dynamics, and the nuances of musical and verbal languages, translations and terminologies through which musical exchanges occur. Popular music researchers can offer insights into the particularities of musical dialogues and explore how these allow us to understand the plurality of impulses, vocabularies and practices that are contained within cosmopolitanisms, and which might lurk as utopian sprits within the shadows cast by the power of nation-states and transnational corporations.

Funding

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