Introduction: »Identities in media and music. Case-studies from national, regional and (trans-)local communities«

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This volume of InterDisciplines includes some among the most compelling contributions presented during an international workshop on »National, regional and local identity/ies in media and music—Evidence from Europe and Russia,« held in December 2012 at Bielefeld University with the support of the Center for German and European Studies (CGES/ZDES) and the Bielefeld Graduate School in History and Sociology (BGHS). The workshop brought together more than 20 doctoral, post-doctoral and senior researchers from 13 countries working in the fields of sociology, history, linguistics and literature, media and communication. The aim of the workshop was a comparative analysis of the contributions of media and music to the creation and articulation of identity on the national, regional and (trans-)local level. The following four main questions were addressed in the course of the workshop, these are also the central questions for this volume:

a) How do media and music take part in the production and dissemination of national, regional and (trans)local identity/ies?

b) What kinds of imaginary geographies and mythologizing narratives are constructed and spread through media and music?

c) How are these media embedded locally, nationally and transnationally; what is their relationship to institutions and power and which technological and financial means do they have at their disposal?

d) Which methods can be employed and which are the methodological challenges faced by researchers of this topic?

In different research contexts, it is often stated that media and music influence the formation and construction of identities. It has also been asserted that it is possible to recognize a special coherence between national/regional/local identities and »their« media and music and that new forms of identities can be transported and formatted through media and music. Collective identity and in some respect also national/regional/local identity is described as a human conception of equality or homogeneity with other human beings or groups (Wagner 1998, 46–70). The process of collective identity formation is described by Frank Berge and Alexander Grasse as a »[…] dual process that on the one hand contains the act of separation, i.e. differentiation and disentanglement, and on the other hand the act of assimilation and homogenization« (Berge and Grasse 2003, 78).[1]

National identity is a special form of collective identity. According to Anderson, nations and, therefore, nation-based identities are »cultural artefacts« of a particular kind, which emerged

> »towards the end of the eighteenth century from spontaneous distillation of a complex ›crossing‹ of discrete historical forces but that, once created, became ›modular,‹ capable of being transplanted, with varying degrees of self-consciousness, to a great variety of social terrains, to merge and be merged with a correspondingly wide variety of political and ideological constellations« (Anderson 1983, 14).

Nations are, Anderson says, »imagined« because »the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear from them, yet in the mind of each lives the image of their communion« (ibid., 16). An important moment of the formation of national identity is the reference to common symbols, rituals and myths (Naglo 2007, 86–87). Furthermore, national identities always refer to territory, because a nation implies a territorial boundary. This marking of

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1   All translations from the German by Verena Molitor.

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Regional and local identities—the local space being the next smaller entity of a region—are also a special form of collective identity, because a region or a local area is also separated from other regions or the country and there is perhaps an act of assimilation with the people who live in the same region and have some attributes in common. Regional identity is always localized, since the region always imposes a territorial boundary. This marking of boundaries has a central meaning in the expression of regional identities (Hepp 2003, 99). Regional identities also develop via external factors such as cultural and linguistic similarities or the feeling of common oppression. Regional and local identities tend to become stronger when they are questioned from outside.

In some papers in this issue (Damiens, Ventsel), minorities—especially regional minorities—play a specific role. Coray states »a minority exists only in relation to a majority« (Coray 1999, 183) and minorities have very different positions in different societies. Minorities may be ethnic, linguistic, national, regional, etc. and may develop out of shifting boundaries, overlap of national boundaries and community boundaries or migration (Boden 1993, 19).

To differentiate local and national identities, Andreas Hepp wrote in his article on deterritorialization and the adoption of media identity »that while local identities refer to experienced community on the basis of face-to-face contacts, concepts of national identity are transported via medial representations« (Hepp 2003, 98). Therefore, the media often delimit the area members of a region live in and forms their recognition of community.

The formation of national/regional/local identities can be affected by media and music. Indeed, media and music may provide the orientation necessary to delimit values and standards and to communicate traditions (but also construct und reconstruct them), bounding the area of our conceivable realities (Hipfl 2004, 16). As a result, individuals or even groups take up the symbols of identity supplied by the media and incor-

porate them into their own identity (Christmann 2003, 154). Brigitte Hipfl, in her article on medial spaces of identity, describes how the media even constructs geopolitical areas by the way in which they report (Hipfl 2004, 16). Furthermore, the media brings together different territories with certain behaviors, peoples and cultural practices and present areas differently in various comparisons with other areas (ibid.).

Bohlman focuses on the contribution of music in the articulation of national identity. For the author, music may »reflect the image of the nation« by referring to something quintessential about the nation, »so that those living in the nation recognize themselves in basic but crucial ways« (Bohlman 2004, 59). The nation may be depicted symbolically, through association with such intangible and specific traits as nature or natural landscape, national or proto-national language, national people and/or a common narrative and historical experience (ibid., 60). Moreover, music may serve a nation-state in its competition with other nation-states and contribute to a struggle over contested territory such as border regions. In this case, »possessing music becomes like possessing land« (ibid., 87). For the author, nationalist music relies on the symbolism of structures that define the nation, create and fabricate an image of the state and enter into public and political rituals, giving »nation« an identity. Nationalist music can mobilize the residents of the state by narrating a historical or political struggle, by identifying the entity against which the nation should fight and by drawing the battle lines, both abstract and real (ibid., 88). According to Cerulo, the articulation of national identity through music is well-exemplified by national anthems, which are able to »unite citizens every time they are performed, bringing citizens together (albeit mentally in many cases) in patriotic community« (Cerulo 1995, 17).

Nonetheless, as highlighted by O'Flynn, the creation of national identity through music—which he defines as musical-national identity—is not a univocal process. Indeed,

> »although national identity is often imagined as ›fixed,‹ in reality it comprises multiple identifications that arise from a plurality of social contexts and subject positions. Accordingly, the term ›national identity and music‹ or media more in general can be under-

stood as a general process by which individuals and groups may come to perceive, cognize and articulate associations between, on the one hand, specifically musical or media phenomena and, on the other hand, wider socio-cultural formations associated with national culture and/or the nation state« (O'Flynn 2007, 25).

Talking about identity and music, O'Flynn introduces the concept of »intercultures«; agencies partaking in the creation of musical-national identities beyond the nation-state (Slobin 1993, 61; cited in O'Flynn 2007, 30). Intercultures are, for instance, multinational corporations that produce music to be sold on the global market. Within this framework, multinational music industries are involved in the formation of »national« musical styles through a process of »glocalization«: »that is, the promotion and production of localized difference for global consumption« (O'Flynn 2007, 29). Other examples of intercultures are transnational diasporic communities which may contribute to the articulation of musical-national identities from outside the borders of the nation-state as well as musicians and audiences of local scenes in which national music is »replicated or adapted in other national-music contexts« (ibid., 31).

In this issue

This issue of *InterDisciplines* includes six contributions that focus on different aspects of identity formation through media and music.

In her paper on »The Myth of European Identity,« **Anna Wiehl** deals with the interdependence of European identity and national and regional identities in a globalized world. As a case study, she uses television news from Bavaria/Alsace, Germany/France and, on the supra-national European level, the Franco-German broadcaster ARTE. Methodologically, she uses a combination of a semio-historic cultural studies approach. First, she presents some concepts of collective identities and myths, with a focus on the creation of the myth of Europeanness. She then combines these concepts with television news as an example of a »virtual mediated community« and a possible source of collective identities. Her analysis of TV news focusses on the micro and macro level and divides this analysis into three parts. First, she illuminates the different concepts of Euro-

peanness and European myth as mirrored in TV news; second, she high-lights the interrelation of European identity and national identity as shown in TV news; and third, Wiehl shows how European identity is represented vis-à-vis regional identity. The result is (audio)visions of the plurality of Europeanness shown in TV news.

Liselotte Goessens presents a case study on the construction of collective identity and mythscapes through music on early Flemish radio. Her analysis centers around a few early Flemish radio programs; their music repertoire and the discourse that was built around them. The author uses a constructivist view of identities and has two main assumptions about the relation between collective identity and music. First, she points out that music produces a strong feeling of togetherness and that music can be used to express identities. Goessens begins her paper with a discussion of social identities, mythscapes and imagined community and shows the interrelation of music and mythscapes as well as media and mythscapes. Second, she explains the results of her analysis and connects them to theories of collective identities. She argues that early radio in Flanders used music, on the one hand, to further Flemish cultural emancipation and, on the other hand, to construct Flemish cultural identity.

Ulrike Thumberger focuses her paper on the contribution of two Austrian rap songs—»Vo Melo ge Schoppornou« and »Jö schau«—to the production and dissemination of regional and national identities. Her main argument is that language and dialects are important factors for the awareness of being a group, and thus support the formation of an in-group. This applies especially in the case of the Austrian rap phenomenon which emerged in the 1960s. In Austrian rap, regional dialects are used as a cultural demarcation from British and American cultural industries as well as from German cultural influences. In her analysis of the two songs, several aspects are taken into consideration including linguistic elements such as phonological features and lexical items, the content of the lyrics and the role of musicians as subjects of a larger discourse within Austria. The paper stresses also the crucial contribution of media, especially the radio station Ö3, in determining the success of the genre in the country.

A broader look at the global and local dimensions of rap music is provided by **Anu Muhonen** in her paper on rap in Finland. Unlike Austrian rap, Finnish rap is a multilingual phenomenon and refers to music produced in Finland, whether the lyrics are in Finnish, English or some regional dialect. The paper describes the ways in which rap and hip hop identities are presented and thematized in two Finnish-language youth radio broadcasters: a national youth radio station in Finland and a Finnish minority language youth radio station in Sweden. The data is based on ethnographic interviews and recordings of live radio broadcasts including radio DJs intros, interviews and rap lyrics, all of which the author uses to analyze the ways in which local, regional, national and global elements are indexed in rap and hip hop identities. As the author highlights, rap music is made up of linguistic and cultural features »that index globality, locality and glocality respectively.« Global indexicalities can be closely connected to some very local and situated issues because globality and locality often interconnect in Finnish rap discourse.

Caroline Damiens focusses on the production of cinema by two Siberian minorities in the Sakha (Yakutia) Republic and the Republic of Khakassia. She discusses how feature films are used by these minorities to build their national identity in post-Soviet time. Damiens conducted interviews with filmmakers from Sakha and Khakassia on how they see cinema as a vehicle for the production of identity. As a second step, the author conducted a content analysis of some films produced by both minorities. This analysis reveals that these minorities wish to play an important and heroic role in Soviet history and shows how these films are used by the filmmakers to create (re)imagined geographies. The last part of Damiens' paper is a comparison of Khakassia films and Sakha films.

Aimar Ventsel's contribution also deals with minorities in Siberia, looking at Sakha music production. The paper distinguishes itself through its very ethnographic and descriptive character as well as through its focus on the processes of glocalization that characterize world music and its positioning of local artists in this production. This is the reason why we decided to place the article in the special session **Miscellanea**. In

particular, his contribution analyzes the ways in which Sakha artists have modified Sakha tradition in order to meet the expectations of and thrive on the global business market. The author provides a vivid sketch of the contradictory situation faced by these musicians; whereas at home they are seen as shining idols and heroes on a mission, representing the culture and traditions of the Sakha nation abroad, they are unequal protagonist in the international music business due to their lack of English language skills and their insufficient understanding of legal and contractual procedures. Ventsel describes different ways in which two Sakha artists—Chyskyyrai and Saina—have manipulated »tradition« and »authenticity« to become part of the world music market, for instance through extensive use of traditional instruments such as the khomus (Sakha mouth harp), rattles and shamanic drums. The articles ends with an invitation to broaden the post-colonial discussion on world music including new aspects such as competition among artists, the market value of a band and the expectation of managers.

Concluding remarks

When we talk about identities that are linked to communities, we can mean local, regional or national identities. In this issue, we present case studies that address different dimensions of identities—local, regional, national and even supranational as well as their intersections.

Going deeper into the multidimensionality of identities, the authors of this issue address, for example, supranational identity beyond the nation-state and even beyond the regions our world has been divided into. The case studies and approaches showcased in this issue, detect the boundaries existing within and connected to the different forms of identities. The boundary is seen as such as well as in its multiple meanings and dimensions—as political, regional, cultural or geographical boarders that intersect, mirror or challenge each other . The cover of this issue pictures the Europa-Asia obelisk that marks the geographical boundary between Europe and Asia. This is not a political boundary as it lies inside one nation state, Russia, and is often connected to a cultural meaning as it symbolizes the border between Europe and Asia.

For the editors of this issue, this border symbolizes the polysemous interconnections between national, supranational and also regional or translocal spaces.

As this special issue demonstrates, media and music can be employed as methodological tools to explore the creation and articulation of identities, taking different levels—the (trans-)local, regional, national—and their interconnectedness into consideration. In order to stress the plurality of medial and musical identifications within a national culture or a nation-state, the title refers to identities or identity/ies. At the same time, this issue reflects the variety of research methods which can be employed in the analysis of processes of identity formation and the methodological challenges faced by scholars interested in this research field.

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