

Protest music or music for protest? Post-migrant adaptations of global pop music in contemporary rights-based protest in Germany

Dr. Carolin Müller, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

carolin.mueller@mail.huji.ac.il

abstract:

This paper explores the inclusion of contemporary global pop music in rights-based protest through the lens of the migration-mobility nexus. As recently migrated musicians increasingly joined rights-based protest movements in Germany, the protest music repertoire has undergone change. Protest movements against right-wing and neo-fascist groups across the country are growing more diverse. That includes the musical activism, which I discuss as post-migratory musical activism.

Post-migratory musical activism is a musical activism that more recently settled migrants enact in collaborative ensembles with longer settled migrants and non-migrants. Such collaborations have produced new forms of music that revived politicizing music traditions that have their roots and links across the globe, such as punk and rap music. At the same time, post-migratory protest ensembles re-discovered global popular music that has a life away from protest spaces as a politically effective tool to signal solidarity with individuals and groups whose rights they call to protect.

This paper draws from fieldwork with a post-migrant protest ensemble Banda International (2017-21) to discuss the implications of post-migrant adaptations of global pop music into protest settings. The new connections that musicians make merge styles and encourage performers to reimagine the instrumentation of known pieces to make collaboration across linguistic and artistic barriers possible. New connections also create new forms of organization of ensemble life wherein newly political musicians have to reimagine their work in the context of rights-based protest. This research will further the discussion on what protest music means for these performers, and why it is music that is chosen to engage in rights-based struggles amidst one's own migratory experience. Further, I address the implications of this kind of musical use for understanding of new forms of protest music that evolve as audiences and musical publics change.

bio: Carolin Müller is a postdoctoral fellow at the Martin Buber Society in the Humanities and Social Sciences at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. She has held positions at the Technische Universität Dresden and at the Central European University. She earned her PhD in German Studies from the Ohio State University and her dissertation investigated creative acts of citizenship-making through street music, music education, and music as a form of cultural diplomacy in Germany. Her work on the German musician ensemble Banda Comunale/Internationale allowed her to investigate music's role in contemporary activism against right-wing groups and contributed to renewed understandings of the representation of music in activist, social and political discourses, as well as the function of music in negotiating the politics of migrancy in contemporary Germany. Her work has

been published in peer-reviewed journals and currently, she works on her book project that investigates emancipatory music-making in Germany's hostile environments.