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EDITORIAL

Popular music heritage, cultural memory and cultural identity

This issue of the *International Journal of Heritage Studies* presents the first results of the European research project entitled ‘Popular music heritage, cultural memory, and cultural identity. Localised popular music histories and their significance for music audiences and music industries in Europe’, hereafter referred to with the acronym POPID. The three-year project, which started in 2010, was financed under the Humanities for the European Research Area (HERA) and set out to examine the increasing importance of popular music in contemporary renderings of cultural identity, and local and national cultural heritage, from a comparative perspective. To this end, the POPID brought together a team of internationally established academics in the fields of popular music studies, sociology of the arts, media research and cultural studies. The Erasmus Research Centre for Media, Communication and Culture at Rotterdam’s Erasmus University led the project, which included partners at the University of Liverpool, the University of Ljubljana and the University of Vienna.

To be clear, in the context of POPID, we refer to ‘popular music’ as a music form which particularly in a post-World War II context has been enjoyed mainly through modes of mass mediation and distribution, and is primarily centred around commercial aesthetics. For generations born after 1945, popular music forms such as rock and punk may be as potent a symbol of national or local identity and heritage as more traditional representations, for example, national and regional insignia, food, drink and sport. With the increasing centrality of consumerism in everyday life, expressions of lifestyle orientations and preferences through music and fashion for instance have become potent signifiers of identity and belonging (Chaney 2002). By exploring the dynamics of meaning and identity formation around popular music, POPID considered how local popular music histories and their remembrance challenge any consensus that has been created around a ‘narrative of nation’ (Burgoyne 2003, p. 209).

Parallel to this, notions and understandings culture have become progressively more grounded in and intertwined with popular cultural expressions and products, signalling the shifting boundaries between high and low culture in late modernity. Popular music participates in these processes, particularly through the intermediation of ‘consecrating institutions’ (Bourdieu 1991) associated with the media and cultural industries (Schmutz 2005, Janssen *et al.* 2011). Through the collection, preservation and celebration of its material and immaterial culture, by public and private institutions alike, popular music has increasingly been put to work as heritage (Bennett 2009). By studying the trajectory of popular music as heritage in a variety of contexts and institutional set-ups, the papers presented tease out and challenge the changing meanings and values of popular music as a cultural practice.

The special issue also interrogates how popular music feeds into a sense of place, as the musical history of localities can be traced back to rich and diverse

local traditions and narratives (see Cohen 1991). The process of inscribing popular music into the heritage of specific locations is not unproblematic. While it has been shown as important in capturing the imagination of members of the local community and underpinning individual and collective attachment to place (Baker *et al.* 2009; and various contributions in this issue), public and private renderings of popular music memories and histories are nonetheless critiqued for placing the spotlight on certain voices while others are faded out. The case studies in this special issue illustrate how cultural heritage conceptualisations that emerge in the social and discursive practices of individuals and institutions directly or indirectly affect the practice and scope of preservation and recollection of the popular music past. One key contention is the tension between official and unofficial understandings of the legitimacy of popular music *as* heritage, and a more normative question on the value and form that popular music heritage should take.

The main contribution of this special issue is to present ethnographic case studies that address these questions and provide insights into the emerging field and practices of popular music *as* heritage. The papers collected in this special issue combine a stimulating interdisciplinary dialogue (ranging from anthropology, to sociology and cultural geography) with rich, transnational empirical data. Underlying all contributions is an interrogation of the extent to which popular music histories, in their official representations and their expression via individual and collective memories, contribute to the narratives of cultural identity and heritage in specific European contexts. The papers also interrogate institutional biases in the practice of popular music as heritage, raising concerns regarding the diversity and inclusivity of what is preserved and remembered. Moreover, by combining advanced theoretical and methodological approaches with insights generated through extensive fieldwork with key representatives from the heritage and music industry sectors, the special issue provides valuable insights for heritage practitioners and music entrepreneurs alike.

The ethnographies gathered here support two arguments: (1) that the emerging field of popular music *as* heritage is socially produced through the practices of a range of actors, from individual collectors to public institutions and private enterprises; (2) that the diversity of actors in the field combine a variety of legitimising discourses of popular music as heritage, ranging from personal and collective attachment and memory to commercial endeavours rebranding and canonising the musical pasts.

The special issue kicks off with a European comparative perspective on the practice of popular music as heritage. Brandellero and Janssen take us on a tour of national and local initiatives celebrating the popular music heroes of yesteryear, from dedicated museums and archives, to honour systems and place markings, revealing a diverse ecology of institutions with changing rationales for preservation. The authors find that even bottom-up fan and amateur collector-driven practices of popular music heritage tend to adopt more traditional formats of preservation, centred around material rather than immaterial culture. The authors question whether the heritagisation of popular music might potentially ossify rather than celebrate this vibrant and strongly experience-based contemporary cultural expression. Moreover, the remembering gaze, particularly through the vantage point of local tourist information sites, lingers on the bigger, more commercially and widely appealing stars, reproducing the hegemony of the music industry and mainstream acts.

Roberts and Cohen delve into the theoretical implications of the emerging field of popular music heritage by questioning the function of cultural heritage discourses related to popular music histories in the UK. Using ethnographic research and discourse analysis, they examine how heritage is *practiced* and *performed* by a range of institutions and sectors that are contributing to the narratives of popular music history in the UK. Adapting Smith's (2006) concept of authorised heritage discourse, the authors question the use of the official/unofficial heritage dichotomy and put forward a three-way analytical framework that theoretically and methodologically foregrounds those practices and processes that variously ascribe music heritage discourses with value, legitimacy and social and cultural capital. The resulting framework identifies three categories of heritage discourse: (1) official authorised popular music heritage, (2) self-authorised popular music heritage and (3) unauthorised popular music heritage. *Unauthorised* popular music is set forward as a critical point of orientation – heritage-as-praxis – as it calls for a more fine-grained approach to the agency of individuals in defining and shaping their own musical heritage through their personal memories and practices.

Roberts goes further into analysing the complex relationship between 'culture' and 'heritage'. As the two have become increasingly enmeshed, both conceptually and in practice, the author asks what makes popular music 'heritage' and how popular music *becomes heritagised*. By casting a critical gaze on the heritage discourses around popular music, this paper demonstrates the way in which the value and meaning of popular music heritage are embedded in a heterogeneity of practices with varying degrees of personal and collective significance. Problematising popular music as heritage therefore requires a focus on its negotiated and transacted nature, while being aware that the parameters by which we engage with contemporary popular music cultures do not become consonant with those by which we collect and preserve its past.

The next paper, by Zevnik, adopts a constructionist perspective to heritage, understanding it as the outcome of a process of social construction rather than an objective totality of inheritance of the past. Zevnik's contribution applies findings from the Slovenian case to address a methodological and theoretical gap in the study of popular music as heritage, systematically revealing the power struggles and negotiations in the social construction of heritage. Drawing on rich qualitative interview material, the author reveals the shifting boundaries between the official, vernacular and collective memories of the country's popular music. The results show that popular music heritage discourses in Slovenia are mostly the outcome of unofficial DIY initiatives and individual (and poorly coordinated) expert and academic attempts. The paper concludes by arguing that a wider Foucauldian concept of regime of truth can help us to better understand the conflicting heritage discourses and power struggles involved in the social construction of heritage.

Going deeper in the analysis of the Slovenian case, Stanković addresses dominant narratives about the history of Slovenian popular music, with the purpose of setting up a referential framework for comparisons between established histories and audiences' memories of the popular music past. The research question is, therefore, which Slovenian popular music genres are discussed in Slovenian popular music histories, to what extent and within which narrative frameworks. The results show that while the Slovenian popular music is very rich and diverse, there are just few genres that get significant attention in those segments of the Slovenian media, and which contribute most to the establishment of cultural canon. The

predominance of punk and alternative rock scenes in the historiography of Slovenian popular music is explained by the musical preferences and backgrounds of the key narrators, generating and reproducing a bias in the remembered popular music history of the country.

The three remaining papers in the special issue focus more specifically on the role of the music industry in framing, preserving and commercialising the heritage of popular music. Van der Hoeven looks at how the music industry participates in representations of popular music history through the reissue of products and commercialisation of nostalgia. By taking the case of the 1990s dance parties in the Netherlands, the author asks how cultural memories are negotiated at these parties, as they offer a platform for the performance of cultural identity and the re-enactment of the audiences' attachment to the sounds of a specific time and place. Van der Hoeven finds that decade-based nostalgia is framed differently in *early-parties*, where DJs and audiences strive for a return to the roots of 90s dance, compared to *decade parties*, which propose a more hybrid take on the genre and its associated styles and fashions.

The retrospective cultural consecration of Austropop, a Viennese popular music style of the early 1970s, and of the punk-inspired music scene of Linz later in the same decade, are the focus of Reitsamer's contribution. The author investigates how recent documentaries on these two popular music phenomena have sought to position them as rock heritage, by advancing claims concerning their contribution to national and local cultural identities. The findings reveal that the subsidiaries of major record labels and ORF, the Austrian public broadcaster, participate in the 'commercial recycling' of the popular music past, by heightening its visibility and proclaimed relevance to contemporary audiences, while commemorating it as an authentic expression of national popular culture.

To conclude our special issue, Khabra looks at the active contribution of popular music in shaping the collective memory and identity of ethnic minorities in the UK. Through the prism of Bhangra music, a style associated primarily with the British Asian community and incorporating elements of folk music from the Punjab region of Pakistan and India, the paper explores the significance of popular music in narratives of cultural identity and representations of cultural memories within the British Asian community. Nonetheless, the marginality of British Asian music in mainstream accounts of popular music history acts as a reminder of the discrepancies between official and alternative narratives of the musical heritage of ethnically diverse places.

The papers presented here open up a series of questions concerning how individual and community understandings of popular music heritage are created via their interaction with not only institutional discourses but also local articulations of cultural memories. Popular music heritage is thus an 'act of negotiation' (van Dijk 2007) in which individual, collective and institutional cultural memories around the local are produced. Through audience research, POPID's next research outputs will provide a more fine-grained analysis of how contemporary audiences negotiate their relationship and attachment to popular music cultures of the past.

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