EASA Media Anthropology Network
E-Seminars Series

http://www.media-anthropology.net/workingpapers.htm

E-Seminar on Mark Pedelty's working paper

"Musical News: Popular Music in Political Movements"

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Dear All

Welcome to the 20th EASA Media Anthropology Network e-seminar! For the next two weeks, and ending on Tuesday 2 October at 9 pm GMT, we'll be discussing on this mailing list a working paper by Mark Pedelty entitled "Musical news: popular music in political movements". You will find a PDF of this paper at http://www.media-anthropology.net/workingpapers.htm

Mark Pedelty received his PhD in Anthropology at UC, Berkeley (USA) in 1993. His ethnographic research has included study of war correspondents in El Salvador and musical ritual in Mexico City. He taught at Miami University (Ohio) for four years and the University of Minnesota for nine. In 2006 he joined the faculty of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Minnesota, where he is conducting research into the relationship between news, popular culture, and political movements.

The discussant will be Herman Wasserman who teaches in Media, Communication and Cultural Studies at Newcastle University (UK). Herman is the editor of the journal *Ecquid Novi: African Journalism Studies*, and associate editor of the *Journal of Global Mass Communication*. His research interests include global media and popular culture, media ethics, media in the global South (especially Africa), media and the construction of identity, and postcolonialism and media.

If you haven't yet read the paper, now is your chance to do so as Herman will not be posting his comments until later today. These will be followed by Mark Pedelty's response and then the discussion will be open to all of us on the list. To post all you need to do is write directly to the list at medianthro@easaonline.org after we have had Mark's response.

Looking forward to a wide range of contributions to the discussion, it's over to Herman now…

John

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Comments on the paper
"Musical News: Popular Music in Political Movements"
by Mark Pedelty

I found the topic of this essay fascinating, and its approach to journalism and politics an important one. Much has been written about the new forms political activism has taken in the age of digital journalism, but to my knowledge serious consideration of such activism can also take place through popular music, and indeed how this could be seen as a form of journalism, remains under-researched. Research into the political currency of popular cultural forms also remains important in the field of journalism studies, where political functions are still mostly attributed to elite media, and popular forms more often than not seen as contributing to the

depoliticization or atomization of society. This paper broadens the definition of journalism in an attempt to acknowledge the agency of activists outside of the mainstream media channels, and in so doing validates the cultural expression of those whose voices are mostly marginalized and ignored in mainstream political journalism.

Because of the global reach of popular music (the author touches upon songs pertaining to South Africa, Central America, Iraq, the US etc.), the topic invites broader comparative work. Such comparisons could provide further insight into the relation between the political function of popular music and the social, political and cultural context of its production, distribution and consumption. A comparison between the content and reception of music produced 'outside' and 'inside' a given political context could also provide insights into the global cultural economy and circuits of production and consumption. How do the political discourses and their impact of, say, Peter Gabriel and Steve van Zandt's anti-apartheid songs mentioned by the author and those of anti-apartheid activists within South Africa itself (see for instance Lee Hirsch's film *Amandla!: A Revolution in Four-Part Harmony*) differ? (It is also interesting to note that the struggles in that country continue to be articulated through music – the South African Anti-Privatisation Forum recently brought out a CD of protest songs).

While the author seems to focus largely on political functions of popular music of years gone by and seems to be more sceptical of the informational functions of popular music in contemporary society, this should not be done too hastily. Certain political and social conditions today still contribute to the emergence of popular music as a form of journalism. Mano (2007) has shown how popular music functions as journalism in Zimbabwe, where mass media are weak, opposition political parties are frail and the state exerts strong control over the media. Although the Zimbabwean context differs vastly from the one in the US, the author does note (with reference to Pratt) that the latter has a lively popular culture precisely because its political discourse is impoverished (albeit due to a very different political dynamic than in Zimbabwe). This inverse relationship between the richness of popular and mainstream political discourses is worth looking into further. But perhaps here the paper needs clearer definitions of news, journalism and 'the popular' to distinguish between the various informational and cultural functions popular music continues to have in contemporary societies, and to evaluate them.

The author seems to put his faith in the possibility of popular music to create a community of resistance, and convincingly points to several international cases where this has been noted. The question however arises to what extent music can indeed mobilize activists to rise up against oppression and injustice or whether popular music in today's global market rather commodifies resistance and thus renders it politically impotent. One thinks here of the efforts of Bob Geldof, Bono and others whose political campaigns are predicated on consumption. The emphasis the author places on local performers is therefore an important corrective in this regard, and could serve to avoid treating popular music as a homogenous form of cultural expression. The notion of activist communities created through popular music could be interrogated further. If music serves to build communities, how is the political message of popular music amplified within these communities to the extent that it translates into action? How strong or weak are the links in these communities – strong enough to persist when resistance meets with resistance?

The survey used to gather information yields useful information if the aim is an exploration of activists' attitudes towards popular music. When it purports to establish causality between music and activism it becomes slightly more problematic. Asking activists whether a song has

ever informed them about a social or political issue or caused them to think differently about an issue could at best establish their own attitude towards popular music in terms of their activism, or whether popular music succeeded in articulating their political views. It is less certain that these survey questions can establish whether popular music did in fact inform them or mobilize them. A particular song might over time have become an anthem for a movement whose impulses came from a variety of sources which are now much more diffuse and difficult to recollect than a hit song. In this regard the one respondent's comment that music does not change his/her opinions, but confirms or intensifies them, poses a particular theoretical and methodological challenge if one were to disentangle the strands of cause and effect.

As the author notes in the discussion, the question of information selection, perception and retention is as relevant a question for conventional journalism as it is for popular music as journalism. Further work would therefore be needed to establish to what extent the political content of popular songs are retained and integrated into activist work. But the extent of this retention and integration would not necessarily depend on the 'quality' of information in the sense that the term is often used to distinguished between 'quality' and 'popular' journalism. Such a distinction often (barely) obscures a class distinction rather than a useful analytical one. The fact that journalism (whether conventional or in the form of popular music) does not provide the kind of 'in-depth' information seen to belong in the rational public sphere, does not necessarily mean that it cannot play a significant political role. Politics might just have to be defined more broadly than in the narrow sense of political journalism. The debates around tabloid journalism (see for instance Dahlgren and Sparks, 1992) have shown how the political is often articulated through the popular in ways which would not qualify as 'political journalism' in the elite press.

A further aspect that might be worth considering is how new technologies can facilitate the political function of popular music through its wide reach and powers of amplification. In addition, the very act of downloading, sharing and copying music with the help of these new technologies could perhaps even be seen as a form of anti-corporate resistance in itself (although one should of course remain aware that taking such a position might merely be expedient). Do these technologies contribute to the formation of new communities and political bonds, or do they serve the further fragmentation and atomization of the movement? Is Rage against the Machine downloaded on an iPod really as politically powerful as Pete Seeger on a stage?

In summary, I found it a stimulating paper that provides some fresh insights into how we define journalism and define its political functions. Further qualitative, ethnographic work into how political meaning is created from popular music in specific contexts will be important to build on this exploratory work. In this regard, the author's suggestion of complementing the survey with participant observation is something to look forward to.

References:

Dahlgren, P., Sparks, C. (eds.). 1992. *Journalism and Popular Culture*. London: Sage.

Mano, W. 2007. Popular music as journalism in Zimbabwe. *Journalism Studies* 8(1): 61-78.

John Postill (Sheffield Hallam University)
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Many thanks for those opening comments on "Musical news: popular music in political movements", Herman. It's over now to Mark Pedelty for a response.

John

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Dear All

I think Mark Pedelty may be off email today so I am forwarding on his behalf his response to Herman's comments, see below.

The seminar is now open to all list subscribers. To contribute, please write directly to medianthro@easaonline.org (i.e. not to me). I suggest we aim for a first round of 6-8 comments and questions on the working paper by Wednesday to get a good discussion under way.

John

PS: Please bear in mind that our listserv can be temperamental at times, so if you find that you haven't received your own posting please check with me first offlist before resending it, as sometimes posts reach other list subscribers but not the sender (don't ask me why).

Mark Pedelty (University of Minnesota)
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Thanks, Herman, for the thoughtful and useful feedback. You have done an excellent job of bringing out the difficult questions and conundrums.

The following point is very well taken: "Research into the political currency of popular cultural forms also remains important in the field of journalism studies, where political functions are still mostly attributed to elite media, and popular forms more often than not seen as contributing to the depoliticization or atomization of society." Andrew Keen's (2007) new book appears to be the latest articulation of that argument (I am basing that on a televised interview-have not yet read the book). Like many of our colleagues in journalism and mass communication studies, Keen has an unwarranted nostalgia for mainstream (read "corporate") media forms.

Yet, like you, I am not so certain that new media technologies and uses are – by virtue of relatively decentralized ownership and control – necessarily democratizing agents. Instead, I find Naomi Klein's point in *No Logo* (2002) of value, that the most meaningful innovations, from a humanitarian standpoint, are those that are articulated with a movement. In this case I did not start with the tech or popular texts, and then assess "effect", but rather the starting point is the movement itself. My major leap of faith is that because this music matters to

activists that it does, in fact, have the potential to translate into something more fundamental than a passing fancy, reorientation in outlook, or occasional vote alone. I have my doubts that the "popular" writ large is such a democratic forum or that the new tech forms are truly all that democratizing.

The point concerning comparative analysis is key. Not only would international comparison be useful (and difficult), but also comparative study of activists vs. non-activists, activists of differing political leans, etc. I decided that this survey would not be able to achieve the requisite scope for international comparison, but an ongoing project is at least getting at those other comparisons.

Also, thank you, Herman, for the Mano reference. There is surprisingly little published concerning the relationship between music and news and it is good to know about Mano's work in Zimbabwe.

Your point concerning definitions is also well taken. It is the starting point of our classes concerning popular culture, but I sidestep it here. In the study of musical ritual in Mexico I took a somewhat pedestrian approach, defining the "popular" as those forms in which large groups of people invest their time, money, and passions. I prefer that working definition to those that automatically associate "the popular" with a subaltern, assuming that "the popular" is by definition either resistant, carnivalesque, or social anaesthetic. We sometimes forget that "the popular" is a category that we have created. So often, that which is really popular in the sense of current interest and use is very different from that which we think "should" be popular in a given context. However, I pretty much ignore the definition question in this work altogether, which is an oversight. For the universe of this study, the long list of musicians cited is, in a very literal sense, what is popular. As for what that music and musicians mean to the respondents, I am not sure that the categorical invocation of "the popular" is helpful in an analytic sense, and to the extent that I did that it weakens the paper.

I also side step definitions of "news" and "journalism", employing the tautological explanation that journalism is what journalists "do" (and that, by extension, musicians occasionally do something like that). Because there is no certification process for US journalists, and the genre runs the gamut from literary forms to AP blurbs, I hesitate to provide a basic definition. Any non-fiction narrative can be considered journalistic, in a sense, so it is not terribly earth shattering to refer to topical popular music as a form of journalism. What I found surprising was the extent to which music had acted as a headline service, providing important information to activists, particularly in their youth. In other words, in that regard it is more akin to mainstream journalism than many might think, perhaps occasionally even filling an information gap or reaching a wider audience.

I am not sure that I really do have the faith you ascribe to me when it comes to music and resistance. Once again, I do not think that the tech or media texts are really doing this important work, as a general rule, but rather that activists are using certain tech and texts in useful ways. For every musician cited there are hundreds that limit their range to sex and romance (not that there is anything wrong with that). Furthermore, for every activist surveyed there are millions of people who do very little to make significant changes in policy and society.

This survey actually made me more optimistic than I was going in. My assumption was that the political role of music was overemphasized in the literature.

It still might be, but at least it seems to really matter for these activists. While there is no way to determine cause-and-effect relationships or even the level of importance of music in these activists' political work and formation, it clearly is important to them. The referenced musicians would probably be quite happy to see that their work resonates this way, because making such music is the greatest leap of faith. Bruce Springsteen's Oscar acceptance speech illustrates that act of faith well:

> "You do your best work and you hope that it pulls out the best in your audience and some piece of it spills over into the real world and into people's everyday lives and it takes the edge off the fear and allows us to recognize each other through our failed differences. I always thought that was one of the things popular art was supposed to be about."

There are a lot of assumptions about effects in the political music literature. Hopefully this survey provides at least a small sense of how music might be functioning in the lives of activists.

As for your concern that asking someone if music has informed them, motivated, etc., does not really answer the question. Then what would answer that question? I think your point goes for all social research methods. I am equally sceptical of the ethnographic lens when it comes to judging veracity. If you want to know if music has done x, y, or z in someone's life? Ask them. Will that be the last word? No. Do we accept the emic point of view, as ethnographers, or do we also challenge it with our own, etic understandings drawn from other evidence? Truth is, we do both. In a survey, the answer is challenged in the aggregate. In ethnography, whether we admit it or not, we augment and even challenge our informants' perspectives through context and observation. If we simply relate the informants' views, we add nothing. However, if we consider them unqualified to assess their own lives and cultural worlds and fail to understand their perspective, we also fail, regardless of method. I am as suspect of the ethnographer's desire to show our informants in a positive light (or selectively chosen key informants' visions of reality) as I am of the survey takers tendency to take that word at face value, ignoring the over-determining influence of question construction, survey contexts, and so on. Truth is, there are many truths, of which the informants' is just one. Despite the strong turn towards reflexivity, the deeper heuristic, logistic, and ethical difficulties of dealing with informants have not really been brought to the surface of the discipline. In sum, I am no less sceptical of the veracity of these responses than I am of ethnographically-derived truths and conclusions. I am, however, sceptical of this survey data in slightly different ways than I am of my ethnographic data.

As for causality, I hope that the paper does not really make causal claims, as in "music causes _____." A respondent stating that she first heard about X through song Y, or a claim that music has informed these activists is a far cry from making a claim of cause and effect. If such claims are made in the paper, or even implied, you are very correct in questioning such a leap of logic. These are, at best, associations with evidence of internal validity.

Perhaps not best to end on that point of uncertainty, but this study has raised more questions than it has answered thus far. Your thoughtful feedback has helped me to think through the next stages of the project and will, no doubt, productively frame the online discussion.

References:

Keen, A. 2007. *The Cult of the Amateur: How Today's Internet is Killing Our Culture*. 1st ed. New York: Doubleday/Currency.

Klein, N. 2000. *NoLogo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies*. 1st ed. Toronto: Knopf Canada.

Amahl Bishara (University of Chicago)
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I really enjoyed this paper (and I have to add here that as an anthropologist of journalism, I love Pedelty's *War Stories: The Culture of Foreign Correspondents*). I have a lot of small comments rather than one or two broad ones. And you'll forgive me if they're a bit conversational.

1. It seems like Pratt's suggestion that a politically rich popular culture would be in inverse relationship to a flourishing democracy leaves open a lot of questions about definitions of "the popular" and "flourishing democracies", and is, at any rate, a pretty pessimistic view. I'd like to hear you address it more.

2. I think doing more in-depth interviews with activists of different generations might be tremendously helpful, because you might get a sense of listening practices, how different movements might each have different ways in which information flows, how all of this varies by music genre... To break that down more, in more in depth interviews, it would be interesting to hear what today's youth (or 20 and 30 something) get from Bob Dylan's music or other music from the 1960s – not info about contemporary conflicts but context for contemporary movements, a sense that people have struggled with similar issues before, motivation for very different movements... Regarding listening practices, very important topic for ethnographic inquiry, as you note, I know that many listen to music mainly alone, don't go to concerts much, but may feel a building solidarity with a movement as they listen despite the fact that they're alone. Even if activists do go to concerts, if they are employed at an activist organization, their social circles may not be the same as their work circles. So through participant observation and through in depth interviews, it might be interesting to see how perhaps these social, activist, and work circles overlap and change through listening to music. Regarding different movements, I was intrigued by the person who commented that music was her/his way into a different view of Palestinians – this makes me think that of course each issue has its own place in U.S. society and U.S. media, and that thus its place in popular music will be different. Ani DiFranco does not, to my knowledge, sing about Palestine, but Manu Chao – more international – does, and this may reflect the different politics around Palestine in the U.S. vs. in Europe, or perceptions of gender and the Middle East. Different kinds of solidarity face different kinds of challenges in being born, and resonate differently with genres that carry their own associations. I would be surprised to hear Bruce Springsteen or Willie Nelson sing about Palestine. (And it seems world music might be a category to investigate on its own.). What kinds of progressive political issues find almost no place in popular music? What makes an issue "sexy" for musicians to sing about? Mapping one issue in U.S. popular music would be really interesting.

3. Regarding how youth are getting info from this music, there seems to be a comparison to be made between getting info from music and getting it from political satire like on Comedy Central. Both are alternative to the mainstream media, but presumably music is more motivational, less cynical.

4. I just read an excellent article in *Cultural Anthropology* by Paul Manning (2007) on

cartoons and their role in motivating protest in Georgia, which is one thing which makes me want to hear more about intertextuality in political music and news, along with the very interesting material you have here about intertextuality across musical styles and generations, about Joe Hill for example. Amy Goodman (a former anthropologist herself!) uses a lot of political music from diverse genres, integrates it in news on particular topics, makes it an important part of the days of thousands of people in her devoted audience.

5. I definitely take your point about the value of people's emic analysis of whether or not they were informed, motivated, convinced, but I do think from the anthropologist's perspective, there is also a thin line between being informed vs. being convinced, given the difficulty of determining what is pure "knowledge" that informs vs. material that convinces.

Thanks for this exciting paper - I look forward to reading more on this topic.

References:

Manning, P. 2007. Rose-Colored Glasses? Color Revolutions and Cartoon Chaos in Postsocialist Georgia. *Cultural Anthropology* 22 (2): 171-213.

Pedelty, M. 1995. *War Stories: The Culture of Foreign Correspondents.* Routledge.

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I liked Mark's paper very much. I think his use of a broad qualitative survey to give a sense of proportion to his subsequent ethnographic work is informative.

Like the others, I am left wanting to hear more. I don't really have direct criticisms: Mark is not making a lot of broad claims, but seems to be laying out his initial approach. Rather, I want to raise a theoretical point that might inform linking the survey to the ongoing ethnographic work.

So Mark, I notice that the focus of your work is at the boundary of media practices and 'other' practices. We might call these 'other' practices media-related practices, although this might be criticised as 'media-centric' in the same way as describing an 'other' in relation to Europe is 'euro-centric'.

- To what extent are we dealing here with practice-related media? You seem to indicate at times that the driving force in the media usage is the activism. This is a relevant point for New Media studies in particular. Computers can be seen as both media and tool, so the issue of them being practice-related media is a strong and emerging one.

- Are there guidelines to be found in your work on how to approach the gradient between media related practices (e.g. talking about telly the next day with friends) and practice related media (i.e. going to the net to download a podcast about something you need to write about?)

- What are the criteria by which you, in your work, attempt to locate the centre of a set of practices (which may well be decentred, but I detect a focus in the statements you gave.) In a way I am asking you how you (as you work and research) determine if the tail is wagging the

dog or vice versa, or perhaps something in between.

- What are the implications for this in terms of Anthro-media methodologies? When should we be approaching media as Media, with a penumbra of media-related practices, and when should be looking into sets of practices, and the mediated implications they have? Is it possible to make calls on this? Is there a difference, for instance, between the live performances you describe, and the other forms of listening?

I am trying to keep this an applied set of questions, because I know we have tied ourselves up in knots about this on abstract level before.

Regards

Daniel

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Thanks to Mark and Herman for an interesting paper and some thoughtful comments. I have comment and then a query.

Herman, rightly in my view, raises a methodological issue about the kinds of conclusions that one can draw from the responses to Mark's 5 questions. Herman suggests that people may invoke a song as being the source of persuasion or information but that the range of sources may be more complicated and diverse (I'm paraphrasing – Herman can correct me if I'm doing so badly). Mark's response is to throw the question back and broaden the problem to all research methods, which is fair enough, but I think not as helpful as it could be. It seems to me that many of the examples in Mark's paper (for example Peter Gabriel's Biko) simply don't contain enough information on their own to make much of an impact, unless there are other sources of information around – like other audience members who may fill in the gaps during of after the song. After the fact the fleeting sources of information and persuasion that might have given the song its necessary context may be forgotten, while the song is retained as the mnemonic device around that issue. I know that when I think about the Depression in the US most of my factual memories are wrapped up in Woody Guthrie and Peete Seeger songs (which I heard long after the Depression was over), and I am sure that those songs were instrumental in shaping my understanding of that period, nevertheless, when I listen to those songs now, I realise that there simply wasn't enough context to inform or persuade in isolation. Before Mark responds that he agrees and he makes that point, which I think he does very well, let me say that it seems to me that his survey may be a bit more defensible than Mark allows for. In other words, rather than saying there are problems with the survey that are fundamental to all research methods and we are stuck, I think he could say that the survey provides some very interesting evidence that music plays a significant role in shaping the information and perspectives that individuals adopt, but we would want to stop short of suggesting that music does so on its own.

It seems to me that one of the real strengths of Mark's paper is in providing wonderful evidence of the ways in which music, like other communicative idioms, associates ideas. These are associated/packaged in ways which are dynamic and specific to contexts. So Chief Baker when he sings Bomb a Civilian, which sounds very amusing to me, intends to draw

associations between different things/ideas. Mark has identified some of them, different people may experience others. If the song happens in the right contexts then it could serve community building purposes and could spark someone to get bit of information, but it would seem unlikely that the song could ever draw those associations in any lasting or meaningful way without additional sources of information and persuasion. So back to Herman's point, I would agree that the survey question doesn't really indicate that a song informed or persuaded anyone by itself, but it does indicate that songs are part of the informational and persuasive battery out there.

Apologies for dragging all that out a bit longer than I intended. Now my query:

Mark, you say that one person listed 12 classical songs. Were these instrumental pieces? I started thinking about classical music in this context and I must admit I'm a bit stumped as to how an instrumental piece of classical music might do more than evoke emotional responses--how might this response be linked to any journalistic information? If it's operatic then I assume the person understands the language the opera was written in and it's less perplexing for me.

Once again, sorry for being so long winded.

Thanks,
Steve

Simone Abram (University of Sheffield)
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Dear all,

John has made some changes to the organisation of the seminars to try to get a better response, but this paper hasn't yet generated a great deal of debate, and I have been wondering why.

It could be due to several factors, of course, as well as the usual "it's the beginning of term and we're all very busy" ones. However, my concern is that there are changes happening in the Media Anthropology Network which we need to be clear about. First of all, it's very positive that the network has now attracted people from all over the world and from outside anthropology. It confirms the value of an anthropological perspective, and of a network. However, it is important that we retain a focus. The network started from EASA, and anthropology of media has been its core. I hope it will stay that way. Also, the larger the network, the more people become reluctant to stick their necks out and say something, in case some faceless potential senior person (or even peer) thinks they're silly. If that happens, there's no point having network seminars at all.

The other danger is that if papers are presented which don't really engage the anthropologists in the network, then there will be little response. Reports of surveys, in my view, fall into this category – please forgive me, Mark, but I think it's worth considering.

The paper is well written and the subject is promising, but the actual paper presented is based on a rather slim survey, and this has never been an approach which arouses great enthusiasm

among anthropologists for various reasons. I found the questions in the survey problematic, in that they made huge assumptions about what it means to be 'influenced' or 'inspired', for example. There's also no way to interpret the responses knowing so very little (almost nothing) about the respondents. Nor is it statistically significant, so cannot be used as quantitative data. I also fail to be surprised that the most political musicians raise the most politicising response. Perhaps I'm missing the point here. Such a survey might provide a useful tool to see how widespread issues raised in ethnographic research might be, but the results are not overly convincing on their own, and they go no further than popular debate.

If I might comment further on the paper itself, I have to say that I found it very difficult to relate to. This is partly because the music history in it is so thin, so that the sociological literature which appears to have 'missed' the informational aspect of music is promoted as though it were the whole academic response. I do think anthropologists are sometimes rather slow to engage with other disciplines as they approach their fields, and I wonder if this is what has happened here. There is no shortage of literature on the role of folk music in Britain, for example, from the Victorian use of song to promote particular moralities, or of the resistance to that, to the role of key contemporary folk musicians in raising consciousness (a phrase notably absent in the paper), a debate that is also very lively in British and some European musical presses and media contexts. Nor is it possible to ignore the 'informational' activities of singers who mention more than 'lurv', as most of them make quite clear in interviews, for example (which I note you do not refer to). In the paper, the very strong focus on popular music in the US does seem to be taken to represent the informational value of news *per se*. Perhaps this explains my feeling of alienation from it.

I'll stop there. Our contributions to the seminars are also getting over long, so this is probably too much too.

Simone

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Well, I never really thought of the informational content of particular songs and the journalistic potential there and instead kept in mind the great potential of emotional leverage and consciousness raising. So this paper sparks curiosity for me. And I look back and re-think the music of some political/activist bands in Turkey. Probably the most political band in Turkey, Grup Yorum (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grup_Yorum) (http://www.grupyorum.net/) devotes most of its songs to particular events that led to "martyrdoms". One of their last albums is entirely devoted to hunger strikes and every song narrates a fragment of the strike process.

Coupled with the mnemonic device potential of music, and in addition to other uses, these songs convey the information of a particular narration of history to the audience.

One wonders what this phenomenon means: despite the ever growing flow of news through ever more advanced technologies, some "progressive" audience somewhat relies on this informational use which is "outdated". Despite the plethora of media, a very old form is reactivated. From my everyday life observations I know very well that my students will be more informed by particular songs about the events than listening to the news programs

themselves- even if these are journalism students. So this paper points out an angle to be explored. In the longer one, one could make challenges about the very fundamentals of how to make news...

Before Simone's post, I would ask a single question about the methodology. I am quite ignorant about the "quantitative methods" in general but still I felt like the survey has to be strongly supported by other means. Dear Mark seems to downplay the role of ethnographic work but it is still more tried than a relatively new means of research - in the discipline? - like this survey.

And by this pretext, I would like to thank Mark's work on war correspondents. It is one of the most inspiring ethnographic works on journalists for me and i very much relied on that work in imagining my own research design....

Cordially,
Erkan

Reference:

Pedelty, M. 1995. *War Stories: The Culture of Foreign Correspondents*. Routledge

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I would like to respond to Simone's intervention, which I think is a good one, partly because I take issue with it.

I have been someone who has fallen foul of the discipline of the seminar quite a few times. Perhaps it is part of my socialization process, but it strikes me that a certain amount of bad behaviour and controversy fuels a good debate, so I mourn my domestication somewhat. I wonder if the e-seminars are getting a bit too mature.

If there are a wide audience of people, including seniors, coming in, then so be it, we cannot let careerism be the death of good debate. We need to keep focussed on the things that gave this seminar energy, which I recall as being passionate debate of the issues, including some level of outrage.

So let me (gently) take issue with Simone for a moment. I think she is right to say that it is hard to respond to the paper, as there is a lack of the richness that Anthropologists revel in. But it struck me in my debate with Faye Ginsburg that Anthropologists are often guilty of picking specific cases because they are sexy signifiers on the academic market, and not because they are somehow representative of the context they are drawn from.

Just because we have a big arsenal of critiques of representiveness, doesn't mean we can set it aside as an issue. I think we owe it to our subjects, and our sense of defending the underdog (which is part of how Anthropologists justify their existence) to engage with such issues. For instance "Dalits" in India seem under-represented in Anthropology when compared with the more sexy "indigenous" categories.

So we shouldn't trash Mark for using a survey: He found out things that guided his subsequent participant observation. Whatever the flaws in his methodology, is what he is doing worse than the implicit surveys other Anthropologists do when choosing their cases? Is it good enough to say "well it's interesting in that it feeds Anthropological Theory?" That strikes me as rather parasitic.

What I would like from Mark is more detail on any Participant Observation carried out, or at least some detail of how he is using the survey to guide that. This might contribute to a debate about how we pick our cases in Anthropology.

2 down 1 to go.

Daniel

Julian Hopkins (Monash University, Malaysia)
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Hello All,

I don't have much to add in substantial terms, but in relation to the international comparative issues mentioned, I have a couple of things to add.

Mark mentioned the participative folk-type music, and this reminded me of various types of songs in Northern Ireland and their role in articulating political and communitarian standpoints. I don't know much detail but there is an oft-mentioned Orangemen/Loyalist song that speaks of "wading in Fenian blood" (approximately); "We shall overcome" was an important song for the civil rights movement; and I remember a couple of 'rebel' songs - one commemorating a helicopter escape from prison (with chorus "up, up, and away" – this one was more 'journalistic'), and another one that was participative and still sticks in my memory. The words, that guide the actions, that I can remember were (apologies to anyone who may feel offended):

> "If you hit the RUC [Royal Ulster Constabulary] clap your hands! [...]
> If you hit the British Army stamp your feet! [...]. "

And there were a few more lines like that I think.

Perhaps highlighting the significance of these songs in the Irish consciousness is the intro to the U2 song "Sunday Bloody Sunday" in the live version: Bono says "This is not a rebel song, this is Sunday Bloody Sunday!"

Regards,

Julian

PS: Sorry, I guess I should add for those who are not familiar with the history that "Bloody Sunday" was an infamous incident in 1972 where 13 unarmed demonstrators were shot and killed by the British Army in Northern Ireland.

PPS: Apologies again, I'll pay more attention to what I send out in future. I made a mistake with the escape song mentioned I mentioned.

It was called the "Helicopter Song": lyrics here
http://sniff.numachi.com/pages/tiHELICOP.html

John Postill (Sheffield Hallam University)
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Simone and Daniel have raised some important issues about the e-seminars and the media anthropology network in general, but may I suggest that we put these on hold until after the present seminar (which ends next Tuesday, 2 October) so that we can focus on the discussion at hand.

My question to Mark has to do with his reliance on the notion of 'function' which is central to his discussion. It seems to me that this notion, with its implicit association with the idea of societies or communities as homeostatic wholes, jars with the findings reported here, and particularly with how "certain songs or concerts etc" appear to have had a transformative effect or influence "at critical points in the early adulthood of many political activists" (my emphasis). I stress these two phrases to mark out what to me could be an interesting question to research further (perhaps through life histories), namely the contribution of specific musical events to turns towards activism in early adulthood. The tacit synchronism and holism of 'function' seem to me at odds both with the strongly historical character of this project and with the flux and open-endedness of the political life processes under study.

John

Mark Pedelty (University of Minnesota)
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This seems like a good time to respond. Erkan's response really captures my intent well. I will deal mainly with the heuristic challenges in this response and respond to the other questions on Friday. Apologies up front for the length of the response.

Before getting to the main issues, it might be useful to deal with Simone's response. Simone has argued that the relative lack of responses to this paper might be due to the fact that it is based on a survey and that, in general, papers such as this one might be straying beyond the boundaries of media anthropology. There are several assumptions there. First, there have been several responses to this paper, all of which launch valid criticisms and do so in a way that can, and will, engender further discussion. The last few papers, including this one, have received fewer responses than used to be the case, perhaps because of timing in the academic cycle. To really know why this is would require more systematic research, perhaps participant observation among the members or a survey (OK, that was a bit snarky♣). Instead of many short responses we are witnessing a trend toward longer, more detailed responses. Hopefully, members with thoughts, challenges, or questions that can be made more succinctly still feel

♣ cynical, sarcastic, satirical

comfortable contributing. Second, having been an enthusiastic member of the network since John got it going years ago, I have watched it evolve from a small and active conversation to more of a large, more organized forum. I have been guilty of doing more reading than reacting, but not because I have not been interested. Having said that, the subject of this paper might be of more interest to scholars in Music, Communication Studies, and Cultural Studies than it is to anthropologists. If that is the case, I apologize.

By no means do I see this survey as the be-all-and-end-all of the project. Rather, like many of our ethnographic ancestors, I believe that participant observation is usefully supplemented with such instruments. In this case, the survey helped me recognize that (1) the literature seems to have ignored an important component of political music and (2) although the research team chose localized political performers and spaces as our ethnographic focus, such performers and sites are clearly not as important to the overwhelming majority of activists as they were to us. Our ethnographic imaginations got the best of us.

Two responses have noted that there are several assumptions involved in the survey. That is true. I chose to ask very skeletal questions so as to avoid more leading than was necessary. My main assumption was that if you want to know if music has functioned in x, y, or z ways in someone's life, you ask them. That may not be the best way to get at the question, but it seemed appropriate for a survey. The prompts resulted in a superficial "yes" or "no", but also a very rich set of narrative descriptions. Perhaps I should have provided more of the responses. However, I would guess that there are as many informant voices provided in this paper, and perhaps even vignettes, as provided in the typical ethnographic paper.

In order to go deeper, our ethnographic team needs to continue, and appropriately redirect, our participant observation work in the field. To that end, perhaps I should have fully explained our participant observation work. Our work involves getting to know activist audiences by interviewing them, experiencing their worlds, analyzing the salient musical texts, and even performing for and with informants. The ethnographic team has actually formed a band and is playing in local venues. In other words, the "participation" element is taken very seriously. I received some flak after my first book for writing about journalists without actually becoming one. That won't be the case with the project. I chose to present the survey data instead of the participant observation element of the ethnographic work, because the latter is ongoing and, furthermore, the survey provided an interesting opportunity for ethnographic reflexivity.

The survey has assisted us in our critical reflection, helping us to see that the elephant's tail we had been studying (local music) was more of a minor appendage than the central organ we had assumed it to be. I, in particular, misjudged the relative importance of local music in local political networks. Knowledge is sorrow; I wish that such spaces were as important to activists, in general, as they are to the performers and audiences (often one-in-the-same) who inhabit them. The survey helped us to situate our field site(s) and subject relative to a broader, admittedly superficial, sense of the larger social and political field. (and, by the way, for anyone that has not done a survey recently, it is damn hard work on a par with participant observation). I have the same level of reasonable distrust in both the survey and participant observation data, and find that they nicely complement each other. Observations from both subprojects make so much more sense thanks to information derived from the other. The Malinowskian tradition of holistic ethnography – as presented in his anatomical metaphor for getting at both the skeleton and "flesh and blood" of a culture – does not require the addition of broader quantitative instruments, but it doesn't hurt.

Because I am an anthropologist, my heart still lies in participant observation. Participant observation was at the centre of both of my book length projects and will be the case with this one as well. However, a bit of methodological relativism is in order. I see no reason to reject the methodological "other". In general, I find quantitative methods good for providing broad context, recognizing that it is superficial data from a semiotic perspective (as Simone puts it: "slim"). Participant observation, deep interviews, semiotic analyses of text, and other qualitative methods allow us to go much deeper. In this case, the team has learned a great deal about the political meaning and functions of local performance spaces. Quantitative methods would not have gotten us very far in that regard. However, without the supplementary survey we would have mistakenly elevated that knowledge to the centre of a set of practices that only marginally includes our field site(s).

Mark

Simone Abram (University of Sheffield)
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That was a very useful clarification of the position of survey techniques in relation to other ethnographic research. Thank you Mark.
I do have one further question though. I can't help noticing that when people write about 'Other' places, they are very specific with their remarks about who they are referring to. In many of your comments, you make quite general claims. It would be interesting if you were to elaborate about the spread of your findings (socially or geographically), in relation to the audience for your survey and in relation to your team's participant observation – which, incidentally, I look forward to hearing more about later.

Amicalement,
Simone

Mark Pedelty (University of Minnesota)
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Will do, Simone. Thanks. Friday morning I will have a block of time to respond in greater detail to specific questions, including more specific details on the fieldwork.

Carsten Wergin (University of Halle-Wittenberg**)**
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Dear Mark,

Thank you very much for your paper. I will not enter into the debate that is already going on but simply state a few things that came to my mind when reading it.

1) Your grouping of "labour, human rights, peace, and environmental activists" characterised by this survey and the evidence it gives about music these people like, made my think of Madonna's song "Music" (I think it came out in 2001?!) in which she sings "Music makes the bourgeoisie and the rebel." I wonder what the "bourgeoisie" might answer if you send

them this survey, as well. Who might they be, in the first place? Who would you send it to? With what songs might they come up? Might there be more similarities than one expects?

2) I wonder whether music as a medium has a deeper impact on people than news media as it more fundamentally influences personal development, for the rest of ones life, and at a certain point in life. When does musical news-awareness stop? Why do older people in the questionnaire mention a lot less contemporary music as inspirational to them? Have they not the time and interest to keep up with musical news coming out? Have they made their choice and is it now on others to continue? This could relate to John's take on the notion of "function".

3) Finally, I would like to point to the film "Die fetten Jahre sind vorbei" (The Edukators) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Edukators, which I find makes excellent use of music to present the generational differences there are in relation to political awareness, activism etc., but also how the musical content bridges between generations. (For example the song "Trend" by the group Mediengruppe Telekommander.)

Thank you again for your paper, Mark. I am looking forward to hear about the longer fieldwork phases coming up!

Carsten

Mark Pedelty (University of Minnesota)
pedeltmh@umn.edu

Let me start by thanking everyone who has responded to the paper. You have provided truly invaluable feedback for this ongoing project.

Each set of questions and challenges has been cut and pasted below, so that it is clear to the reader who and what I am responding to. Pardon me for pasting your questions and challenges out of context. I will try to honour the totality of your response and not just the specific question.

Stephen

[Question: *Herman, rightly in my view, raises a methodological issue about the kinds of conclusions that one can draw from the responses to Mark's 5 questions. Herman suggests that people may invoke a song as being the source of persuasion or information but that the range of sources may be more complicated and diverse. [...] I think he (Mark) could say that the survey provides some very interesting evidence that music plays a significant role in shaping the information and perspectives that individuals adopt, but we would want to stop short of suggesting that music does so on its own.*]

Response: Quite right, Stephen. Music 'functions' within a much wider and deeper matrix of practices and symbolic patterns, rather in isolation. That is made clear in the respondents' examples and statements. It is something that I should make more evident in the paper, and will, thanks to this reminder. Having said that, I was rather surprised at what appeared to be the relative power of music in relation to other practices, especially as a source of information (this is not to say that such information translates into real political power). Of course, there is

an incredible range of factors involved in helping one to be receptive to new information, or to seek it out in the first place, but it does appear that popular music is for many young activists an initial source of information, a 'headline service' as I note in the paper. We might be exploring that specific question in greater depth (see below) as we continue the larger project. As others have also pointed out, this is where surveys and other quantitative methods fall short. Standing at the border of anthropology and disciplines where quantitative methods are more central, I am continually surprised by how scholars working in a social science model reduce 'culture' to a 'variable' as if that is a meaningful, or even scientifically justifiable exercise. You are quite right, although musicians and their songs are the central referent here, in no way should it be understood in isolation from myriad other 'factors.' That is a matter of methodological and theoretical convenience, not unlike what we all do simply by virtue of using the word 'music' in a sentence. We artificially isolate a general field of practices and ideas from others in order to produce and communicate an understanding of the world that is, unavoidably, a reductive model of the world. My own critique of doing so in a survey and in our models is, therefore, not so much the fact that we do that as well, through narrative such an instrument and model are overly reductive. Once again, that is why I am coupling this subproject with others as part of a larger ethnographic project (see below).

Speaking of which, my definition of ethnography does not exclude quantitative complements. I am a bit 'old school' in that regard. Participant observation is a qualitative method, but ethnography as an umbrella term includes the possibility for both qualitative (essential) and quantitative (useful complement) methods. Thanks, Stephen, and pardon me for using your nicely focused question to launch into a discussion concerning quantitative vs. qualitative forms of reductionism.

[Question: *Mark, you say that one person listed 12 classical songs. Were these instrumental pieces? I started thinking about classical music in this context and I must admit I'm a bit stumped as to how an instrumental piece of classical music might do more than evoke emotional responses – how might this response be linked to any journalistic information?*]

Response: This question really stirred the juices. It was here that I realized that I hold what may be a discordant, working definition of 'music'. Although quantitative coding of the examples required the identification and counting of discrete things: events, musicians, songs, etc., I think of music as a very expansive set of practices, texts, ideas, and discourses. Therefore, it was surprising to see that respondents did not note classical music influences. In the past, at least, classical musicians and their work have been associated with political concepts and movements in a very strong way. For example, in postrevolutionary Mexico the *indigenista* movement flourished not only in the world of the mural arts, but also in classical music. Whereas there was relatively little overtly political pop, Mexican classical music at the time was overtly associated with politics. The articulation of 'indigenous' melodies (rural popular music from an earlier period is more accurate, code at the time for a critical urban politics) with the socialist and internationalist activism of its composers, such as Silvestre Revueltas, meant that classical music itself was imbricated with politics. I mention this not in order to downplay your question, but rather to reassert the same point that you and Herman have made so well. The survey might be more likely to elicit manifest information and somewhat mechanical understandings of 'music' and 'functions' (see below), partly by virtue of being a survey and partly do to the spare nature of the questions. Therefore, the respondents are probably thinking more in terms of lyrics (words), names of musicians, etc., than the more expansive sense of music mentioned above. Furthermore, it might be simpler for a respondent to recall the more manifest ³information² solicited in a question concerning

information than one that deals with something as nebulous as community. The only caveat to all of the above is that, despite our methodological and epistemological reservations, the examples informants provided often did get at deeply meaningful histories, stories, beliefs, etc. While it is no substitute for more deeply contextual fieldwork on our part, the respondents remind us that people do have an ability to tell their stories with fairly open-ended prompts in ways that demonstrate that they too understand both the basic intent and limitations of specific questions and the survey instrument itself.

P.S. Your statement about musical practices reminds me that there is no Nahuatl term for 'music' per se, but rather a set of terms that link what English speakers refer to as music, dance, and poetry. Perhaps the more inclusive anthropological definition is closer to that of the Nahauatl than the colloquial.

John

[Question: *My question to Mark has to do with his reliance on the notion of 'function' which is central to his discussion. It seems to me that this notion, with its implicit association with the idea of societies or communities as homeostatic wholes, jars with the findings reported here, and particularly with how "certain songs or concerts etc" appear to have had a transformative effect or influence "at critical points in the early adulthood of many political activists" (my emphasis). I stress these two phrases to mark out what to me could be an interesting question to research further (perhaps through life histories), namely the contribution of specific musical events to turns towards activism in early adulthood. The tacit synchronism and holism of 'function' seem to me at odds both with the strongly historical character of this project and with the flux and open-endedness of the political life processes under study*.]

Response: I am a big believer in using both diachronic (historical) and synchronic (systemic) models and methodologies. I believe that the term is polysemic enough to encompass both. Something can function in systemic relation to something else (setting aside the heuristic necessity of separating those 'things' in the first place), without the implication that one is ignoring the dimension of time. Take the following example (respondent's example not included in the paper):

I went to the first post-Katrina Jazz Fest in New Orleans to see Bruce Springsteen. He talked about the complete breakdown of our government and how they did not respond to help the people in New Orleans at the time of the hurricane, and even months after the hurricane. He sang a song "My City of Ruins" and wrote a new song about Katrina...I get goose bumps still as I remember this... I and everyone around me cried tears during his performance because it was so emotional and moving. I have long been a supporter of rebuilding New Orleans, I order music from a New Orleans store and food products from the Cajun Grocer, I have also subscribed to a monthly New Orleans music magazine OffBeat and become a member of their local radio station WWOZ to help support them financially, this all came about after I saw the devastation that persisted 8 months after Katrina happened and seeing Bruce's show there on April 30, 2006.

I think that it is fair to say that music 'functions' here in relation to both historical and concurrent practices, working in concert with previously held beliefs and orientations, providing mutual reinforcement, and helping to inspire continued action. Music certainly should not be totally reduced to a 'function' (I am no functionalist), but it provides one,

admittedly limited, way of thinking about the place of music in the life of a politically engaged person. Having said that, your challenge will help me to be more reflexive about my choice of terms, especially when trying to simultaneously converse with anthropological and other audiences.

Simone

[Question: *I can't help noticing that when people write about 'Other' places, they are very specific with their remarks about who they are referring to. In many of your comments, you make quite general claims.*]

Response: I am not quite sure what you are referring to here, Simone. The 'other' subprojects (listed in detail below) or when I made the statement in my last response concerning the methodological 'othering' that takes place? That latter was a call for methodological relativism. If ethnocentrism is, in part, the unfair evaluation of another culture based on one's own symbolic frameworks and standards of behaviour, then the parallel here is when a quantitative scholar might charge that the qualitative 'they' do not systematically randomize their samples so that they are more representative and thus allowing for more generalizable statements connecting the results to some dynamic in that larger population. This is just one of the implicit and sometimes explicit charges lobbed over the methodological transom of cultural anthropology from other domains. Someone making that statement is evaluating qualitative methodologies according to quantitative frameworks and goals. Just as Beethoven falls horribly short to Bob Dylan when judged based on an analysis of his lyrical prowess, so too one methodology falls short when judged via the standards of another. The othering that 'we' do to quantitative methods is that their results do not plumb the semiotic depths of informants' lives and cultural worlds. Now, if your charge against the survey (that it's results are 'slim' and that is why anthropologists would not be interested) is based on an analysis that uses the standards and goals of survey methods in order to do so, rather than a qualitative scholar's reaction against surveys in general, you might have me. Although a good deal of consultation went into both ends of the survey to make sure that it would be up to snuff, and I tried to be as rigorous as subject, ethics, and other constraints would allow, there are several things I would and will do differently next time.

One final thought on methodological relativism. If the goal of anthropology really is still holism – as argued in introductory courses and texts THEN surely it doesn't hurt to supplement our participant observation fieldwork with quantitative methods, when possible and appropriate? I hope not, because frankly, having done a good bit of participant observation in the past 18 years, I am having fun experimenting with quantitative methods as well.

[Question: *It would be interesting if you were to elaborate about the spread of your findings (socially or geographically), in relation to the audience for your survey and in relation to your team's participant observation.*]

Response: as I keep promising, I'll give a brief summary of the other ethnographic subprojects below. Here I will deal with your excellent audience query. Although my Ph.D. is in Anthropology, I have mainly worked in interdisciplinary contexts. As with anything comparative, working in explicitly interdisciplinary contexts makes one strongly aware of

how different each community is both discursively and methodologically. I'd like this to travel not only within anthropological circles, but also Cultural Studies (perhaps the only discipline whose practitioners take greater joy in parsing words and metaphors to within inches of their lives than we do), Communication Studies, and Media Studies. Probably a fool's errand. In addition to scholarly works concerning political music, I've read every biography, autobiography, and book-length work of musical journalism about political musicians that I could get my hands on. It was extremely refreshing and insightful. I'd really like to write a book on the topic that reaches that more general audience. While 'writing about music is like dancing about architecture' (quote attributed to everyone from Martin Mull to Laurie Anderson and Elvis Costello), there is a group of people out there that reads a lot about music. If the journalistic work they read is any indication, they are a sharp set. I am increasingly thinking about aiming the eventual book at them. Do you think that is possible, or is there too great a gulf between the academic and journalistic worlds to make that leap?

Daniel

[Question(s): *What are the criteria by which you, in your work, attempt to locate the centre of a set of practices (which may well be decentred, but I detect a focus in the statements you gave.) In a way I am asking you how you (as you work and research) determine if the tail is wagging the dog or vice versa, or perhaps something in between. [...] What are the implications for this in terms of Anthro-media methodologies? When should we be approaching media as Media, with a penumbra of media-related practices, and when should be looking into sets of practices, and the mediated implications they have?*]

Response: 'Media-centrism'are right. My work is becoming media-centric as I become surrounded by media professionals and scholars. Indeed, it is an arbitrary starting point, and potentially dangerous if the political activist/audience is the assumed focus. I don't have a good answer. One reason I am looking at activists is that I wanted to side-step the 'are they resisting' debate and go right to a population that, by most assessments, including their own, are actively engaging in meaningful political resistance. Yet, as you point out, I do not really start out with them as the starting point in this survey project. Instead, I ask them what music does in their lives, putting the music 'first' if you will. While they then become the protagonists in their responses, re-centering themselves, they did so in ways that I found surprising. Conversely, in the participant observation I put performance contexts and those peopling them first, leading to observations that are both reinforcing the survey data and, as shown in the opening vignette and discussion in the paper, also diverging in interesting ways. Which leads us to:

[Question: *What I would like from Mark is more detail on any Participant Observation carried out, or at least some detail of how he is using the survey to guide that. This might contribute to a debate about how we pick our cases in Anthropology*.]

First, your message really captured the intent of the subproject and paper: the survey was intended to provide some broader context and help redirect the participant observation work.

Also, this captures the sense I am getting from all of these wonderful responses, 'the survey is all well and fine, but what about what really matters: participant observation?' I say that jokingly, because as an anthropologist I completely understand. I do the same thing with my quantitative colleagues, and they do the same thing with me. There are more things in heaven

and earth, Horatio, than imagined in (our) philosophy. However, by popular demand I give you a more complete outline of the participant observation work. However, I am not going to submit the full paper each subproject deserves, partly because each of the other projects involves a set of collaborators:

Participant Observation (or 'Action Research?')

I wanted to know how political music functions in the world of 'local music' in Minnesota, an area with a long a storied tradition of producing critical musicians. And no, I am not referring to the Andrews Sisters. So, like a good little ethnographer I learned how to play guitar, wrote a slew of songs, got together with other musicians, formed a band, and started 'gigging' around town in the places where political music is (or used to be) made. With a much greater emphasis on participation than is typical and a sort of 'let's see what happens' approach to the musical intervention, perhaps it is better described as 'action research'. I don't know. I do know that integrating ourselves into these spaces so deeply has allowed not only for experimental interventions, but a very deep level of participatory engagement with audiences (our own and those of other musicians') and other bands. It took a couple years to get proficient enough on guitar to do this, although that learning process was perhaps the most informative of all. Very traditional ethnography in that sense, learning about a new culture through experiencing the enculturation process first-hand. One of my key informants was a brilliant drummer and young man who I played a few concerts with, Varun Kataria. He is political music personified, and observing his main group, Brown Moses, in various concert venues taught me a great deal as well. Varun is just back from finding himself in Brazil, India, and Argentina, and so we plan on performing more.

I joined up with my most recent musical associates and co-ethnographers last January when we formed a group called the Hypoxic Punks. See Hypoxicpunks.org for an outdated webpage with good photos or our MySpace site for more recent info and the usual weak MySpace graphics (we signed on to two more concerts since updating the space). Pardon the primitive recordings, we have advanced far musically since then really.

We played a few clubs at the end of the spring, after a few months of rehearsing, and are back at it after a summer off. Last night was the most recent concert. We played at a place called the Acadia Café, which has a nice concert auditorium hooked to a café that is a general gathering point for Bohemians inhabiting a low-income, inner-city neighbourhood. It is a political centre of sorts, where local music fans rub elbows with activists. I have discovered that there is much less overlap between those two groups than I would have guessed (score one for the survey). On the other hand, audiences are reacting really well to our overtly politicized music, and are not simply writing us off as 'hippies' to use the dismissive term that youth currently apply to anything that even looks like it might have political content (even punks, which as you all know, hate hippies).

You are probably sorry that you asked at this point, but with this a work in progress I am not sure how else to honestly answer your queries.

What have we learned from all this? First, the current 'we' is Desdamona Racheli (bass and interviewer) and Pete Noteboom (guitar and assistance with the follow-up survey). I have learned a great deal about a backstage world that carefully grooms its public face. Ideal for ethnographic investigation.

I have developed several ideas as to why political music tends to take the forms it has, and it is not simply historical accident. For example, technology, cost, and the complications of human interaction seem to be one reason why traditionally political music has been more associated with individual performers than bands, and is so strongly connected to folk music forms. Although the band work is much more fun and the performances feel like a political event in and of themselves, it has been interesting to note the difference between that and solo performing. Based on just a few summer solo performances, there appears to be a major difference in how people experience these different forms of music. After a solo performance, people approach me to talk about the words and ideas. Conversely, after the band performances they approach us to talk about what we did 'musically' (to draw on the colloquial equation of music and sound). This might be one reason why there is a relative over-representation of soloists in the 'political music' genre, from Joe Hill to Woody Guthrie, Joan Baez, Ani Difranco, Billy Bragg, etc. I think there are multiple reasons for this, from tech to generic-expectations on the part of an audience. That is just one theme that I have been thinking about.

Remember, this response is not an ethnographic research paper, but rather a small indication of the sort of themes that will be present in the eventual ethnographic report / book / chapter / journal article, whatever form it takes. All I have at this point is a pile of field notes and recordings. Right now I am trying just to swim in the alien culture that is local music, taking as many notes as I can, and thanking the Gods of Folk-Rock that I have a smart team of collaborators. It is hard work and, to be honest, I am looking forward to finishing the project next spring in order to start putting it all together. Musical performance of this sort does not lend itself well to experimental participation; it demands a very high level of engagement with audiences, fellow performers, tech, PR, and so on. As I sit here writing after a full evening of performing and listening to other bands on the bill, I have a whole new appreciation for the dedication of local musicians.

Quantitative Content Analysis

This bit is in collaboration with Baohuan Li. We are using both computer coding (LIWC) and human coding to take a look at lyrical content. Our main interest is in better understanding the relationship, if any, between mainstream news agendas, popular music, and that which has been generically identified as 'political music'. Baohuan and I started that project three weeks ago.

Interviews

My interaction with other performers has been fairly informal. Desdamona, however, has been interviewing performers who are both self and externally-identified as 'political'. As mentioned in the survey paper, she is finding a good deal of pessimism among these performers concerning the political potential of local performance. Increasingly, it is appearing that it is only the rare political musician, at the rare historical moment, who overtly performs his or her politics before getting a recording contract and a major distributor. Disciplines of the market and all that. On the other hand, our forays into that world thus far make us wonder if it might just be a matter that relatively few even try? Once again, eventually we will get to systematically think and wade through our notes and transcripts. The survey has generated useful questions as we continue the participant observation and interview components of the project.

Life Histories

The final subproject involves four wonderful graduate students and myself. It is the polar opposite of the survey in terms of informant engagement and exactly what a few of you called for. Each of us is interviewing 2 fans of a well-known political musician to take a full case/life history about their identification with their favourite musician and then seeing how their 'fanhood' translates into their political life, if at all. What is lost in terms of representation and breadth (these are ubber-fan-activists, representative of a special breed) will be made-up in depth, hopefully. It should be a good complement to the survey. The survey and your responses have helped us in forming this subproject, which will is part of a Mass Media and Social Change seminar. Students were given the option to collaborate in the larger project and 4 of the 9 students in the seminar decided to do so. The 5 of us have developed the subproject over the last several weeks of the seminar and it is now under human subjects review.

Follow-Up Survey

I might follow-up this survey with one that focuses exclusively on members of student organizations, looking at the comparative role of music in activists of different political stripes and between political vs. non-political (self-defined) students. If funded, that survey would attempt to answer some of the questions that were spawned by this one. Pete Noteboom will assist with this second survey.

Putting it All Together

Like the blind philosophers holding different parts of the elephant, these subprojects get at different aspects of 'political music in the contemporary United States' all with the goal of better understanding what music does. I know that may seem a bit mundane, but I have a strong applied interest. I would like musicians, activists, and organizers think through more effective ways to integrate music into movements. The goal is not to rob music of its aesthetic qualities by turning it into a mere tool. As one respondent noted, to be effective and meaningful, 'music has to be good.' While that may be somewhat tautological, there seems to be a whole lot packed into that 'good' and, as several have pointed out, several assumptions that need to be laid out and critically dissected.

Erkan

[Question: *Mark seems to downplay the role of ethnographic work but it is still more tried than a relatively new means of research – in the discipline? – like this survey*.]

Response: Excellent point. Using a survey, census, or other quantitative instrument is both somewhat new and very old. I've already made the Malinowski reference in a past post, but in general would say that I somewhat lament the shrinking of the term 'ethnography' to simply encompass participant observation. This is my third ethnographic project and this stems in part from a desire to place my participatory observation work in larger contexts. By no means should that ever become an expectation. There is only so much time in a life, and we are not going to see survey researchers, experimentalists, and such going into the field to complement their work with participant observation either.

In part I am experimenting with this mixed-methods approach to better understand the

somewhat polarized world of social research that currently exists in US universities (Does that hold true elsewhere?) More specifically, I would like to be an interlocutor in my own new departmental home between the quantitative and qualitative researchers. They are a very collegial group, but there is very little scholarly exchange between the quantitative and qualitative scholars at present. While it is taking some retraining to do so, I am finding it an interesting challenge.

Perhaps Anthropology could regain its role as an interdisciplinary interlocutor and the 'holistic' mantle if we start rediscovering some of these forgotten methods, applying them critically in new contexts. They used to say that Anthro was 'the most scientific of the Humanities and the most humanistic of the Sciences.' That is not the worst thing to be said of a discipline.

Amahl

[Question: *It seems like Pratt's suggestion that a politically rich popular culture would be in inverse relationship to a flourishing democracy leaves open a lot of questions about definitions of "the popular" and "flourishing democracies", and is, at any rate, a pretty pessimistic view. I'd like to hear you address it more*.]

Response: I don't think Ray feels that the two have to be inversely related, but rather is reflexively admitting that evidence of flourishing political artistic expression does not by any means indicate that people are finding their voices heard in policy-making circles as well.

In my more pessimistic moments I hear the words of the great American socialist and activist Hellen Keller, who argued that 'democracy is but a name.' What would a democracy with 300 million people look like? Can there be concentrated private ownership of nearly every space, thing, and unit of labour-time and still be something like what we call 'democracy.' These questions are too large for this project, yet integral to the fundamental question of the relationship between music and politics. However, since Woody Guthrie and Billy Bragg, among others, have asked those questions musically, we can try to do so anthropologically. I'd really like to hear your thoughts on this excellent question.

[Question: *What kinds of progressive political issues find almost no place in popular music? What makes an issue "sexy" for musicians to sing about? Mapping one issue in U.S. popular music would be really interesting*.]

Response: Great questions. So far, I would say that environmental issues are the biggest gap. It is damn hard to fit that subject into a frame that usually involves individual angst and interpersonal tensions (sex, romance, and the like making up the overwhelming majority of pop topics). Things like war can be represented in that sort of narrative frame fairly easily. However, despite the occasional song like 'where do the children play' by Cat Stevens or 'Big Yellow Taxi' by Joni Mitchell, there aren't many tunes that could be called environmentalist, and I don't think it is for historical reasons alone.

This is one of things we have been experimenting with both lyrically and via context. Last semester my students created performance projects designed to make people aware of the growing dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico caused in large part by storm run-off from the Upper Midwest of the USA. They found excellent ways to do so through theatre, dance, graphic art, etc., but music was a tough nut to crack. This semester they are putting on a

benefit concert where, in order to gain admission, the audience member must donate 4 hours to environmental clean-up with one of three local organizations. Music as a lure and a tool, essentially. That holds some promise. Hopefully the eventual book will be able to detail that outcome, using examples of how the 'mega-event' model Garofalo describes can be integrated into local communities.

Your 'mapping' idea is brilliant, Amahl. Over the years I have been thinking about doing that with references to Joe Hill as the intertextual glue that holds together an otherwise disparate political music tradition in the USA. No matter what style of music a musician plays, there seems to come a point where in order to be connected to that tradition he or she has to sing 'I Dreamed I Saw Joe Hill Last Night.' It would be very useful to similarly trace the movement of a single issue through disparate territories of style, audience, etc. to better understand the topic, musical genres, and movements it travels through. Thanks!

Finally, if anyone has actually gotten this far, I want to thank you all for the helpful responses to my paper. It is an invaluable service and I am greatly in John's debt for making it possible.

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Many thanks for that extraordinary effort to address the numerous issues raised so far by your working paper, Mark.

A reminder to all that the e-seminar closes this coming Tuesday 2 October at 9 pm GMT, so there is still time left to post any final comments on the paper or brief replies to earlier posts.

As I won't be online on Tuesday evening GMT my list co-administrator, Jens Kjaerulff, will be closing the session (possibly a little later than 9 pm as he lives many time zones behind GMT!).

John

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It struck me that there is an issue of how to understand power in Mark's work:

He mentions that the "power" of music surprised him, but that this may not translate into 'real political power.'

Which makes me wonder, what is the distinction between the power of music and real political power, how do they shade into one another, and how does one approach such an issue academically?

One of the analyses of power that has gripped British politics of late is that of Luke's not-so-very-radical view.

He makes a distinction between 'power to' and 'power over' giving Giddens a starting point

for the whole “duality of structure” business.

Gidden’s problem (which Hobart explored I believe in *Loose canons*) is that he cannot make his two bits of duality stick together, he can’t explain the relationships between agency and structure (structuration is, to my mind, descriptive rather than explanatory.)

OK many hostages to fortune there, but the point I am driving at is that this study is looking at the boundary between media related practices and/or practice related media.

Or the boundary between media and activist studies if you like. Now media is stuffed with analyses of power centering on ‘power over’ from hypodermic influence models through to more active audience models. But these models are still-media centric, so activity is still predicated on response to media, thus are still power-over centered, even where looking at audience agency, which seems to imply kinds and degrees of ‘power to.’

Now surely Gidden’s “sandwich-with-no-filling” problem (or excluded middle) could be addressed by looking at how activist music relates to activism, the translations between one another, where media related practices shade into practices with related media?

Complex agency is another good way of addressing this excluded middle, (Inden, Collingwood) and getting at how mediation and agency are interlinked, thus looking at a common ground for social agency and the generation of social structures, and how they may or may not enable one another ('power over' may or may not translate into ‘power to’, and vice versa.)

This way, larger-scale changes (i.e. globalization, social activism as part of wider politics) can be de-naturalized from the descriptive idea of a juggernaught,with its own ‘natural’ momentum, without losing site of the complexities of agency in practice. (The idea of non-intentional outcomes can be included in this, without losing sight of the role of human agency in shaping wider events.)

Does this fit with some aspects of your agenda in approaching political music?

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Collingwood, R. G. 1944. *The new Leviathan; or, Man, society, civilization and barbarism*. Oxford: The Clarendon Press.

Giddens, A. 1979. *Central Problems in Social Theory*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Hobart, M. 2001. *Loose Canons: Commentary as the missing object in media studies*. SOAS Media Research Seminars. www.criticalia.org

Inden, R. B. 1990. Imagining India. Oxford, UK ; Cambridge, Mass., USA: Basil Blackwell.

Lukes, S. 2004. *Power: a radical view* (2nd ed.). Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

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Hi Mark and the others,

Mark, I liked your paper, even though this is a field that I'm not well oriented in. I have followed the discussion with great interest. And I have to ask why all this pessimism about the paper? My understanding of the paper when I read it was that this was an initial scanning in of the research area with the aim to delimit the proper focus for the further study. Isn't this where we all start out in our work, maybe not through quantitative analysis, but through other means? Further, regarding my late entrance into the discussion, I just felt quite relaxed with the fact that the discussion would continue for two weeks, so I would have the possibility to enter my contribution at a point when it suited me well…

I have some brief comments and questions. The discussion touches the question of elite and popular culture. You take it up in terms of pedestrian and subaltern, and finally state, "in the universe of this study, the long list of musicians cited is in a very literal sense what is popular". Further you questions if the concept has an analytical value for this study. I think that you are downplaying the concept of culture and popular culture a bit too easy. Discussions and definitions of popular culture and culture include a lot of assumptions and aspects that might be of great relevance. Some central issues are for example aspects as the outreach and accessibility of a cultural form. The formative aspects of processes and means of communication with a public are other issues. For example Appadurai, Korom, Mills take up this point and state that cultural forms and traditions are closely related to the forms of cultural reproduction. Changes in the means of transmission, production and distribution transform the cultural forms. The contemporary global agenda includes factors as the high tech informational revolution, highly structured mass media, increasing mass education. The popular accessibility of culture has increased and it influences the framework, the social composition and the content in the cultural form. I think that this ought to be relevant factors in a discussion of popular culture/music.

Another set of questions regarding culture and popular culture is the relationship between elite and popular culture. I sometimes have problems understanding what you really mean when you use the concept of popular music. Is it to be considered to be popular music due to the outreach of it – a great number of people have access to it and likes it, is it because it pleases a "non elite category" of the population, what about the position of the musician, composer, singer- must he belong to a "non elite category" to be able to produce popular music, what about the assumptions about the role of classical music as a political force that you take up in the discussion part – is this popular music, and so on. Some interesting standpoints on this issue is for example the Gramscian point of view that the song is identified as popular because it contains a conception of the world that contrasts with what he calls the official conception of the world, and is therefore identified as representing people's conception of the world. Ross (1989) states that for most people popular culture is the source of the common sense that ideologically absorbs and demystifies the specialist discourses. I would like to get a clarification on those points. My own experiences of the distinction between elite and popular culture, or in Indian terms great and little traditions, is that it might be useful categories for analysis, it exist a division between the culture of the higher castes and the lower groups, but this distinction is blurred and rather vague. The two levels of discourse are closely interconnected and have intermingled and interacted. Overlaps between the different traditions are common.

Elements have been reinterpreted, reformed and take on differing meanings in the different levels.

The second point that I want to take up have been discussed to a certain extent and I just want to emphasise it a bit, probably since this would be an area that I would consider central myself. It is stated that music plays a significant role in shaping the information and perspectives that individuals adopt. You also state that music is a very expansive set of practices, texts, ideas, and discourses. I think that it would be nice to see a more comprehensive analysis on this point, to be able to find out the elements that have significance in this process, to delimit the meaningful aspects of the musical performance that gives it the force to affect people...

Some reflections, thanks again for a nice paper!

Kerstin

References:

Appadurai, A., Korom, F. (eds). 1991. *Gender, Genre and Power In South Asian Expressive Traditions*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Ross, A. 1989. *No Respect, Intellectuals and Popular Culture*, New York, London: Routledge.

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Hi Mark and e-seminar participants,

This e-seminar is great. The first one I have attended, and I regret having been such a laggard in this innovation! I really liked Mark's paper. Looking at the part music plays in the news process is a wonderful idea, and I have found the paper, the comments and discussion – especially Mark's comprehensive response – stimulating. I would like to add a few ideas that occur to me.

First, concerning the definition of news, I think what Mark calls a tautological definition, that is, news is what's in the news media, is quite appropriate if one is investigating journalistic practice – asking what reporters and editors consider news and how they make the decision to include this or that story. For a less media-centric approach (to supplement, not replace other approaches) I would like to see us explore news as a form of talk with a very specific kind of narrative energy. In the broad category of institutionalized ways of communicating about conflict (such as law) I think news can be characterized as an alarming report. As Austin (1962) says, distinguishing the illocutionary from the perlocutionary, one can say "I warn you that …", but one cannot say "I scare you that …". Likewise, the news reader can say "this is the news (an institutional product)" but not "this is hereby news to you." The actual psychological impact is an empirical question, not one of conventional expectation, although the two normally coincide. Which is just to say that news has to be news to someone, and I think this is an understanding or a definition that editors and journalists demonstrate in their judgments of newsworthiness. Although this approach could lend itself to psychological reductio-

nism, I think the anthropological perspective rescues it. As Mary Douglas and Steven Ney say in their critique of economic market theory (1998), the human person is never an isolated individual but is always part of a cultural system of shared ideas, values, and stocks of knowledge. When a story – however conveyed – strikes a news community it achieves the effect of being an alarming report, "news", by engaging with (and further shaping) an already prepared ideological community. If news is about conflict, as I argue, then this receiving community may well be a political movement, although it could just as well be the taken for granted, common sense position. Established and resistance ideologies, and their adherent news consumers, could read the same story quite differently.

Music, Mark's insight, can play a powerful role in constructing and holding together the cultural communities that receive news. Or that create a story as news by their reception. I think this idea is well worth pursuing, and the exchange between Mark and Steve is illuminating. Music and lyrics don't necessarily convey new information (which I would argue is not an adequate definition of news anyway) but they can help produce the other necessary ingredient of the news process—the buzz. Just based on my own experience of music and my imagination of others' experience, I think music can crystallize an otherwise felt but not articulated sense of a whole way of life. I think this is the nature of the aesthetic experience in general. The sense of an authentic way of life, experienced or strongly imagined, supplies the range of sources that Mark and Steve cite as giving meaning to the song. A down and out person listening to Woody Guthrie during the Great Depression, perhaps singing along with others in a ritual situation, could gain a new sense of understanding of his or her interests and rights. Not only that, I think I can share that understanding a bit myself now, listening to that music today. Old timey music (e.g. Ralph Stanley) seems very evocative of a way of life as well. I don't think anyone mentioned American rap music, but that seems a good example of political music to me. (I defer to those who know more about it.) It has been argued that rap implies—to be authentic, which is a necessary aspect of it—a hard way of life on the street. The middleclass suburban youth's imagination of that way of life and its political nuances can influence his or her interpretation of news media content.

I was very struck by Mark's finding about the age factor in being open to music as a political/news influence. My undergraduate students say they don't read or watch the news, but they do seem to love their music. I am wondering about the political experience of music among journalists and editors as well as among activists and non-activists. George Marcus and Douglas Holmes (2005) talk about paraethnography, which I think might apply to the ways that news professionals develop a sense of the news community - their attempts to gauge moving thresholds of alarm among the constituents of their target news community. Their own music listening might figure into this perhaps largely unconscious, intuitive, aesthetic sense of newsworthiness.

Finally, as one who has worked mainly in interdisciplinary settings, I like Mark's defence of research methods borrowed from other fields. When anthropologists use them, I really think they are transformed into anthropological methods because of the perspective we have. Unfortunately it works the other way too. Ethnography can be transformed in to a non-anthropological method at times.

Andrew

References:

Douglas, M., Ney S. 1998. *Missing Persons: A Critique of Personhood in the Social Sciences.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Austin J. L. 1962. *How To Do Things With Words*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Holmes D.R., Marcus, G.E. 2005. "Cultures of Expertise and the Management of Globalization: Toward the re-functioning of Ethnography". In A. Ong and S.J. Collier (eds). *Global Assemblages: Technology, Politics, and Ethics as Anthropological Problems*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

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A few points on the power issue.

I think the distinction between the power of music and real political power made by Mark is valid and important. In cultural studies (and the cultural turn across the social sciences) there has been a blurring of the distinction. But as Francis Mulhearn argues in his book Metaculture, this blurring ignores the sheer effectiveness of real politics in its ability to change people's lives in the ways which matter to them most (life and death, distribution of wealth, freedom of speech and so on). Cultural politics is a very weak form by comparison. Still, for me the value of Mark's paper is that it shows a linkage, a gearing between the two in interesting and significant ways.

With Daniel I agree that Giddens structuration theory doesn't work. But I'd put the problem slightly differently, drawing on the critique made by Margaret Archer in Realist Social Theory. She suggests that structure and agency are elided in Giddens's conception - it becomes impossible to see how agency can be generated through structure because they are simply two sides of the same coin. Archer's solution is to treat the two as ontologically distinct though with a mutual impact one upon the other. Structure provides the grounds of agency and it is then either transformed or (most often) reproduced through particular actions over time. A key conception here is that agency 'emerges' from structure, that is it depends on structure yet cannot be reduced to it. Not enough space here to explain these ideas properly.

But the point is that such an approach helps us to see that even in the worst of times people's radical political agency - struggling to transform bad structures - is always possible (the approach also allows for unacknowledged conditions and unintended outcomes of action). I'd say mediation is structured too. But media are actually much more volatile and given to change than 'hard' political structures like - say - capitalism, patriarchy and racial othering. Music in particular can take on a political character in all the ways that Mark shows. So in effect we have a situation where agency is relatively easy-but-ineffectual in the case of music, and where it is relatively difficult-but-effectual in the case of politics. From this perspective there isn't really an empirical answer to the question: 'How much political action can political music engender?' Rather, it all depends on history i.e. where we are with the struggle: some way down the line in Venezuela but a good deal further back in the UK where I live. Incidentally, music has been hugely significant in the Chavista movement.

Jason

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As this seminar winds down, I want to thank everyone for their contributions. I will be digesting your questions and contributions for weeks, including the fascinating discussion that J.A., Kerstin, Carsten, Daniel, and Andrew just contributed. I wish that I had the time it would require to do justice in responding to those final posts.

Instead, I am going to give it a sloppy try, responding in turn to each of those final posts and calling it a night.

Thanks, and I hope to meet you all some day.
Mark

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This last set of responses nicely punctuated the seminar. What is power? How do we define and recognize it? When are cultural expressions "enough"? When do practices, performances, and texts like "music" meaningfully reflect complementary forms of agency or, conversely, when is it an anodyne or substitute for other forms of democratic expression? When does such a catharsis empower and when is it the sigh of the oppressed, potentially empowering someone or something else? The ethical concomitants J.A. Listed strike me as a useful way to think about the matter. Such basic barometers for assessing meaningful (positive) social change are too often missing from assertions of resistance and cultural potential.

It seems that J.A.'s comments present the flip side of the earlier discussion. If, as others pointed out, music does not really do anything autonomously (inform, motivate, etc.), but rather is integrally linked to other practices, texts, performances, and emotions, then musical catharsis is probably not truly "powerful" if isolated and "contained".

Political musicians seem to experience the same conundrums faced by all political dissidents. Theoretical constructs don't survive well in practice. One of the things that drives audiences when encountering political performance is watching to see how performers' will negotiate the difficult contradictions and conundrums that go with making any potentially meaningful claim onstage. One strategy is to insert a few artful, yet obtuse lyrics and hope that the gods of polysemy bring home a message that matters to the audience. If even songs like Born in the USA are susceptible to incorporation into a Republican campaign, what chance does Oliver's Army have? Yet, the head on approach of Rage Against the Machine or Billy Bragg falls prey to critical, aesthetic judgments that sublimate a hidden politics. The old argument of artlessness, the belief that political art is an oxymmoron.

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I don't know where to start, Carsten, and can't do justice to your artful comments.

"Might there be more similarities than one expects" between the answers of rebel and bourgeoisie? Hell yes. Much of what we call politics is an internecine quarrel among elites. Songs tend to be "about" workers or "for" workers, for example, sung by relatively privileged musicians rather than workers themselves. That was as true of Joe Hill as it is of Rage Against the Machine. The professional musician is, by definition, relatively privileged in relation to working people. (No matter how destitute he or she is, he or she gets to spend her time playing music rather than the soul-sucking work asked of others). Political musicians must deal with that conundrum as well. Woody Guthrie, as stage persona, had to lay claim to a life that was not really his (farmer, worker), and sell that image to willing urban liberals. Otherwise, he really would have to become a worker, and politically impotent as a musician (no time or resources to do what he does best: perform). The impossible is expected of the "movement musician," that he or she is truly connected to a movement or that of which she sings.

Some of the same might be said of the relatively privileged "audience" as well. These are the contradictions that send much of the bourgeoisie running for the nearest safe place, the contradiction-free (and movement-free) zone. Take a look at the "hipster olympics" on youtube, a wonderful update of the Python skit. It is incredible the lengths that people will go to in order to avoid the conundrums of political existence.

That is what I like about punks; they tend to revel in their contradictions (although The Clash did their best to hide their art school backgrounds).

Interesting comparative reading:

Unfair, but interesting critique of performers fostering mythic working class personas vs. "true" elite identities:

Gray, M. 2002. *The Clash: Return of the Last Gang in Town*. Milwaukee, Wis.: Hal Leonard.

The critic-fans defence:

Gilbert, P. 2005. *Passion is a Fashion: The Real Story of the Clash*. 1st Da Capo Press ed. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press.

Smartest book in the set, written by the roadies:

Green, J., Barker, G., Lowry, R. 1999. *A Riot of our Own: Night and Day with the Clash*. 1st ed. New York: Faber and Faber.

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The time has come to close this e-seminar on "Popular Music in Political Movements", and John Postill has asked me to do so on his behalf, as he was not able to tend to his email this evening.

I wish to thank Mark Pedelty for contributing the paper, and for his very generous participation in the discussion that ensued; Dr Herman Wasserman for acting as discussant; and the many subscribers to the Media Anthropology Network mailing list who contributed comments on the paper.

Anna Horolets has kindly offered to transcribe the session, and Philipp Budka will make it available on the network's web site soon.

The next E-seminar on the list is scheduled for 20 November – 4 December 2007, where Ursula Rao (Sydney) has agreed to contribute a paper entitled "Local Newsmaking, Globalization and the Culture of Neoliberalism", based on ethnographic fieldwork among local journalists in Lucknow, India.

Best regards,

Jens Kjaerulff
(PhD, co-administrator of the Media Anthropology Network's mailing list)