

SINGING IN THE DARK? WORLD MUSIC AND ISSUES OF POWER AND AGENCY

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INTRODUCTION

In the mid-1980s a new category of music, World Music, appeared in the western markets and mass media. It was launched by a group of British independent record labels as a marketing category for music that did not seem to fit properly into any of the existing racks in the retail outlets ([fRoots](#), 2003). What was originally a couple of months' campaign in the record stores grew eventually into an institution: today World Music has its own growing section in the record stores, and there are trade fairs, festivals, radio programmes, magazines and organizations dedicated solely to it. World Music is an example of economic and cultural globalization.

The main focus in the academic research conducted on World Music has been on issues of dominance and agency in the global music market. Two main but quite opposite understandings of these themes have emerged in the literature. According to one view, World Music provides a positive basis for the creation of fluid and negotiable identities, and even for resistance from the margins to dominant systems and meanings.¹ According to the other view, World Music is just another phenomenon through which the western world is appropriating the Third World's resources, this time musical creativity.²

In this chapter I shall review the findings of existing World Music research and explore the possibilities of enriching it by adding two different approaches to globalization: sociological studies of the structures of the global music industry on the one hand, and some of the methods of political economic Global Value Chain analysis on the other. Issues of power and its distribution are central to each of these three branches of research, though the approaches taken and units of analysis used are very different in each case. I shall attempt to examine the potential for the cross-fertilization of these different approaches: my focus will be on how World Music research might benefit from this exercise, though I also believe that research on commodity chains and global industries should benefit equally from the research on World Music. Rather than produce a final analysis of issues of power and agency in World Music, the article will offer a more precise means of approaching these issues. Much of the literature reviewed below deals with music of African origins, which from the very beginning has formed a very significant sub-group within the category of World Music.

WORLD MUSIC RESEARCH

Questions of power in both its positive and negative senses are central to research on World Music. The established views usually place the emphasis either on the possibilities of agency and resistance or on the facts of hegemony and dominance. Feld (2000: 152–3) has called these views the ‘celebratory’ and ‘anxious narratives’ of World Music respectively. However, more accounts have appeared on the anxious than the celebratory side.

One example of a ‘celebratory’ reading is Frith (1989: 5), who emphasises the ‘vigour and imagination with which local musicians take over “hegemonic” pop forms for themselves’, and consequently sees popular music as an empowering and democratic force.³ Taylor (1997:

197) sees World Music as a quite unprecedented system empowering both hybrid sounds and hybrid selves. While not denying the existence of western dominance in the industry, Taylor places the emphasis on the new spaces of resistance that have arisen in reaction to these new forms of dominance. He shows how non-western musicians appropriate and modify western songs and images to address issues important to them in their music and performances, as well as the musicians' discourses about their own identities in published interviews. Taylor concludes that the possibilities for innovative resistance in World Music derive from the fact that 'new technologies and modes of musical production allow these musicians to occupy different subject positions in a kind of simultaneity never before possible' (1997: 94).

The 'anxious' form of narrative, conversely, highlights how the western music industry, musicians and media exploit Third World musical forms and musicians. These studies see in World Music another late capitalist and post- or neo-colonial system sustaining the structural inequality between the First and the Third Worlds. This appropriation is seen as taking place on both the economic and symbolic levels, as will be discussed next.

Many commentators have remarked that the term World Music in itself implies a division of the world into two disparate and unequal parts. First used by academics in the early 1960s to refer to non-western music, the phrase had a liberal and relativist ring to it, emphasizing musical plurality and contesting the Eurocentric tendency to define music as Western European art music (Feld 1994b: 266; Taylor 1997: 2). In the mid-1980s, the term was adopted by the music industry as a new marketing category. Being initially associated especially with musical forms from Africa and the African diaspora, World Music has gradually come to embrace music of non-western origins in general, as well as that of European and American minorities. Even though often marketed as the music of a specific

ethnic group, World Music is usually fusion music accommodating a variety of musical styles and traditions, often in a single piece of music. Rather than a style or genre, the term thus connotes a social and territorial space by referring to musical styles originating outside the dominant north-western Euro-America, those of marginal populations (Erlmann 1994: 179; Feld 1994b: 266; Mitchell 1993: 310). The distinction between music and musicians of different origins is retained in how recordings are offered for consumption in music stores: while western music is usually categorized according to genre or artist's name, World Music is primarily categorized according to its continent, country or ethnic group of origin. Even while it broadens our musical sensibilities, then, it can be remarked that the category of World Music simultaneously reminds us of and reinforces the boundary between the First and Third Worlds, that is, between 'us' and 'them'.

The most concrete forms of appropriation are discussed in terms of the meagre salaries paid to musicians and the use of their artistic and intellectual resources and property without proper acknowledgement of copyright, as well as in settings that are far-removed from the musician's original intention (e.g., Feld 1994a, 1994b, 2000; Taylor 1997: 40–63). From the beginning, the production of World Music has frequently involved the collaboration of Third World musicians and western pop stars, such as Paul Simon, David Byrne, Peter Gabriel and Ry Cooder. In complex ways, these collaborations are often found to benefit mostly the western partners. For instance, Paul Simon is acknowledged to have paid good wages for recording studio time, as well as the standard shares in royalties to his South African collaborators, Ladysmith Black Mambazo, in the *Graceland* record (1986). However, he also claims the overall ownership of the product: the record cover mentions only his name, and the inside says: 'Produced by Paul Simon', and 'All Songs Copyright by Paul Simon' (Feld 1994a: 239–42).⁴

Elaborate musical, textual and performance analyses reveal other, more subtle modes of appropriation (see, e.g., Erlmann 1994: 176–9; Meintjes 1990; Taylor 1997: 41-50). For instance, Meintjes’s analysis finds in *Graceland* a text that, while it celebrates plural authorship and constitutes a dialogue between centre and periphery, at a deeper level contains highly power-laden images of the ‘other’. Taylor’s (1997: 41–50) examination of Peter Gabriel’s *Us* album shows that while Gabriel uses a wide array of foreign musical styles and musicians, his own singing is foregrounded, while the singing, music and lyrics of the other musicians are distanced by mixing them into the background. This also occurs on the album’s cover, which depicts Gabriel straining alone into the unknown, as well as in the video of the first track of the album, which focuses on Gabriel. Feld (1994b) has applied the Canadian composer Schafer’s term ‘schizophonia’ to this kind of separation, splitting and distancing of sounds from their original sources and musicians. The issues of appropriation and copyright involved in such splitting become even more complex in the ambient and new-age type of music, where the musicians do not perform together, but instead western composers and musicians use recorded non-western music as an inspirational source and treat it as oral tradition, which therefore, it is claimed, does not belong to anyone (Feld 2000). Feld (1994a: 245) concludes that western elite pop artists are in the strongest artistic and economic position to appropriate global music diversity with the full support of their record companies. Other researchers (Goodwin and Gore 1990: 78) move beyond the role of specific actors to emphasize that ‘media imperialism is not perpetuated by pop musicians, but by the western cultural hegemony inherent in the structure of the global media’.

Whether on the industry or individual levels, economic appropriation often goes hand in hand with more symbolic forms of appropriation. Several studies have shown how the World

Music industry is based on and reproduces primitivist images and stereotypes of non-western peoples. The music and the way it is presented and produced emphasize exoticism, sensuality and mysticism, which all add up to images of pre-modern vitality (Erlmann 1994: 179; Taylor 1997: 19–27). An example of the actual production processes of such images is Meintjes's (2003: 180) examination of how Zuluness, as an epitome of 'ageless and virile Africa', is worked into the sound of *mbaqanga* music in a South African studio. This is done in several ways and on multiple levels: for instance, drums and percussion are emphasized, the timbre of the drum is made to sound acoustic and live, the genre and lyrics of the songs are transformed, and aspects of different traditional forms are combined. The overall idea is to make the music sound pre-industrial, participatory, human, unmediated, spontaneous, rural and thus more traditional and more ideally African than *mbaqanga* is or ever was; there is no actual history of live, acoustic *mbaqanga*, nor much connection with rural South African modes of expression (Meintjes 2003: 130, 134).

Meintjes (2003) remarks that ideas of race, class and ethnicity are produced for the world market through musical sound. Indeed, many analysts have criticized the essentialization and commodification of ethnicity which lie at the heart of World Music production and consumption and which, by reproducing symbolic images of less civilized others, sustain the unequal power and economic structures between the First and Third Worlds.

In live performances and on record covers, primitivist images are often produced by presenting half-naked bodies in ethnic costumes and vigorous dancing styles, which convey the sense of passionate, powerful, somewhat dangerous Africans. Images of heroic warriors, freedom fighters and political militants are also used successfully in World Music markets. Such ideas are strongly associated with Zuluness (Meintjes 2003) and with several African

musicians, such as the Zimbabwean Thomas Mapfumo, the Algerian Khaled and the Nigerian Fela Kuti. Schade-Poulsen (1999: 28–37) describes how, in the western media, Algerian *rai* music and its main representatives, like Khaled, were politicized by evoking images of youthful rebellion familiar to westerners. With repeated references to such figures as Elvis Presley, Jim Morrison and James Dean, and to such music genres as rock, punk, reggae and rap, *rai* music was made sociologically understandable and familiar to western audiences. The media interpreted drinking and *rai* music as part of the struggle for a liberal, modern Islam in opposition to an intolerant, archaic Islam and the totalitarian state.

Turino (2000: 335) makes a similar remark concerning the production of sounds for the world market. He suggests that instrumental and musical sounds must be foreign and distinctive, yet simultaneously sufficiently accessible and familiar-sounding in order to attract a World Music audience. According to Turino, *mbira* emerged as a major national and nationalist symbol in and for Zimbabwe only after it had become popular in World Music circles in the 1980s.

Turino believes that the interest in the world market was largely due to the fact that the sound and style of *mbira* were easy for westerners to recognize and comment on (Turino 2000: 340–1). The music of Thomas Mapfumo, a central figure in the popularization and politicization of *mbira*, was made more accessible through particular modes of technical production, such as softening vocal styles, clarifying the distinct parts of a musical piece and transforming the sound of *mbira* from the dense, buzzy quality preferred by indigenous players into a light, clear, metallic sound (Turino 2000: 345–6).

This paradox of ‘different yet familiar enough’ is entirely logical to Erlmann (1994, 1996), who sees World Music as an example of late capitalism’s systemic reproduction of itself through the production of difference. In this system, homogenization and differentiation are

not mutually exclusive features, but integral constituents of musical aesthetics and globalization. Analysing the sound texture, lyrics and on-stage performance of a *Graceland* song, Erlmann finds a ‘post-modern space littered with semiotic debris without any referent to authenticity... Graceland offers a sonic scenery without actors, pulverized into gazes, copies of copies’ (1994: 179). Thus, regardless of the celebratory rhetoric of multiculturalism, there is no space for authentic otherness or difference in the global institution; everything is produced by and reduced to the all-encompassing system (Erlmann 1994: 470; 1996). Consequently, according to Erlmann (1996: 470), ‘a serious analysis of global musics can only be written from a subject position in the West’. In this view, ‘the absence of the Other’ (Erlmann 1994: 468) that the late capitalist system produces in order to reproduce itself results in the loss of overall agency for the ‘other’.

Erlmann’s analysis thus opposes the more celebratory views of World Music mentioned above that see it as offering a genuine space for musical and cultural diversity for musicians in the Third World and elsewhere. However, these extremely optimistic and pessimistic views respectively on the possibilities for agency in the global music industry are too totalizing and difficult to substantiate when the discussion remains on the system or macro-level. The problem is in the nurturing of dichotomies such as us–them, Third World–First World and dominance–resistance. In order to make further progress with issues of power and agency, we need a more diversified view of the industry and the actors who make it up. In the next section, therefore, I shall deal with the literature on the global music industry of which World Music is a part in order to examine how this might advance our understanding of the phenomenon.

THE GLOBAL MUSIC INDUSTRY

Existing sociological research on the music industry concentrates especially on the history of the recording industry, and that of the major companies in particular. Because this history has largely been one of concentration, issues of power have also surfaced centrally in this research, concerning the questions of the ability of a few transnational companies to dictate cultural production and consumption, and of the relationships between the majors and the independent companies.

The origins of the music industry lay in the late nineteenth century, when the industrial production of phonograms and gramophones started (Graham 1988: 11; Wallis and Malm 1984: 1). The industry experienced three periods of expansion in the twentieth century. By the end of the first period, prior to the First World War, the industry had developed many of its present-day working structures and established itself around the world. The second period of growth was in the late 1920s and ended with the depression. The third period of expansion took place between the late 1950s and the late 1970s (Gronow and Saunio 1998).⁵ After a clear decline in sales in the late 1970s, the situation improved again in the 1980s, thanks to increased cassette sales and a substantial increase in compact disc sales (Burnett 1996: 45). At the beginning of the twenty-first century, however, worldwide sales in the industry have been decreasing again. This is due to an upsurge in downloading from the Internet and the proliferation of CD-burning, combined with competition from other entertainment sectors.⁶

Even though concentration was the overall tendency in the music industry for much of the twentieth century, this trend became particularly strong in the 1980s, as the industry responded to the downturn in sales and the recession with a flurry of takeovers and mergers. Between the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 2000s there were at different times

five or six major companies with total market share fluctuating between 70 and 90 per cent of worldwide record sales (see Burnett 1996: 50–9; Taylor 1997: 198). At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the ‘big five’ were Universal Music, Sony Music Entertainment, EMI Music, the Warner Music Group and BMG (the Bertelsmann Music Group), which together were reported to control 71 per cent of worldwide sales, while the independent companies’ share of the markets was 29 per cent (IFPI 2002). Recently discussions of further mergers by the majors have been under way.⁷

In addition to mergers, the majors responded to the decline of the 1970s and 1980s by increasing the importance of international markets; by the 1990s they were reportedly deriving over half of their incomes from them (Burnett 1996: 4, 48). This internationalization has been realized through subsidiaries, affiliates and non-affiliated licensees in foreign countries.

The major music industry, though large in its own right, is part of even larger global media, electronics and entertainment conglomerates. Each of the five major music companies belongs to huge corporate groups, which have spread their actions to cover a range of business sectors. These sectors are subject to constant restructurings of the corporations themselves and acquisitions between them, but in addition to the record industry several of the following areas can be found in each of the existing conglomerates: the manufacture of electronic technology; book, magazine and music publishing; and the ownership of retail outlets, film studios, and video and film distribution networks, as well as television, cable and computer networks.⁸

A major driving force in the concentration, diversification and internationalization of these corporations has been to increase their control of the market through their control of different production and distribution sections in the field of entertainment. Diversification facilitates the spreading of a creative product across as many outlets as possible. Audiences who have seen a film may buy the book, a magazine with the star on the cover, the music of the soundtrack and maybe a T-shirt. They may even rent the video or watch the film again on television or listen to the theme song on radio or music television (Burnett 1996: 17, 22).

The differences and relationships between the independent and the major companies have attracted considerable discussion in the literature. Small companies are often seen as the innovators in the industry, since they are constantly looking for and experimenting with the production of new sounds, in contrast to the majors, which aim to minimize risk and expand their market share by trying to produce mainstream hits for a global audience. The dominance in the market of the small and large companies respectively has often been described as cyclical. Smaller labels are frequently seen as the risk-takers and market-testers for new acts, which are then taken over by the majors as soon as they prove successful. The same trend has been noted with respect to the successful independent labels themselves, who often become merged with or enter into partnerships with the major companies. Such partnerships are typically licensing or distribution deals, through which a major company distributes and markets an independent label's products and possibly helps it financially.⁹ Usually the independent labels also rely on the majors to press their records. As a result of their purchases of smaller record companies and distribution deals with other companies, the major companies typically own several record labels and may also distribute several independent ones. A single label usually specializes in certain music genres and can thus be seen as a way of branding for a company.

As well as concentration in the industry, an increase in outsourcing has also been observed since the 1960s (Frith 1981: 137; Hesmondhalgh 1996: 479; Kealy 1982: 104). This means using outside rather than in-house professionals, such as producers, sound engineers and managers. According to Hirsch (1990), however, outsourcing fits in well with the nature of cultural industries and thus typifies them. The record industry relies on creative material generated outside itself. It is rational for the company to delegate the responsibility for finding and producing new talent to outside professionals such as record producers on a contract basis, rather than having them in-house adding to its overheads. The same logic applies to the artists, who are contracted on a royalty basis. According to Hirsch (1990: 129), the record company administration is dependent on these outside specialists in the sense that it has to trust their professional judgement and cannot interfere much beyond setting budgetary limits. While this kind of craft administration of production is typical of cultural industries, the distribution sector is much more bureaucratically organized and is characterized by greater economic concentration than the production sector (Hirsch 1990: 131). The distribution and exhibition of products are especially crucial spheres in cultural industries: sales are often significantly dependent on the extent of publicity and on availability.

Control over the distribution sector has become ever more vital in the music industry, as well as more concentrated. Indeed, one industry executive quoted by Burnett (1996: 2) remarked in the 1990s: 'One of the definitions of a major record company is that you are in the distribution business.' Until the 1970s the record industry relied largely on independent record distributors acting as intermediaries between record manufacturers and retailers. In the 1980s the independent distribution system began to break down, as many independent labels agreed to be distributed by a major (Burnett 1996: 61). Burnett has described the development

as follows: 'The 1980s saw a change from retail sales via well-stocked music shops with knowledgeable staff to rack sales via small outlets lacking knowledgeable staff [on the one hand], and a trend towards a few large record mega stores [on the other hand]' (1996: 75).¹⁰

Also within the major record companies, distribution divisions seem to have increased their power (Negus 1999: 55). Such divisions link the record company with retailers and may include market researchers, sales staff and business analysts. Negus (1999: 56) relates their growing power in the US to the increasing competition between retailers, which has resulted in the strategy of the 'tight control of inventory'. In response, record companies have made their distribution services more flexible by adopting 'just in time' methods of distribution and by allowing the retailers to return unsold records. Distribution divisions in record companies have consequently acquired more power in that they control not only how many records should be shipped but also how many should be manufactured by the labels in the first place. The distribution units can exert this power in relation to both the other divisions within the record company and the independent labels that the company distributes (Negus 1999: 57).

Because promotion is essential in the music industry, though increasingly expensive, usually only a small selection of all the music produced is promoted. Those who decide which products to promote are thus also very influential in the industry, in a large company typically being situated in the promotion and marketing departments. According to Frith (2002), these departments have acquired a greater say even regarding what is produced in the first place, decisions that formerly used to be taken primarily by the A&R people (artists and repertoire).

Some of these changes in the global music industry accord with the much wider changes in global industrial organization that have taken place in the last twenty years. Among such

wider developments are the increasing internationalization of retail activities and the concentration of their control in countries of the North, as well as the overall increase in the power of firms specializing in retailing, branding and marketing. The strategy of the ‘lead firms’ in various industries has been to retain control over product definition and marketing while outsourcing some other functions, such as production and inventory management (Gibbon and Ponte forthcoming: 6, 89). These tendencies are also found in the global music industry, as the majors’ strategy over the past twenty years has been to extend their control over as many distribution channels as possible while outsourcing functions on the production side. Nonetheless it remains questionable whether the ‘lead firms’ can actually lead successfully in the same way and with the same efficiency as in manufacturing industries or agribusinesses, for instance. The music industry’s reliance on the creative potential that lies outside itself might make it more difficult for it to concentrate power in product branding and design. This feature of the industry is situated in the dynamics between the majors and the independent companies, in which the latter often act as talent scouts for the whole industry (Frith 1981: 156).

There is no shared understanding among researchers about how the relationships between the independent and the major companies should be interpreted.¹¹ Perhaps most often, however, the position of the independent companies and what they represent – diversity and innovation – have been seen as precarious and under constant threat from the predatory majors (e.g., Gillett 1971; Wallis and Malm 1992). The high concentration of transnational control has been related to the low diversity of musical output (Peterson and Berger 1975; Rothenbuhler and Dimmick 1982). However, more recently other writers have described the relationship between the independents and the majors more as one of co-operation and symbiosis than of competition. According to Frith (1989: 107), in experimenting with sounds, trends and artists,

the independent firms play a necessary role in the industry and have achieved a permanent if subordinate position in it. According to Burnett (1996: 61–2), concentration has left more room for specialists in the form of the independent labels and has led to cooperation rather than competition in the industry. Consequently, he suggests (1996: 137), diversity increased in the 1980s as well as concentration.

Hesmondhalgh (1996: 480) has suggested that nowadays the independent labels can be seen as outsourced A&R departments, contracted to the major record companies in a similar way to artists. However, he does not interpret the tendency towards externalization in terms of a wider distribution of power within the recording industry. Quite the contrary, rather than structural changes and increasing diversity, he emphasizes the continuity of patterns of power in the industry (1996: 479, 483). He suggests (1996: 485) that the situation in the music industry is comparable to that in the film industry as analysed by Aksoy and Robins (1992); that is, the forces of oligopoly, reintegration and centralization remain strong.

This dichotomy in the views of researchers into the global music industry resembles that found in World Music research, namely between the view of an all-consuming transnational industry as a system that leaves little space for autonomy for minor actors on the one hand, and the view that sees the potential for alternative spaces for the minor actors within the system on the other. The studies reviewed above do give us some idea of the structures and nodes of power in the global music industry and of their changes. In order to probe further into questions of dominance and agency, more unpacking of the industry into yet finer categories of agents and forms of power and empowerment is required, however.

WORLD MUSIC AND SPACES OF POWER AND EMPOWERMENT

It is difficult to deny the economic power of the major record companies and their parent corporations and its concentration in Europe, the USA and Japan. The division of labour in World Music fits into the general description of the music industry offered above, in the sense that the majors become interested in artists who have become successful and who appear to have sufficient cross-over potential. Nonetheless, independent companies have played and continue to play a very crucial role in World Music.

There is very little research focusing on the independent music industry specifically.¹² Most often it is considered secondarily, in terms of its fate and potential in the face of the expanding transnational music industry. As was mentioned earlier, the category of World Music was originally the commercial innovation of a group of independent labels. Hernandez (1993: 51–3) has remarked that non-western musical styles and musicians could not have achieved such popularity in the US and Europe without the support and encouragement of a specialized infrastructure – above all, the small labels, specialized radio programmes and magazines – to promote them. World Music remains driven largely by the efforts of the small labels and freelancers. These efforts include both production and all kinds of publicity work for the music, that is, the very exposure that is essential for cultural products. This is an important point to remember when considering the structures of power and domination in World Music, one that tends to be missed in research that considers the global music industry as a single block.

Nor is the distinction between the majors and the independent companies sufficient: a subtler understanding of the various categories of actors and their functions and networks is needed. Approaches that pay closer attention to the specific occupational groups and production

processes within the music industry have been developed in the fields of organizational sociology and popular music studies. Hirsch (n.d.; 1990) describes the culture industries as pre-selection systems where each product has to pass several filtering stages before it reaches the audience. At each stage there are more products available than what gets through the stage. While some of these stages are situated within the record industry, such as those taken care of by the producers, company managers and promoters, certain crucial filtering stages are outside of and beyond the direct control of the industry itself. These stages are taken care of by the professionals who ‘discover’, select and recruit creative material to be produced by the industry (talent scouts), on the one hand, and the mass media gatekeepers who select the products to receive media coverage, on the other hand (Hirsch n.d.; 7).

Even though Hirsch accords power to the occupational groups that do the filtering, his model has been criticized for the view of a rather passive quality of the engagement of these gatekeepers with the product. According to Hirsch (n.d.), the product does not undergo changes as it flows through the system. Hirsch’s and some other’s comparable models (e.g., Ryan and Peterson 1982) have been criticized for an assembly-line view of cultural production where the product is quite mechanically shifted from one stage to the other (Negus 1996: 56–7).¹³

In emphasizing the active role of the recording industry personnel in shaping the product Negus uses the concept of cultural intermediaries instead of gatekeepers. At the same time, rather than focusing on how the industry creates the cultural product, Negus shifts the view to study how the industry is shaped by the wider socio-cultural context and values (Negus 1992, 1999). Consequently, instead of emphasizing corporate control in music production, Negus is interested in the more informal webs of meaning and practice that function in the popular

music production as well as the groups of workers who mediate between artists and audiences, that is, between production and consumption. Such groups include, for instance, advertising, marketing and promotion personnel as well as journalists. Negus (2002: 505-6) includes in the group of mediators also some other occupational groups that are seldom given specific attention as cultural intermediaries but that in fact have an important impact on the realization and shaping of the creative product in the music industry; as such groups he brings out senior managers, business analysts, accountants, and lawyers.

This kind of disaggregating of the industry into occupational groups is very helpful in diversifying the picture of the industry and directing attention to the networks that function beyond and across the company formations. However, accepting the fact that the industry is part of the wider socio-cultural context should not lead away from acknowledging the industry itself as one of the structuring contexts for the actors. For a study about issues of power in the World Music institution it would be useful to examine the networks of actors in the context of the larger industry structure and consider what kinds of power and control different structural settings enable or enforce for diverse participants. This would contribute also to the discussion of the major and the independent companies; that is, to the question of their interrelations and differences in their modes of functioning. There is also a need for a better conceptualization of the different kinds of power that the various actors exercise as well as of the interaction and modes of influence and control between the different categories of actors. In order to formulate more specific questions about structures and qualities of power the World Music research might benefit from utilizing some of the methods and ideas of the Global Value Chain (GVC) analysis.

GVC analysis studies the whole chain of firms and other actors that are involved in the production of a commodity for consumption. It aims at defining the agents or firms that 'drive' or 'lead' the chain, the means they use to do so and the impacts that this has on the other agents in the chain. It also attempts to delineate the conditions under which subordinate participants can move up the chain hierarchy (Gereffi 1994).

A central way of conceptualizing power in this analysis is thus through the notion of 'driving' or 'leading' a chain. 'Leading' does not generally refer to a firm's market share but rather to its ability to control certain functions, which allows it to dictate the terms of participation by other actors in different functional positions in the value chain (Gibbon and Ponte forthcoming: 90). In a recent research project into the global commodity chains of six products of African origin (on which the other chapters of this book are based), the lead firms' mechanisms of driving *vis-à-vis* their first-tier suppliers were found to be located in their ability to define a range of aspects in trade, such as the functional division of labour, prices, payment terms and other contractual conditions, performance criteria for first-tier suppliers, and the quality of a product or service that the lead firm wants to purchase (Gibbon and Ponte forthcoming: 105–6).

Cultural commodities are again different from those studied in the project mentioned above, of which five were agricultural (citrus, cocoa, coffee, cotton and fresh vegetables) and one manufactured (clothing). One could, however, use GVC analysis and the results of the project as a heuristic tool to formulate questions about the possible forms of 'driving' in a music chain. Issues of control in the music industry might be more complicated, because value and quality, for instance, are probably often more negotiable than in the case of many of the agricultural or manufactured commodities. Consequently, World Music research would also

have to consider the more symbolic or immaterial forms of control and power related, for example, to the definition of quality and style. A broader definition of forms of control than that used in the typical GVC analysis is thus needed in research into music chains. Such research would address the following questions: who are the agents that constitute the networks of the World Music industry, what are their functions in the industry, what forms of control *vis-à-vis* other agents do they exert, and how do they negotiate economic and symbolic value for themselves, their work and their music? It is possible that, by acknowledging different variants of control, the study of World Music chains would differ from the usual GVC analysis by finding more than one key agent or ‘driver’ in these chains. It would then study how the different forms of control are played out and competed for.

In addition to the forms of power that leading agents exert in a chain through ‘driving’, GVC analysis studies the empowerment of the subordinate participants in a chain through the concept of ‘upgrading’. In broad terms, ‘upgrading’ refers to the potential of subordinate agents to increase the quality or value of their products, the efficiency of their production process or their skills in the production process. Some of the recent studies have examined the upgrading opportunities by searching to identify the concrete roles in the chains that trigger rewards for the subordinate agents, such as higher and more stable returns, as well as the routes for achieving those roles (Gibbon and Ponte forthcoming, 81-2).

Including the question of upgrading, to study the World Music institution enables examining power from two perspectives; that is, not only as an agent’s ability to control the actions of the others but also the possible forms of empowerment that participation in the institution may bring for the subordinate agents. Making a distinction between these two sides of power and considering both of them in one study would bring clarity to the present discussion in the

World Music research and its tendency for an either-or position in the issues of dominance and agency.

Defining possibilities of upgrading for Third World agents in the World Music industry would require a study of its own, but on the basis of the existing information, it is possible to describe some empowering aspects of the institution for Third World actors. First of all, one might ask what the position of and possibilities for non-western artists would be were there no World Music industry. As was suggested above, the existence of the World Music niche and infrastructure has been essential in obtaining exposure for Third World artists in the West in the first place. This argument about the empowering aspects of the very existence of the 'system' can be set against the 'anxious' narratives that see the institution mainly in terms of domination.

Participation in the World Music industry may have positive repercussions beyond the industry chains proper and the dominant western world. Among such possibilities are the stylistic, technological and informational influences that flow back from the west to developing countries. For instance, internationally successful African stars often use their resources to boost the music industry at home. In the mid-1990s 80 per cent of recording studios in Ghana were set up by musicians who had made money abroad (Collins 1994: 146). Many individual musicians are noted for such efforts, such as the Senegalese Youssou N'Dour, who has built recording studios in Dakar and promotes other African musicians in the world markets. These forms of upgrading do not necessarily take place within the global music industry, but aside it, even though they may at some point become part of the global chains.

Participation in World Music circles can also create other kinds of value and linkages extending beyond hegemonic centres. Hernandez (1993: 64, 67) has remarked that in Columbia, for instance, World Music has expanded musical horizons by revitalizing the country's own, formerly despised, African musical heritage.¹⁴ As a consequence, in Columbia and the Spanish Caribbean the World Music boom has enhanced transcultural musical and economic flows within the region and with Africa. According to Guilbault (1993: 39), Antillean music was only recognized in the western media and markets after first becoming popular among West Indian and African immigrant groups in Paris. Such increases in horizontal linkages between different immigrant groups and multilateral linkages within the Third World are usually of both economic and cultural value.

Finally the categories and the images that the 'system' produces and that are often found to exert symbolic violence on Third World participants may also have more positive potential. For example, ethnic or regional categorization of World Music, even while simplifying diversity, also functions as a way of defining the quality and style of music. It is a way to make foreign music more accessible to its audience, a way of branding the music. Sometimes non-western participants in the industry may also willingly enhance and make use of the essentialized and commodified ethnicities that the World Music industry seems to produce for them. For example, the study mentioned earlier by Meintjes (2003), which describes how most stereotypical images of 'Africanness' or 'Zuluness' are mediated into music in a South African studio, simultaneously reveals that this sound is being created by an African producer, who is well aware of the stylistic expectations of both the domestic and the international markets, and who modifies the sound accordingly.

There are also other ways for Third World participants to make use of the images used in the industry. Earlier Taylor's study (1997) was mentioned on how non-western musicians appropriate and modify western songs and images to address issues important to them in their music and performances. Turino (2000) examines how popular music has played an integral part in the emergence of the black middle class in Zimbabwe. World Music may thus help form and reform identities for Third World participants: it is not only a means of simplifying and suppressing them.

The point in bringing out these examples of the ways that the Third World participants can benefit from or make use of the World Music institution is not to prove that the 'anxious' narratives are simply wrong and misguided. It is rather to alert us to the complexities of power and diversity of agents and agency. One way to examine the pros and cons of the World Music institution would be to make a comparative study of the position, possibilities and kinds of rewards of artists who participate in the global music industry and of those who do not. The existing arguments in the World Music research rather add up to a list of different forms and levels of domination and agency than a debate; that is, the kinds of agency and domination that they refer to are often so disparate that they are not easily comparable to each other. One way to make the comparison more manageable is to be clear about the breadth of the context in which issues of domination and agency are being considered; that is, are we considering relations within the industry itself, or its possible wider effects?

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have suggested that the notion of the 'global music industry' should be unpacked into networks of agents in order to be able to examine properly questions of power

and agency in World Music. At the same time, however, one should not lose sight of the broader industry structures within and across of which these networks function. To achieve this goal, the existing literature on World Music might be enriched by using some of the findings of the global music industry and popular music studies and by introducing the methods of Global Value Chain analysis. The global music industry studies offer analysis on the broad developments in the structures of the industry, and especially on those of the major entertainment and music companies. The popular music industry studies help to diversify the picture of the processes of music production by looking at the smaller units of agents, the different occupational groups that function both within and outside the industry itself. The agents involved in the World Music industry include artists, producers, studio engineers, record companies and the different divisions or functionaries within them, promoters, distributors, retailers, and publishers as well as media people and DJs. The GVC analysis for its part offers a means for studying more closely the different aspects of power and control that the diverse categories of agents exert in relation to each other. Forms of control include such issues as the potential to influence contractual terms, other agents' functions, responsibilities and performance, as well as to define the economic and symbolic value of one's own and another one's work or music.

The existing arguments in the World Music literature about dominance and empowerment, as expressed in the 'anxious' and 'celebratory' narratives respectively, seem to talk past each other because they are often referring to quite different kinds of power and agency.

Analytically it would be beneficial to separate the power that particular agents might have or lack within the World Music industry from power that derives – sometimes indirectly and beyond the industry itself – from one's participation in the industry. While the former includes the forms of control one agent has in relation to the other agents in the chain,

mentioned above, the latter includes the different kinds of repercussion that a musical style's or an artist's exposure in the World Music industry may have elsewhere. These include issues like the strengthening of the recording industry and musical professionalism at home, new multilateral cooperation and networks between different territories, reputation and other forms of symbolic value for an ethnic group or a country, or a new vision of one's identity and value system. I suggest that we consider all these different aspects that accrue directly or indirectly from the existence of World Music, yet keep in mind that they constitute phenomena of different kinds that are not directly comparable or measurable against one another.

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Notes

¹ See, for instance, Chambers (1992: 141), Frith (1989: 5), Goodwin and Gore (1990: 77) and Taylor (1997).

² See, for instance, Erlmann (1994, 1996), Feld (1994a, 1994b, 2000) and Meintjes (1990).

³ For other comparable views, see e.g. Chambers (1992: 141); Goodwin and Gore (1990: 77). For criticism of the 'celebratory' views, see e.g., Erlmann (1994); Feld (1994: 262–3).

⁴ Conversely, Simon is acknowledged to have paid copyright fees for using the basic pattern of a Ghanaian song. Eventually, with this money a National Folkloric Board of Trustees was formed in Ghana to deal with copyright issues concerning national folklore (Collins 1994: 144–5).

⁵ For a meticulous history of the recording industry, see Gronow and Saunio (1998).

⁶ While the overall trend in the world has been a clear decline in markets, some individual countries have experienced increases in sales, such as China, India, France, the UK, Ireland, Finland, Spain, Russia, Bulgaria, Australia and New Zealand (www.ifpi.org).

⁷ EMI and Warner Music attempted to merge in 2000, but this was prohibited under anti-trust regulations. In 2003 EMI was again negotiating to take over Warner, which also had discussions with BMG for a joint venture. For its part BMG was also negotiating with Sony about a joint venture, and in November 2003 they informed regulators of their plan to merge (Financial Times 10 November 2003). At the end of the same month, an investor group was reported as having purchased the Warner Music Group (www.mi2n.com). If this transaction is accepted, the purchase would create one of the world's largest independent music companies. At the time of writing, the transaction is still subject to regulatory review.

⁸ For an account of each of the major corporate groups and their business fields as they existed at the end of the 1990s, see Negus (1999: 37–45).

⁹ For the typical types of partnerships between major corporations and independents, see Hesmondhalgh (1996: 475-7).

¹⁰ The increasing importance of internet downloading – both legal and illegal – poses a real threat to the existing distribution system and the majors' dominance in it. At the time of writing, however, the changes in the industry that might result are still too difficult to predict.

¹¹ Indeed, many researchers acknowledge that the distinction between the major and the independent companies is fallacious because there are hardly any strictly independent companies today, since they rely on the majors for various services. Negus (1999: 28), for instance, refuses to use the distinction altogether. Within the industry, however, the distinction is very much a live one. It can also be argued that there are important differences in mode of operation between the independent and the major companies. Using the distinction therefore does not necessarily entail accepting the moralizing it often suggests, that is, the view of the majors as simply ruthless profit-seekers and of the independents as music enthusiasts devoted to creativity.

¹² See, however, Gillet (1971), Shaw (1978), and Wallis and Malm (1984).

¹³ For a review of the other research that has been done on this line as well as the critical studies, see Negus (1996: 55-61).

¹⁴ Similarly, according to Guilbault (1993: 41), the international success of *zouk* (a music of the French West Indies) significantly lifted the status of Antillean music at home in the Caribbean.