

Abstract PhD project: Fuhr, Michael

Sounding out the K-Wave Globalization, Shifting Asymmetries and Popular Music in South Korea

This project wants to find out how the musical imagination intersects with the production of ethnic/national identity and the history of listening in the context of 'globalized' popular music in South Korea. It analyzes the transformative processes in the field of pop music since the 1990s (with the emergence of popular phenomena like 'k-pop' and 'Korean wave'), and seeks to understand the conditions and effects of transnational flows, asymmetrical relations and the role of the imaginary 'other' in music production and consumption. A specific focus lies on aspects of how pop music is utilized and connected to strategies of (trans-)national identity construction, considering questions of transnational mobility and the role of immigrant pop idols. As academic work on popular music in Asia is still scarce, the study aims at widening the regional scope of western-dominated popular music studies and will help to unlock and enhance new areas of study in (ethno-)musicology and cultural studies. Instead of reading Korean pop music as a sign of mere 'Westernization' or 'Americanization' the study provides deeper insight into the structure of popular music and into the dynamics of cultural globalization through detailed ethnographic analysis.