Norient Books
Hannes Liechti

This Track Contains Politics

The Culture of Sampling in Experimental Electronica

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1

Introduction

This book aims to reveal, listen to, and analyze narratives behind popular music.

"It's sharing your narrative. That's what it is." This is how one of my interviews with U.S. electronic music producer Lara Sarkissian ended. We were discussing my research into sampling and I asked her why she had agreed to take part in this study. "It's sharing your narrative," she answered briefly and without much consideration. Being involved meant, for her, the opportunity to share her story, her viewpoints, her experiences of the world. It meant talking about and reflecting on her own position, which is considerably shaped by her affiliation with social minorities.

It's sharing your narrative.
That's what it is.

Sarkissian grew up in the Armenian diaspora of the Bay Area in California. She took part in community events and parties, attended an Armenian elementary school, volunteered at the cultural diaspora organization Hamazkayin, and regularly visited one of the four Armenian churches in the region. Moreover, as a female producer, DJ, label owner, and concert organizer, she operates in a field which is, at the time of this study at the end of the 2010s, still prevailingly male-dominated. Her music in general, and her sampling practices in particular, reflect these personal experiences. Conducting research into her music—and finally, also, reading this book—means listening to her story. It means discovering her perspective.

Why should we do so? Why should you, the reader of this book, listen to the story of a "lonely" laptop producer at the fringes of electronic popular music? Why should we care about such an individual narrative far away from the musical mainstream? Because that is at the core of the enterprise of cultural anthropology: the attempt to listen to people, to analyze the acquired data, to generalize, and finally to make sense of our world. Moreover, in light of the emergence of postcolonial theories, it is also the task of research to question and challenge established power relations. If we want to do this, we especially need to listen to those on the other side of power, to those belonging to minority groups, to those at the margins of society, of our scope as researchers, and of our own individual worldviews. This book aims to reveal, listen to, and analyze narratives behind popular music.

"It's sharing your narrative. That's what it is." This phrase could also serve to explain Sarkissian's reasons for sampling. It is through sampling—the technique of musical production whereby external sound material is taken and processed in new musical compositions—that Sarkissian shares these narratives. It is through sampling that she talks about Armenian culture and history and her own role as a female electronic music producer.

In this book, I argue that analysis of the culture of sampling is one possible way to access particular narratives of this world.[1] The inclusion of external music, environmental noises, or found media material brings the world into popular music tracks in a condensed form. Timothy Taylor (2001, 139) describes sampling as providing "aural glimpses of the social." Every process of sampling represents a complex net of contexts, meanings, choices, creative decisions, and musical strategies. In-depth analysis of such processes and their socio-cultural ramifications means revealing and interpreting this net as far as possible.

To examine what a particular sampling strategy tells us about the narrative of a music producer, and thus about the world we live in, we particularly need to ask about the reasons for adopting such strategies: why has a particular sound been sampled? This task has to date rarely been undertaken by researchers. This is thus a book about reasons for sampling; about the motives, motivations, and intentions that lead to the inclusion of particular sound material in electronic music tracks. It is not a book about all sampling since, for many artists, using samples is just a banal aspect of their music-making routine. In fact, this is a book about very particular but meaningful sampling practices.

This is a book about reasons for sampling.

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1   In musicological contexts, the term "analysis" is often related to the analysis of the musical text. I do not follow such a narrow concept. Instead, I rely on H. Russell Bernard's (2011, 338) definition of analysis as "the search for patterns in data and for ideas that help explain why those patterns are there in the first place." Moreover, analyses contain interpretation as a particular analytical step.

In this introduction I first want to embed my research in a historical context and to offer a very brief overview of the history of musical sampling. Second, I will comment on the relation between sampling and the political. This book focuses on electronic music tracks that contain political sampling material. I have identified at least seven dimensions on which sampling and the political clash; only two of them are covered by this book. A historical overview and a discussion of the social-political potential of sampling will then help to identify gaps in the research on sampling. Accordingly, this book focuses on the reasons behind the sampling of non-copyrighted material beyond hip hop. At the core of this book there are five in-depth anthropological, musicological, and production-oriented analyses of experimental electronic popular music tracks. Ultimately, I will close this first chapter by presenting in detail the object of study, its core interests, and its structure.

A Very Brief History of Musical Sampling

Four rough stages have so far shaped the development of sampling in popular music and the research on this production technique.[2]

Stage One: Technological Development (1970s and 1980s)

The first devices to make sampling available to music producers were developed in the 1970s. Most authors claim the Fairlight CMI (Computer Musical Instrument), arriving in 1979, as the first instrument with a built-in sampling function. Paul Harkins emphasizes that the Fairlight CMI was not the first tool allowing the reproduction of externally recorded sounds. It was, however, "not only the most commercially successful of the first digital sampling instruments; it was also the most widely used instrument for sampling" (Harkins 2016, 16).

Still, due to its high cost, the Fairlight CMI was only affordable to a few producers with high-end studios—such as Stevie Wonder, Peter Gabriel, and Kate Bush—or institutions such as broadcast companies and academic departments. This first stage of sampling was thus shaped by technical and economic developments. Later, drum computers with built-in samplers, such as the E-mu SP-12

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2 Other authors have provided more detailed historical approaches to sampling: Davies (1996) presents a general history of sampling including its precursors reaching back to the ancient empires of China and Rome. Schloss (2014 [2004]) discusses sampling in hip hop, while Morey (2013, 2017) focuses on British dance music. Finally, Harkins (2016) addresses the subject from the point of view of important technical devices.

(1985) and the Akai MPC60 (1988), were much cheaper, making the technique available to a broader range of producers. Moreover, new instruments continuously increased sampling capacity, from a half-second to one second (Fairlight CMI) up to more than thirty by the end of the decade (Harkins 2016).

In the second half of the 1980s and the early 1990s, the technique of sampling became increasingly widespread in popular music, especially in hip hop and newly emerging electronic dance music (EDM) genres such as house, techno, and drum and bass. The technique was particularly embraced in hip hop, because it allowed producers to adapt previously developed DJ techniques—cutting and repeating breaks—into new recordings. Mark Katz (2010) and Joseph Schloss (2014 [2004], 25–61) both highlight the significance of DJ practice for the understanding of sampling in hip hop.

Beyond the early breakbeats of hip hop, the academic literature discusses further precursors to sampling in music history. Among them we find versioning in dub (Sanjek 1994) and avant-garde techniques from art music (musique concrète; e.g. Davies 1997, de la Motte 1995) and beyond (cut-up by William S. Burroughs; Cutler 1994).[3] Rather than tracing a single line of development, sampling should be explained non-teleologically, with reference to multiple origins.

> *The history of sampling should be explained non-teleologically, with reference to multiple origins.*

With regards to the sampled material, at first the focus was primarily on single short sounds from instruments or the environment (such as breaking glass). As the storage capacity on sampling devices increased, longer "sound bites" became processible, such as larger melodic lines and rhythmic patterns from other records, or media material from popular culture and daily political life such as movie dialogue and political speeches (Butler 2006, 61).

Stage Two: the Golden Age of Sampling or "Sampladelic" (1986–1991)

It was toward the end of the 1980s that sampling became a celebrated production technique in popular music. In relation to hip hop, Kembrew McLeod labeled the period between 1986 and 1992 as "the golden age of sampling" (McLeod and DiCola 2011; McLeod 2015).[4] Among the outstanding sample-based hip hop productions from this period is Public Enemy's album *Fear of a Black Planet* (1990), which was made up of hundreds of "fragmentary samples" (McLeod 2005, 81; Sewell 2014b).

Sampling in EDM also flourished during this period. Between 1988 and 1991, Justin Morey (2017, 145) observed a "flowering of sampling practice in underground dance music and the mainstream."

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3 Fischer (2020, 109–43) offers a well-arranged overview on the historical development of sampling in the 20th century.

4 McLeod (2015) included the year 1992 as well. However, the lawsuit against Biz Markie's rap song "Alone Again" in 1991 can be considered a turning point in the history of sampling, as Sewell (2013) argues.

Mark Butler (2006, 61) remarked that sampling was an essential "part of track construction" at that time, referring to Simon Reynolds' (1999, 41–43) description of the period as "sampladelic."

Stage Three: Lawsuits, Restrictions, and the Decline of Sampling (1990s–ongoing)

Several high-profile lawsuits in the U.S. followed, marking the provisional end of the limitless sampling of copyrighted material (Sewell 2014a). In both the hip hop and EDM genres, observers and fans used expressions such as the "decline of sampling" (Morey 2017; Leydon 2010, 197) or, even more fatalistically, the "death of sampling" (Marshall 2006). At the turn of the millennium, Morey (2017, 205) considered the big beat genre to be "the 'last hurrah' of the sampling composer in mainstream dance music." Since this period, the practice of sampling copyrighted material has mainly been pursued by underground or niche musicians who count on being under the radar, or by music business heavyweights who can afford greater sums for copyright (sample clearance).

As Holger Lund (2015) has shown, the practice of sampling faced yet further restrictions during the 2000s. The closure of online file hosting service Megaupload and the voluntary erasure of thousands of megabytes of uploaded music on Rapidshare "meant that music bloggers [and sampling artists] lost their cyber warehouses and these warehouses' contents." With regard to Europe, the implementation of the Directive on Copyright in the Digital Single Market, approved by the Council of the European Union on April 15, 2019, might in future further affect the creative practices of sampling in music and beyond (Romero-Moreno 2018; Fischer 2020).

Stage Four: Ubiquitous Studio Technology and "Post-Sampling" (2000s–ongoing)

At present, it is widely recognized that these lawsuits shaped the further development of the production technique, at least regarding the processing of copyrighted material in mainstream music. However, sampling is flourishing as never before. It has become an indispensable and ubiquitous technique in the production of popular music. Behr, Negus, and Street (2017, 2) write that "sampling is no longer exceptional but, rather, embedded in commercial (and much other) popular music practice with significant consequences for the aesthetics and ethics of music making."

Sampling has become an indispensable and ubiquitous technique in the production of popular music.

Besides multitrack recording, signal processing, MIDI sequencing, and sound synthesis, popular music scholar Timothy Warner (2003, 22) considers sampling one of the "essential techniques which dominate the creative process involved in the production of pop music," while Reynolds (2011, 311) describes

sampling as an "every-day part of our listening lives." The rise of digital audio workstations (DAW)—music production software such as Live by Ableton, launched in 2001—substantially facilitated and stimulated the use of samples (Brett 2019; Ismaiel-Wendt 2016, 119–53; Fischer 2020, 143).

Only a few scholars continue to analyze the functions of sampling in this latest stage of its development. Among them, and following Wayne Marshall (2017), a tendency towards "a more atomized approach to sample-based music" can be recognized. According to Marshall, instead of "looping breakbeats or well-worn melodies," popular and obscure electronic dance music of the last decade has focused on "a set of brief sonic signifiers" (ibid.). While these samples are clearly audible and recognizable, Harkins identifies an important sampling strategy of recent decades where the opposite happens: with "microsampling," he refers to the digital reproduction of "rhythms, melodies, and voices at the micro level" (Harkins 2016, 185–86).[5] In this approach, original sampling sources remain hidden.

Others have already proclaimed the arrival of the era of "post-sampling," describing various strategies and techniques that allow artists to employ a sampling aesthetic without using samples in a recognizable way. Following Morey (2017, 295), such methods are "replays, using samples as a source of inspiration that is subsequently discarded, treating their own recordings as if they were samples, obscuring the sample, or seeking out the obscure."[6] Morey further concludes that "in a largely post-sampling musical landscape, the habit of finding ways to work with sound materials as if they *were* samples endures" (296; italics original). In his study on sampling, copyright, and creativity, Georg Fischer (2020, 307–18) labels these practices with the term "Umgehungskreativität" (workaround creativity).

Behr, Negus, and Street (2017, 2, 15), finally, describe a "'post-sampling' musical environment" as the combination of sampling and other musical practices. According to them, sampling has lost its standalone character and must be considered as a "musical field in which listening practices, creative habits and habitus are informed by and realized through a technical and musical sphere to which sampling is integral." These thoughts directly correspond with my own understanding of sampling as a multilevel creative process.

After this brief outline of the history of sampling, I will now address my own focus on the subject. To do this I will discuss two perspectives from which I can develop the scope of my research: the socio-political potential of sampling and the lack of anthropological perspectives in the academic literature.

5 See also the reworked chapter in Harkins' book on digital sampling (2020, 103–18).
6 Marshall (2006) describes a similar strategy by discussing the sample-free but sample-shaped sound aesthetics of the beats by hip hop band The Roots.

The Socio-Political Potential of Sampling

In approaching narratives behind sample-based music, I focus in this book on political sampling material or political strategies. I conceive of "the political" as a signifier of the social. In search of significant stories and traceable intentions and motivations, I was looking for tracks in electronic popular music whose sample material contains (layers of) meaning, pointing beyond a merely musical or personal level. In other words: I was interested in sampling material (or sampling processes) with significance and relevance for a broader part of society.

An extended definition of the concept of "the political" follows in Chapter 2.

Meanwhile, these areas—sampling and the political—potentially clash in many ways. I have identified at least seven dimensions to this clash. In combination, they illustrate the socio-political potential of sampling. To strengthen these perspectives, I have elsewhere published a collection of short essays (Liechti, Burkhalter, and Rhensius 2020) which provides examples for most of these categories. Some of these articles are thus presented briefly below, among other references from the academic literature on sampling.[7]

(a) Sampling Political Material

The processing of political material is a common strategy in popular music. Especially in hip hop, samples from black political leaders and activists such as Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr., and Stokely Carmichael became "commonplaces," as Russell A. Potter asserts (1995, 43). Beyond hip hop, early examples include the avant-garde synth-pop group Art of Noise, who sampled a political speech in their 1984 track "A Time for Fear (Who's Afraid)" (Warner 2003, 99), and Paul Hardcastle's 1985 synth-pop track "19," which used samples from a documentary about the Vietnam war (Morey 2017, 124).

The case studies on M.E.S.H.'s track "Methy Imbiß" (Chapter 10) and Eomac's "Perversas" (9) particularly deal with this category.

The processing of political material is a common strategy in popular music.

In EDM, the practice encompasses—among uncountable others—The Orb's "Little Fluffy Clouds" from 1990, with its sampling of World War II airplane sounds (160–63; Holm-Hudson 1997), as well as Matthew Herbert's highly conceptual sampling art, which processes war sounds such as bullets and bombs (DJ Empty and the 2013 EP *The End of Silence*), or captures the destruction of products from multinational enterprises (as Radio Boy).[8] In her brief survey of the sampling of political speech across dance music, Lora Baraldi (2020) looks for strategies that go beyond the well-known modes

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7   This subchapter was previously published in Liechti 2020. This edited collection of short essays offers further examples of sampling strategies within the seven dimensions presented here.
8   The political sampling strategies of Matthew Herbert are further discussed by Velasco-Pufleau (2020), Burkhalter (2015a), Harkins (2013b; 2016, 229, 240–47) and Großmann (2005).

of social commentary and denunciation, often taking the shape of danceable satire. Just as this book does, Baraldi examines the aims, motivations, and intentions behind particular sampling strategies. This dimension further includes the processing of police sirens and gunshots, a practice popular in various fields, from hip hop and dancehall to recent experimental electronica (Amobi 2015).

(b) Sampling with Political Intent

Even if sampling material is not political as such, it can be used in combination with intentions or concepts that are <u>political in nature</u>. Prominent examples include John Oswald's *Plunderphonics* (1988) and Den Sorte Skole's *Lektion III* (2013).[9] Both projects combine a broad range of samples from external musical recordings—samples that are not explicitly political—to "challenge the existing laws and the music business" (Den Sorte Skole cited in Lund 2015). They can be conceived of as musical protest against copyright norms.

Political intentions behind sampling processes are discussed in the case studies of COOL FOR YOU's "STABILIZED YES!" (Chapter 6), Lara Sarkissian's "kenats" (7), and Moro's "Libres" (8) .

Political sampling strategies do not need to be obvious to the listener.

Again, Matthew Herbert's highly conceptual sample art serves as an example here, for instance when he processes sounds from a pig's life (*One Pig*) to criticize the globalized food industry.[8] Another example is mentioned by Morey (2017, 212): in the track "Power to the Beats," the electronic group Utah Saints sample testimonies from Metallica and Chuck D given before U.S. Congress as part of the debate around the filesharing platform Napster. Producer Jez Willis remembered that this "was a statement for me (but again, no one got the reference!)" (ibid.). This example is a first indication that political sampling strategies do not need to be obvious to the listener.

(c) Sampling in Conflict with the Law

A third category collects sampling strategies that neither process political material nor are linked with a political intention per se. Instead, they are in conflict with the law because they process copyrighted samples without clearing the rights. There are countless examples of this political dimension of sampling: one could for instance look at the German lawsuit between electro pioneers Kraftwerk and the hip hop producer Moses Pelham, who used a two-second sample from a Kraftwerk track in one of his productions (Ismaiel-Wendt 2016, 171–84; Fischer 2020, 13–19).

The academic literature has broadly covered this area. The ramifications of such laws regarding musical practice have, for example, been raised by Michel Brasil, who portrays the sampling practice of underground beatmakers in the local hip hop scene of Belo Horizonte, Brazil. He shows that the decision to use the technique

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9   For further discussion on John Oswald's *Plunderphonics* see Cutler (1994), Holm-Hudson (1997), and Weber (2004).

of sample chopping is both economic and political, since producers are forced to chop samples due to copyright issues (Brasil 2020). This is yet another example of the aforementioned "workaround creativity" in sampling (Fischer 2020, 307–18).

This book does not cover this category. The following three political dimensions of sampling will also not be amplified further. This is because they are defined from the perspective of reception. As explained below, this study mainly focuses on the perspective of musical production.

(d) The Problematization of Sampling Strategies

The processing of external sound material has always stoked (and continues to stoke) controversy among scholars, journalists, and fans. In most cases, they criticize an imbalance of power between the sampling artists and the authors of the sampled sources. In research, the processing of ethnographic sound recordings in particular is criticized by many authors such as Timothy Taylor (2003, 73).[10] He observes that "one of the ways Westerners appropriate other music is to construct the original makers of that appropriated music as anonymous."

Taylor brings up the case of the new age band Enigma, who sampled a song by the Taiwanese musicians Difang and Igay Duana without permission or credit in their hit single "Return to Innocence" (1994). Similarly, Susanne Binas-Preisendörfer (2004, 2010) discusses the song "Sweet Lullaby" (1992) by new age group Deep Forest, which is based on a Melanesian lullaby from the Solomon Islands.

In EDM, sampling practices are also regularly criticized as exoticizing or as cultural appropriation. DJ and label owner Simian Keiser (2016), for example, criticizes the exoticizing tendencies in club culture's sampling of African music, the so-called "outernational sound"—exemplified by Four Tet's 2013 track "The Track I've Been Playing That People Keep Asking About And That Joy Used In His RA Mix And Daphni Played On Boiler Room."[11]

The processing of external sound material has always stoked (and continues to stoke) controversy among scholars, journalists, and fans.

10   See Binas (2004, 2010), Feld (2000), Hesmondhalgh (2000, 2006), Stokes (2004), Taylor (2001, 2003, 2012), or Théberge (2003).
11   Similar cases have been analyzed by Chris McGuinness (2020), Luigi Monteanni (2020), and the Laura Collective (2020). McGuinness explores the story of Punjabi singer Sohan Lal, whose voice ended up on a globally distributed compilation containing a sample library of South Asian sounds. From there his voice found its way into mainstream electronic dance music productions, as did samples of Indonesian car horns called "om telolet om." Monteanni analyzes this phenomenon as part of a local youth culture. He problematizes the global use of these samples in between the benefits of recognition and the discriminatory structures of Orientalism. Using samples, Monteanni argues, is far from a harmless practice. Finally, the Laura Collective asks to what extent sampling practices maintain or disrupt an exoticized ideal of indigenous populations. The Brazilian research collective compares the example of a worldwide EDM artist who repeats the clichés of exoticizing cultural appropriation through sampling, with an indigenous rap group who use cultural sampling "to occupy the Western visibility regime as a way to express and make their own narratives heard."

(e) Provoking Conflict

In the previously discussed dimension, sampling is political because sampling practices become problematic through reflecting established power relations. This fifth dimension now categorizes direct provocations through the use of particular sound material. The British techno DJ Dax J was sentenced to one year in jail after playing a track that sampled a Muslim call to prayer in a live set at a nightclub in Tunisia in spring 2017. Dax J had to immediately flee the country to avoid arrest. On social media, he later apologized for the incident, mentioning that "it was never my intention to upset or cause offence to anybody" (O'Connor 2017).

This case is also discussed by Liam Maloney (2020). He considers sampling "a microcosm for political and ideological disparities across the globe" and argues that sampling has become a "politically charged act, trapped between secularism and theocracy." Despite its unifying history, he says, sampling has become "a divisive process."

(f) Sampling in Politicized Contexts

Another encounter between sampling and the political occurs when a non-political sample, or sample-based music devoid of political intentions, is played in a politicized context. One striking example would be the use of sample-based music as propaganda or within a political campaign. The meaning(s) of the sampled materials might change considerably in such contexts. While I cannot offer concrete examples here, it should be evident that such situations could potentially occur.

Another fitting example, discussed by Mattia Zanotti (2020) and Nico Mangifesta (2019), is *Stregoni*, an Italian music project working with asylum seekers and refugees. The project draws on participants' smartphones as individual sample libraries for improvisation and the realizing of performances. Sampling, in this case, facilitates an attitude of community, and Zanotti asks whether the production method can even help to represent and recreate identity. This practice of sample-based music is political not least because it brings together refugees and native Italians and because it relies on the smartphone, a symbol "mentioned with grievance by those who line up against immigration" and, on the other hand, a "strongbox that preserves identity" for the refugees (Zanotti 2020).

(g) Sampling as a Political Act

A final perspective considers sampling on a meta level. It regards sampling as a cultural technique, containing processes of selecting and combining creative material. This technique could be considered political as such. Three articles from my publication on political

sampling explain this dimension.

Marcel Zaes (2020) examines what he calls the "textural sampling" of Japanese electronic artist Kyoka. He finds its political quality in the producer's blurring of the lines between sample-based club music and synthesis-oriented experimental music by "destroying out-of-context materials, stripping them of their meaning, [and] rendering them extremely dense collages." In doing so, sampling challenges listener expectations and value sets attached to the experimental or popular music markets. In Kyoka's so-called "techno punk," Zaes sees the "subtle resistance of a conscious, self-designated outsider."

Vinícius Fernandes (2020) analyzes the cut-up technique, one of sampling's predecessors, developed by writer William S. Burroughs in the 1960s. "The reallocation and deformation of signs" enacted through cut-up "produces a suspension of normal expected coherence" between these signs and the underlying medium. Fernandes understands sampling techniques as a "powerful weapon" and a political tool, helping to produce a "political conscience" by suspending "semiotic normality" and thus "uncovering the subjects operating perversely behind" particular signs. Fernandes argues that the cut-up method can be read as a premonition of 21st century phenomena like the 2018 Facebook-Cambridge Analytica scandal.

Lastly, remix researcher Eduardo Navas (2020) reflects on how automated and self-training forms of production are reshaping creative possibilities in music and culture. His take on the politics of sampling in the age of machine learning invites us to extend into the future our thoughts on the interplay of sampling and politics today.

■

The above categorization is neither exhaustive nor systematic. A further study that pays particular attention to political sampling could further verify and enlarge these categories. In the present book, I will primarily discuss the first two dimensions: the sampling of political material (a) and sampling with a political intention (b).

I have so far presented an overview of existing research on sampling from two angles. The first chronologically traced the development of the production technique since its early days in the 1970s, while the second focused on the political dimensions of sampling. Two further perspectives will be pursued later: in Chapter 2 I will contrast various definitions of the term, and in Chapter 3 I will systematically discuss typological attempts to describe the processing of samples. Although there is, as we have seen and will see, considerable output on the phenomenon of sampling in (academic) literature, there are still substantial gaps that need to be addressed.

Gaps in Sampling Research

Sampling studies have so far been largely centered on questions of copyright, authorship, originality, and creativity. This is no surprise: legal issues are key when one examines the political dimensions of sampling. However, Harkins (2010a, 2) rightly assumes that this interest might "overemphasize the role of the law in making musical decisions." A second focal point of sampling studies has been the genre of (U.S.) hip hop. It was only in recent years that a larger number of studies started to focus on genres associated with EDM. Today, there are around twice as many available studies on sampling with a focus on hip hop than there are on EDM. Beyond both fields, sampling is even less analyzed. As a result, we do not know much about the differences in sampling practices between various genres.

Schloss (2014 [2004], 146) has further argued that "symbolic meaning (as opposed to pragmatic value within the musical system) is almost universally overstated by scholars as a motive for sampling." In his critique, the ethnomusicologist refers to the predominant conception of sampling as a referential or intertextual practice. Joanna Demers (2010, 52) seconds this view and observes an overestimation of quotations as "intentionally included."

This book is, on the one hand, yet another study with a strong emphasis on the generation of meaning and the analysis of intertextual relations. On the other hand, however, I develop an approach that allows us to carefully differentiate between a broad range of motives and intentions behind sampling processes.

I develop an approach that allows us to carefully differentiate between a broad range of motives and intentions behind sampling processes.

Another gap concerns the lack of in-depth analyses of musical examples. There are only a few studies that substantially analyze individual tracks of sample-based music.[12] In most studies, tracks are instead addressed through short references to underline a particular argument. It is surprising that one of the main objects of popular music remains largely absent. Even if tracks or songs are thoroughly analyzed, such as in the anthology *Song Interpretation*, there is no example with a considerable emphasis on the processing of sampling material (von Appen et al. 2015). To pave the way towards filling this gap, I will analyze sampling strategies from the perspective of individual tracks, and I will further investigate the development of appropriate analytical tools for sample-based music—which, owing to the aforementioned gaps in the academic literature, remain absent. Furthermore, existing track analyses rarely

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12   The following authors invest certain efforts in the analysis of individual tracks. This is a small number relative to the overall number of studies on sampling: Binas (2004, 2010), Bonz (2008), Brøvig-Hanssen (2010), Elflein (2010), Di Fede (2014), Hein (2016), Holm-Hudson (1997), Ismaiel-Wendt (2011), Metzer (2003), Miyakawa (2005), Taylor (2003), and Williams (2015).

combine methods from cultural anthropology and musicology. As I will illustrate here, this combination can help us to reach in-depth descriptions of musical phenomena.

Finally, regarding the analyzed sampling sources, the overwhelming number of studies focus on the sampling of previously recorded, officially released, and thus copyrighted music. Hence, this study will focus on understudied sampling material such as found footage, environmental noises, media material, and other either unreleased or not officially released music.

This study will focus on understudied sampling material such as found footage, environmental noises, media material, and other either unreleased or not officially released music.

These gaps in the research on sampling illustrate the need for a closer focus on aspects of production, a call that was already made in 2003 by Tara Rodgers (2003, 313), who recognized that the "musical and political goals" of sampling artists have not been adequately explored.[13] Rodgers proposed a set of questions that should be addressed by further studies. She asked, for example, "How do electronic musicians use the 'automated' mechanisms of digital instruments to achieve nuanced musical expression and cultural commentary?" (ibid.).

In the following years, Rodgers' call was answered. Many subsequent studies refer to her demand and state that sampling must be conceived of as a result of conscious creative decisions and as a part of the compositional process. However, the actual in-depth analysis of these chains of decisions, and an analysis of the perspective of the artists involved, remains an unfinished task. This might be due to the considerable methodological challenges such an endeavor entails.

Perhaps the first scholar to focus considerably on the perspective of sampling artists was Joseph Schloss. In his seminal study on the practices and ethics of American hip hop producers (2014 [2004]) he identified a set of ethical and practical rules guiding the compositional process of hip hop beat makers. Based on anthropological fieldwork, he also addressed how particular beats are made and the reasons behind creative decisions within the sampling process.

After Schloss, it is only in recent years that scholars have continued to fill this research gap. In his dissertation, Harkins (2016, 2020) described the sampler "as a compositional tool," focusing on the history of sampling from the perspective of the technical devices deployed. He showed that the use of music technologies is shaped by an "interpretative flexibility." This means that the practices of the users of sampling devices were not congruent with the purposes these devices were originally designed for.

13   Rodgers was not the first to call for an intensified study of the perspectives of artists and other actors involved. Before her, Hesmondhalgh (2000, 281) and Taylor (2001) made similar appeals.

In another dissertation, Justin Morey (2017) studied sampling practices in British dance music between 1987 and 2012 with a close focus on concepts of creativity and creative practice. He examined the pathways of individual sampling artists and traced how they became successful. He further analyzed the ramifications of copyright law on the sampling practices under analysis. In his history of sampling in EDM-associated genres in the U.K., Morey primarily focused on *what* has been sampled and *how* producers processed their material, without much stress on the "why."[14]

By focusing on the production- and artist-related aspects of sample-based music, this book aims to close some of the aforementioned gaps. This study does, however, focus more on the *culture* of musical production than on musical production itself. Moving beyond issues of copyright and the genre of hip hop, this book takes a track-oriented approach by analyzing five particular sampling strategies. The triangulation of methods—between musical analysis and anthropological fieldwork—will offer new and in-depth perspectives on the artistic application of the producing method in question. Concerning what Rodgers (2003, 313) refers to as the "musical and political goals" of sampling artists, there is still a lot of work to do through research in the field of sampling studies.

I now want to further clarify the object of study and my core interests. This will be followed by a short excursus on the challenges and opportunities related to focusing on the issue of intention—in other words, why should we analyze the "why"?

Object of Study and Focus

In search of the narratives behind popular music, this study focuses on the key medium of electronic popular music in the digital culture of the 21st century: the track. The track is *the* format through which electronic popular music is widely distributed. Tracks circulate online and are accessed through platforms such as SoundCloud and Bandcamp. In clubs, we dance while listening to tracks played by a DJ. Tracks are joined together in DJ mixes, playlists on streaming services, and radio sets. Most of the time, artists start releasing individual tracks before presenting their first EPs or LPs—be they digital or physical. Often, tracks are the first channel through which artists try to reach a greater and global audience.

The analyzed tracks in this book all belong to what I call the

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14 There are two further smaller scale studies that take a production-related perspective. Puig (2017, 2020) examined the strategies of a Palestinian hip hop musician living on the edge of a refugee camp in Lebanon. Although using anthropological methods, Puig's analyses do not go beyond mere description of the processed material. In a paper more oriented towards philosophy, Chapman (2011) discussed Walter Benjamin's concept of the "aura" and his practice of quotation. He based his thoughts regarding the creative process of sampling on interviews with sampling artists in Montréal, Canada.

field of experimental electronica. This field allows for a fruitful analysis of sampling strategies. Experimental electronica tracks are predominantly instrumental and, in place of lyrics, it is the task of samples to connect them with extra-musical content. These tracks represent 21st century music: they are hybrid, digital, and globally connected. The sound is abrasive, ambivalent, and apocalyptic. These tracks regularly discuss socio-political issues such as gender, queer identity, racism, and colonialism. As I will show, this field allows for an in-depth analysis of sampling strategies and gives access to narratives of present-day music making.

These tracks represent 21st century music: they are hybrid, digital, and globally connected.

However, as mentioned previously, this book does not focus on all forms of sampling, instead highlighting sampling strategies that have not been addressed to a great extent by previous research. Accordingly, I will not analyze the sampling of music that has been officially released. This can be conceived as the "classical" sampling method, and is already well documented—no surprise considering the academic literature's fixation on issues of copyright. Moreover, I do not examine the processing of single notes from musical instruments, nor the sampling of domestic musical material that has been generated for previous musical projects. Hence, this book focuses on the sampling of *external sound material*.

Moreover, I focus on political sampling strategies. In terms of the dimensions of political sampling presented above, this study highlights the first two: the sampling of sound material that could be conceived as political, and the sampling of "neutral" or non-contextual sound material with an intention that could be characterized as political. This emphasis allows us to access the complex narratives and traceable intentions behind the analyzed tracks. In other words: no one samples a heavily political sound such as the explosion of a bomb in a military conflict without a clear motive and intention. Moreover, there is a good chance that these intentions are still traceable even after the process of production has ended.

Finally, there are two more constraints on the object of study. First, I have only analyzed tracks released between 2015 and 2017. This constraint has substantially facilitated access to the circumstances of production: the more time that has elapsed since the production of a track, the more confused a producer's memories may become. Second, I have focused on the production stage only; I do not analyze processes of reception. This is not to say that a study of reception is not important. On the contrary: for a holistic analysis of a musical phenomenon, a perspective on reception is essential. Based on the thinking of semiologist Jean Molino, Jean-Jacques Nattiez (1990) has theorized this view in his understanding of the poietic (creation/production), neutral, and esthesic (reception) dimensions of analysis. However, broadening our focus to encompass processes of reception would go beyond the scope of this book.

Core Interests

In summary, this book examines the culture of sampling in experimental electronica. The basic goal of this study is to shed light on the techniques (how) and reasons (why) behind processes of sampling in experimental electronica. On the basis of the case studies, I want to illustrate how political sampling material is processed in experimental electronica, and how seemingly "neutral" or non-contextual sampling material is politicized. I am particularly interested in analyzing the strategies behind these tracks: what attitudes, intentions, motives, and motivations are decisive?

I want to illustrate how political sampling material is processed in experimental electronica, and how seemingly "neutral" or non-contextual sampling material is politicized.

A few core interests led the present research, separated into a first set of general (1–3) and a second set of more specific (4–6) issues. This study seeks to

(1) **shed light on the understudied field of the culture of musical production.** How is music produced? What kind of choices, decisions, and musical strategies shape the creative process?

(2) **unlock narratives.** The research seeks to reveal what I call the "seismographic substance" behind popular music: what can we learn about the world when we study popular music? The insights gained through this approach reveal some of the complexities of the world we live in. Andreas Wittel (2000) has argued that "ethnography is about revealing context and thus complexity." As a consequence, this study does not invest in the question of how popular music *changes* the world, which would be another highly important question.

(3) **enhance the understanding of sampling.** At a time when sampling has become a ubiquitous studio technique, and the academic literature has predominantly focused on questions of copyright and authorship, this study wants to show further nuances in the culture of sampling and its heterogeneous functionalities and modes of application.

(4) **identify a range of strategies behind the appropriation and processing of pre-existing sonic material.** This range reaches from the hidden processing of sampling material on one end to obvious sampling on the other. This includes, in particular, an examination of the reasons for sampling. Hence, this qualitative study identifies neither a single strategy preferred by producers in the field, nor a set of strategies that can be considered as representative. The range presented here illustrates five potential sampling strategies in experimental electronica and could serve as an orientation grid for further studies, which could add other strategies within or even exceeding this range.

The last two core interests can be conceived of as methodological "side effects"—albeit significant ones—of this study.

(5) The first is to offer an overview of the various typological at-

tempts undertaken by other scholars to classify the parameters of sampling. This overview will help to identify further gaps in the research and to develop two new tools for the analysis of sampling processes.

(6) As a consequence, this study also becomes a methodological investigation of the analysis of sample-based popular music. It finally makes a suggestion as to how processes of sampling could be fruitfully analyzed with a close focus on popular music tracks.

In each case study, the research question is divided into further sub-questions. A brief overview of the key conclusions from the five case studies gives a further impression of what the reader can expect in the following pages. Thus, amongst others, the case studies will reveal

– how specific <u>subcultural identities and lived experiences</u> are articulated or reflected through processes of sampling.

→ Case studies of Vika Kirchenbauer, Lara Sarkissian, Mauro Guz Bejar

– how sampling is used as <u>a tool for the communication of political ideas</u>, concepts, and thoughts.

→ Kirchenbauer, Guz Bejar

– how processes of sampling reflect <u>habits of media consumption</u> and how important these media are for the production of music.

→ Sarkissian, Ian McDonnell, James Whipple

– how <u>hidden processes of sampling</u> are meaningful both for the producer and the musical product.

→ Whipple, McDonnell

This study will deploy qualitative research methods. By examining the previously outlined core interests, I will combine methods ranging from musical analysis to anthropological fieldwork (semi-structured interviews and direct observation) and the method of case studies.

I want to make one more remark before closing this introduction. As core interest (4) illustrates, this study also highlights a highly delicate issue: that of intention. This issue might provoke further methodological and epistemological questions.

Excursus: The Problem of Intention

Maria Alvarez wrote that "questions that ask for reasons, and in particular, reasons for action, are among the commonest questions humans have" (Alvarez 2016). Related to sampling, it was Johannes Ismaiel-Wendt (2011a, 50) who emphasized the importance of this endeavor. He said that we need to ask why a particular reference is presented in popular music, and what experience the popular music track transmits through it. However, despite this claim, research has not much concerned itself with this question with regard to the

production of popular music.[15]

This may be related to the considerable analytical and methodological challenges this focus presents: is there such a thing as an original intention? How can we identify reliable motives and intentions? How can we identify something as *the* intention behind a particular action (see also Aristotle on causality)? While keeping these critical questions in mind, let me first justify why I consider it important to care about sampling motivations at all.

First and foremost, I'm interested in knowing what people are doing and *why* they are doing it. Translating these foci to music, I want to know why something sounds the way it does and what went into its creation. Again, these questions do not tell us much about how the world is affected or even changed, but they do tell us something about the world as it exists, and about humanity. Questions like these are at the core of the anthropological endeavor itself.

Second, the understanding of authorial positions can lead to more informed debates around controversial issues. How can we, for example, effectively discuss the accusation of cultural appropriation regarding the processing of certain samples, or understand satire and irony as stylistic devices, without knowing anything about the potential intentions behind an artistic object? Certainly, such debates always need to consider positions of reception too, but they should not be restricted to them. I am convinced that by knowing more about authorial intentions we can contribute to these controversial debates more precisely. In summary, knowing and discussing the artistic positions behind processes of sampling is one step on the way towards a thorough and in-depth examination of musical phenomena. Finally, this leads to a "more informed listening experience," as Robert Ratcliffe (2014, 98) claims.

Of course, we must always be careful not to take the position of authors as absolute. Most of all because we cannot "access the intentions of musicians" but only "their reports of those intentions" as Allan Moore (2012, 208) thoughtfully notes. Secondly, because reception will always add its own, and often contradictory, readings. Roland Barthes' (1977) dictum of the "death of the author" perhaps signaled the death knell for authorship's elevated position.[16] In this regard, Richard Dyer also points to the problematic aspects of the concept of "intention":

> *I want to know* why something sounds the way it does and what went into its creation.

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15   Only a few researchers show interest in an investigation into authorial intention in processes of sampling. Chapman (2011) and Déon (2011), for example, emphasize sampling as a result of considerable artistic choices. In the broader field of music studies, musicologist Leigh Landy (2007, ix) concludes that "a tendency in the artistic scholarship of the latter half of the twentieth century concerns the step away from the study of an artwork's construction and, where articulated, an art maker's intention toward the experience of the recipient."

16   Although it should be said that Barthes' essay does not state that there is no longer any authorial intention or that it is of no importance. Instead, Barthes points to the fact that there is no "original" or "fixed meaning" and thus meaning is primarily created by the reader.

Intention is a notion that has made cultural theorists twitchy for at least a century. Intention acquired a bad name because it was often used in a strong sense, to refer to the biography or inner life of the artist, in ways that both are hard to prove and privilege such intention over what the art seems manifestly to be. However, we do not need to throw out all notions of intention just because of such problems. (Dyer 2007, 2)

To avoid getting caught in the trap of speculation (how can we know about authorial intentions?), this study is broadly based on anthropological research. In artist interviews I tried to fathom the reasons for the processing of particular sampling material as far as possible. I then tried to verify the acquired information whenever possible through other channels. Furthermore, as mentioned above, the focus on political sampling material significantly raised the chances of accessing definable intentions. Finally, perhaps the most important point to make here is that my analysis of reasons for sampling always considers multiple motives and intentions. Thus, I analyze them as a complex entity of various reasons, motives, motivations, and intentions instead of identifying singular, exclusive intentions.

■

Let me return to the beginning of this introduction: "It's sharing your narrative. That's what it is." This is one of several motives behind the sampling practice of electronic music producer Lara Sarkissian. However, as I should have made clear in this introduction, on my way to an in-depth analysis of sampling processes, I will not only concern myself with the obvious strategies: the ones by which someone is intending to *share* something. Hence, this book wants to present a broad range of artistic expressions. To understand these expressions, we need to take the intentions behind them seriously and listen to these narratives. This book is a step in this direction.

Structure and Case Studies

This book could be approached in two ways. Readers who are interested in concrete analyses of popular music should start directly with the case studies. Readers who are interested in how I approached these analyses, in a more general discussion of the analysis of sample-based music, or in an examination of reasons for sampling in experimental electronica should continue on after this introduction. However, no matter how you decide to read it, each part of the book makes reference to the other parts, allowing you to jump back and forth as you see fit. The glossary explains key terms and concepts in a condensed form.

In Chapter 2 I will introduce and clarify the terms and concepts most important to this study. Starting with an extensive definition of "sampling" from three angles (field-based, literature-oriented, and personal), I will continue by discussing "the political" and the two cultural concepts of "meaning" and "material." Another concern of this chapter will be the description and characterization of the field of research, experimental electronica, and a short definition of my understanding of "popular music." The second part of this chapter is dedicated to a discussion of my methodological approach, including a suggestion for a new field of study, trackology, focusing on the analysis of tracks.

Chapter 3 once again discusses the academic literature on sampling. Here I assemble a broad range of typological attempts so far made by scholars to describe various parameters of the sampling process. In doing so, I will identify crucial gaps in the research, including the little-studied focus on questions of the "why."

Chapters 4 and 5 will introduce and develop two analytical tools: the fader of visibility (FOV) and the spider of sampling reasons (SSR). These tools are based on the preceding discussion of the literature alongside data from my own anthropological research. Both tools aim to facilitate the analysis of sample-based music, and will be applied in the case studies which follow. Chapter 5 also addresses, on a broader level, the question of why artists sample in experimental electronica.

Chapters 6 to 10 form the core of this book. These chapters offer detailed analyses of five sampling strategies by laptop producers of experimental electronica. Each analysis aims to deliver a detailed description of the respective sampling process and a thorough discussion of the sampling reasons involved.

In the interlude, I approach the core interests of this book from yet another angle. Having analyzed the sampling processes of released tracks, I here focus on a direct observation of a musical production in the making. This will offer further insights into the creative choices of a particular sampling process and allow a well-grounded discussion of sampling as a multilevel process, as I have defined the term before.

To close this book, I will finally present a few conclusions and an outlook in Chapter 12. I will compare the case studies, illustrate the range of the sampling strategies examined, and offer some concluding perspectives on sampling in experimental electronica. I will discuss sampling as a substitute for the voice, as a deeply personal project, and as a digital experience that is shaped and influenced by media. In the second part of the chapter I will look beyond this study, summarizing its value for a multi-perspective ethnography of sampling.

Although the case studies will be analyzed at length in Chapters 6 to 10, I will refer to them in other parts of the book wherever

appropriate. As such, it is useful to first offer a short introduction to the five analyzed tracks and their producers. For a more detailed introduction, see the respective case study chapters. All tracks can be accessed via online platforms (SoundCloud and/or Bandcamp). Note that throughout the book, artists presented in the case studies are referred to by their full names rather than their pseudonyms to illustrate my relative closeness to them during my research. Further artists not represented in a case study, with whom I had more superficial contact, are referred to by their pseudonyms.

COOL FOR YOU: "STABILIZED, YES!" (2017)

The brain behind the project COOL FOR YOU is German interdisciplinary artist Vika Kirchenbauer (*1983), based in Berlin. Kirchenbauer has so far released two EPs: *GIVEN YOUR CONVENIENT ABSENCE* (2016, self-released) and *MOOD MANAGEMENT* (2017 on Creamcake). In spring 2019, she released her debut album *COMMUNAL MESS* on Creamcake. On all three releases she exclusively processes material from the Northern American Sacred Harp tradition, a religious choral tradition stemming from a colonial context. The track "STABILIZED, YES!" comes from her second EP and had received 2,800 plays on SoundCloud by June 2019 (Creamcake 2017b).[17]

Lara Sarkissian: "kenats" (2016)

Lara Sarkissian (*1992) is an electronic music producer based in Oakland, California. She further acts as a DJ (DJ FOOZOOL), filmmaker, party organizer, and label owner (Club Chai). Sarkissian is of Armenian descent, and grew up as part of an Armenian diaspora community. This Armenian heritage is a strong influence on her compositional practice, including her sampling strategies. "kenats" was one of her first published tracks. Released in January 2016, the track had reached 3,512 plays on SoundCloud by July 2021 (Sarkissian 2016). Sarkissian released her debut EP *DISRUPTION* on her own label in 2018. In the same year, she contributed to the Hexadome project from the Berlin-based Institute for Sound and Music (ISM), at the invitation of research platform Norient. In this context she undertook a four-week artist's residency at the Center for Art and Media (ZKM) in Karlsruhe, Germany, where I had the chance to observe her production process.

The author of this book is also part of Norient. See Chapter 2 for a discussion of the author's involvement.

Moro: "Libres" (2016)

The next case study focuses on a track by Argentinian producer Mauro Guz Bejar (*1993). To date, Guz Bejar has released two EPs: his first, *San Benito*, through NON Worldwide in 2016, and his second, *Irrelevant*, through Janus in 2018. In 2016, Bejar moved from

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17   The display of the plays was disabled after June 2019.

Buenos Aires to Berlin. In his track "Libres," from his first EP (NON Worldwide 2016), he sampled a sound of a chain from an online database. No statistics on clicks or plays are accessible for this track.

Eomac: "Perversas" (2017)

Eomac is the pseudonym of Irish-born electronic music producer and DJ Ian McDonnell (*1979). Since 2010, he has released a range of singles, EPs, and albums on various labels, including his own Eotrax. McDonnell is part of other projects, such as the duos Lakker and noeverything, and the solo project EeOo. In 2014, he moved from Dublin, Ireland, to Berlin. On his track "Perversas" (Candela Rising 2017), he sampled a clip from a documentary on people who maintain sexual relations with animals (the practice of bestiality). The track was released as part of the compilation *Elephant Road* (2017 on Candela Rising). No statistics on clicks or plays of the official track are accessible. A non-official YouTube upload had reached 1,177 views as of July 2021.

M.E.S.H.: "Methy Imbiß" (2015)

M.E.S.H. is the artist James Whipple (*1985), who was born, grew up, and was educated in various places in the U.S. before moving to Berlin in 2009. There, he co-founded the Janus collective, which organizes club nights and releases electronic music. Since 2011, he has released singles, EPs, and DJ Mixes on various labels, though mostly on PAN records. Whipple published his first album *Piteous Gate* in 2015 and his second album *Hesaitix* in 2017. The track "Methy Imbiß" (PAN Records 2015) forms part of his first full-length album and contains a hidden sample of war sounds from the military conflict in Eastern Ukraine in 2014. Unofficial uploads on SoundCloud and YouTube reached 4,121 plays and 7,135 views as of July 2021.

Having introduced the production method of sampling, the focus of the present study, and the tracks and producers examined in the case studies, I will now continue by defining the terms and concepts most important to this book, introducing the field, and explaining my methodological approach.

Part 1

Tools and Theory

2

Terminology and Methods

Sampling is the (digital) use of external sound material to produce new music.

This chapter focuses on the theoretical and methodological framework of my study. I will introduce definitions for the terms and cultural concepts that are most significant to the book. This includes a definition of the term sampling, a discussion of the concept of "the political," and some explanation regarding the concepts "meaning" and "material." (Terms and concepts that are relevant to only one or two sections are introduced in the respective chapters.) I then embed this study in the field of experimental electronica, and explain its underlying understanding of "popular music." The chapter closes with a thorough discussion of my methodological approach.

Defining Sampling

Without a doubt, the most central term in this book is "sampling." Here, I approach the term from three angles: from the field, from the literature, and from my own, concluding perspective. In the first approach, I aim to combine data from my interviews to reach a definition of sampling from the perspective of the musicians involved. The second approach gives a brief overview of definitional attempts in the existing academic literature. Addressing both approaches will illustrate the slipperiness of the term. As a third and final step, I will combine both previous approaches into my own definition of sampling as a multilevel process. I always indicate the names of the interviewed artists in brackets.

Perspective from the Field

When I asked my interviewees about their individual understanding of sampling, I was met with a large variety of answers. The explanation of what sampling is for them was blended with the explanation of how and why it is used. In general, sampling was explained as *a (digital) transfer of sound material from a source to a musical product*. I put "digital" in brackets because this aspect was mentioned only once explicitly (Future Daughter), but I assume that all my informants naturally view the transfer as predominantly digital. Beyond this commonly shared, rather basic definition, there were some nuances in the understanding of the term. Among them I have identified four rough approaches to defining the term. These approaches highlight the challenges of finding a generally accepted definition within the field, and nevertheless suggest some first steps towards one.

(a) Pre-Existing vs. Live-Recording

The first approach defines sampling by the nature of the processed material. Many artists emphasized that samples are of "pre-existing recorded" (Peder Mannerfelt) or "pre-recorded" (Young Palace) sound material. This means that, at the point when the producer accesses their source material, the material already exists as a "pre-recorded" sound file. Recording is here understood as the process of the conversion of sound "into a permanent form for subsequent reproduction" (Oxford 2019b). Accordingly, the processing of material recorded or synthesized at the instant when the producer is working is not considered sampling. In the case of field recordings, this definition becomes especially diffuse and raises questions: do we only consider the processing of field recordings as sampling when the material has been recorded beforehand? Does it make sense to terminologically distinguish between the processing of field recordings that are pre-recorded and others that are recorded at the instant when the producer is working? Is environmental sound unique or does it already exist prior to being recorded? And could we therefore label environmental sounds as pre-existing? Accordingly, some artists explicitly excluded field recordings from their definitions (Mauro Guz Bejar, Young Palace), while others included them (James Whipple).

(b) External vs. Internal

A second approach approximates the term by defining it by the origin of the processed material. In this approach, sampling is the use of *external* sound material. Olivia Louvel, for example, mentioned that sampled material is "not generated from scratch" by the producer themselves. It is made or recorded by "someone else" (Mauro

Guz Bejar, Sufyvn, Young Palace) and samples can thus be considered "found sounds" (KALAB).

One major objection could be raised at this point: the practice of "self-sampling." Dasychira described this as using "tracks of mine and sounds I've composed in the past," and James Whipple similarly considered sampling as "a production kind of studio thing of constantly recording what I'm doing and then resampling it."[1] Apparently, self-sampling is regarded as a form of sampling, although these sounds are internal. Still, such a definition would throw the doors wide open to ubiquitous usage of the term, with the effect of terminological insignificance. Some artists referred to such a broad understanding when they equated sampling with recording (Ian McDonnell or Zavoloka: "For me, it's recording. For me, everything is sampling"). Bod [包家巷] mentioned that "the only thing I wouldn't call a sample is like if I did a stereo recording and just mastered it as that." In consequence, this means as soon as electronic music production contains a single step of editing—as it usually does—one could, theoretically, speak of sampling. Even if we exclude from the concept sounds instantly generated for a specific track, these sounds could turn into samples later, as Peder Mannerfelt explained:

> *It's pretty often the case of me using a sound I have recorded myself for something else or a bunch of sounds I've collected in a folder to use as drums or one-shot samples. As opposed to say a melody that I will record specifically for the track I'm working on (but that melody might be used as a sample in another track, so maybe everything can be considered samples?!?).*

kritzkom pointed to another special case. For one of her projects, she asked a musician to record a few clips on a particular instrument. She mentioned that she does not consider the use of excerpts from these recordings as sampling, although these sources are clearly external. This, once again, indicates the various understandings of what is considered sampling and what is not.

However, most of the artists would probably agree when I define sampling as *the process of using material that was not recorded or generated by the producer for the current track or project.* This would include own (internal) material from previous projects (self-sampling) as well. Still, the use of field recordings and the practice of live-sampling would have to be regarded as exceptions. A reasonable solution would be to rely on a definition of sampling that combines different, equivalent forms such as that suggested by James Whipple:

> *I guess you could divide it [sampling] into three things.*

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1 Musicians often use the term "resampling" to describe the process when a sample is edited and manipulated first, and then recorded within the DAW for a second time (see for example Wegerle 2019a). I do not use this term as I conceive of sampling in general as a multilevel process that could encompass multiple cycles of recording.

There would be the classic form of sampling which is sampling other recorded music. (...) And then there's maybe sampling from more environmental recordings (...) whether it's a field recording that you've recorded, or you sample simply kind of incidental, or ambient, or environmental sound from something. Either from a film or from news footage or whatever. And then the third one would be self-sampling which I do a lot and that's more a production kind of studio thing of constantly recording what I'm doing and then resampling.

(c) Describing Sampling

A third approach to the definition of sampling describes its effects or consequences. Here, similar terms such as "transfer from one context to another" (Drew Daniel/Matmos), "re-location" (Dr. Das), or "re-contextualization" (Dasychira) are applied. Dr. Das pointed to the attachment of new meaning to the sampling material, while DJ Kala emphasized the fusion of one's material with one's own aesthetic. YATTA underlined a temporal dimension, describing sampling as "a way of working at time by pulling up clips from the past." Similarly, Matthew Herbert considered sampling as "historical reenactment" or "historical reimagining." Others generally understood sampling as a "process of appropriation" (Olivia Louvel, Young Palace). The reuse of a sound recording as an instrument (Naked, Dubokaj) or the imitation of an instrument (Dubokaj) was also mentioned in descriptions of the process. Finally, ZULI indicated that sampling could mean "different processes." According to him, the creation of a new sound on the basis of a pre-recorded sample is called sampling as much as the creation of a reference (DJ Kala). The former thus blends the lines between sampling and sound synthesis.

it becomes evident that the limitation of a definition of sampling to a few keywords such as "re-contextualization" would fail to encompass other individual sampling strategies.

It becomes apparent that all these attempts to explain sampling are highly shaped by personal strategies in production processes that vary for each artist. This approach thus hardly serves as a general definition. Moreover, it becomes evident that the limitation of a definition of sampling to a few keywords such as "re-contextualization" would fail to encompass other individual sampling strategies.

(d) Sampling as a Multilevel Process

The fourth approach expands the definition of sampling towards a multilevel process that contains more than the mere transfer of sound from a source to the new composition. Dubokaj and Future Daughter, for example, emphasized that sampling means to edit, manipulate, and tweak the imported sounds. They understood the process of editing as a part of the concept of sampling. Drew Daniel

from Matmos specified the moment of access as entailing further steps as well:

> *I would say that the word sample implies that it's a piece of something that is a broader organic whole and you're taking a part of something. So, it's about excerpting, choosing, selecting, narrowing your access to something.*

In my own definition of sampling below I will rely on this idea of sampling as a multilevel process.

Perspectives from Academic Literature

On the basis of my literature review on sampling, I have identified three main approaches to an audio-related definition of the term, whether relating to signal processing or musical processes: a technical, a procedural, and a multilayered. Table 2.1 presents a rough categorization of these approaches.[2] Technical definitions (approaches [a] to [c]) define sampling following its primary meaning as the conversion of an analog sound signal to digital data. The continuous, analog signal is thereby represented by a digital code containing periodical "samples" of the input signal. The digital code allows the approximate—though never complete—reconstruction of the analog signal. A few authors emphasize that the meaning of the term has shifted towards the inclusion of the storage of sound that is already digital (b) while others point to one of the earliest areas in which sampling was applied: the reproduction and imitation of instruments (c).

I have identified three main approaches to an audio-related definition of the term: a technical, a procedural, and a multilayered.

A second group recognizes that the meaning of sampling extends beyond the mere technical procedure of sound conversion or storage. I call these definitions procedural as they understand sampling as a longer, or even multilevel, process. These scholars define sampling by generalizing the term as the transfer of *pre-existing* sound material into new compositions or contexts (d). As we can see from Table 2.1, this seems to be the most popular approach. This finding resonates with some feedback from the field, and it further corresponds to Butler (2014, 47) who noted that "most of the literature assumes that samples are derived from sources external to the work." An emphasis on the aspect of recontextualization can, however, obscure other functions of sampling. Butler pointed, for example, to the use of sampling as "a more general constructive technique" (ibid.), which would not be covered by such a conception. Accordingly, approaches (e) and (f) show the inadequacy of (d) on a broader level. The attempt by David J. Gunkel (2016, 7–8)

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2   See Appendix for an extended overview of all examined definitions. The list is not exhaustive, and it also includes some general definitions of the term that are not related to the subject of music or signal processing. In this chapter, I focus on audio-related definitions only. It should also be noted that an author's definition of sampling depends on the study in question. An author might define sampling in a certain way in one study before expanding this definition in the context of another study.

to merge different meanings of sampling leads to an emphasis on aspects of fragmentation as the connective element between various modes of definition (approach [e]): "The term 'sampling' in whatever mode it is operationalized, focuses attention on an act of cutting, extracting, citing, and/or recording."

Approach	Focus	Literature
(a) Technical Definitions I	the conversion of an analog sound signal	Cutler 1994; Supper 1997; Binas 2004; Katz 2005; Diederichsen 2006; Djordevic 2014; Brockhaus 2017
(b) Technical Definitions II	additional emphasis on the digital storage of digital sound	Kühn 2009; Binas 2010
(c) Technical Definitions III	additional emphasis on the sampling of instruments	Tully 1968 (cited in Schloss 2004); Davies 1996; Harkins 2016
(d) Procedural Definitions I	emphasizing the transfer of *pre-existing* sound material into new compositions	Brackett 1995: Hesmondhalgh 2000; Fulford-Jones 2001; Demers 2003; Fuchs 2004; Lena 2004; Katz 2005; Moorefield 2005; Marshall 2006; Dyer 2007; Pelleter and Lepa 2007; Klammt 2010; Großmann 2011; McLeod and DiCola 2011; Reynolds 2011; Tonelli 2011; Navas 2012; Collins, Schedel and Wilson 2013; Fischer 2013; Sewell 2013; McLeod 2015; Harkins 2016; Behr, Negus, and Street 2017; Suechting 2017; Gallagher 2018b; Fischer 2020
(e) Procedural Definitions II	emphasizing aspects of extraction and fragmentation	Gunkel 2016; Borschke 2017
(f) Procedural Definitions III	emphasizing aspects of manipulation and editing	Binas 2010; Großmann 2005; Fischer 2013; Schloss 2004
(g) Procedural Definitions V	emphasizing various stages or aspects	Metzer 2003; Rodgers 2003; Leydon 2010; von Gehlen 2011; Behr, Negus, and Street 2017; Harkins 2020
(h) Combining Definitions	emphasizing technical *and* procedural aspects	Reck 1995; Ruschkowski 1998; Großmann 2002; Feuerstein 2004; Kvifte 2007; Demers 2010; Harkins 2010a; Hosken 2014; von Appen 2014; Gallagher 2018a; Oxford 2018b, 2019c

Table 2.1: Audio-related definitions of "sampling"

This definition, as simple as it is, highlights the cultural function of sampling and merges all different forms of meanings of the term. However, it does not work as a useful definition as it is too unspecific. Others emphasize that sampling not only encompasses the transfer of a sound from one context to another, but also the

editing and manipulation of this material (f).

Finally, a few scholars try to understand these various stages and aspects of sampling as a multilevel process (g). Behr, Negus, and Street (2017, 2) highlight that the practice of sampling "constitutes a continuum of activity, sometimes distinct from other musical practices but very often merged into them." They view sampling as part of a musical field which is shaped by "listening practices, creative habits and habitus" (15). At the same time, sampling itself is, they argue, part of a greater "spectrum of activities" (1). One of the first scholars to suggest defining sampling as a multilevel process was Tara Rodgers. In my own definition below, I will rely to a large extent on her attempt: "In the production of electronic music, the sampling process encompasses selecting, recording, editing and processing sound pieces to be incorporated into a larger musical work" (Rodgers 2003, 313).

As a final category, several scholars have tried to combine previous definitional attempts. Among them are the often-quoted Tellef Kvifte (2007) and Dan Hosken (2014). Both emphasize definitions (a) and (c), as well as a third attempt referring to "the process whereby a musician/composer includes part of an earlier recording in his/her own music, as a more or less recognizable citation" (Kvifte 2007, 107). Furthermore, Kvifte adds a fourth understanding, where sampling is used in a completely hidden way as a "repair-technique" in studio production to merge different recordings to reach the best result (108). As Harkins (2010a, 8) points out, Kvifte's extended definition is still incomplete. It does not adequately represent sampling strategies where samples are neither used in a recognizable way nor as a mere studio repair-technique. In this book, it is most of all the case study of "Methy Imbiß," with its concealed sampling of highly referential sound material, which evades Kvifte's categories.

Sampling is not equal to the terms remix, quotation, collage, and montage, to name only the most important of the terms sometimes used interchangeably with it.

There is another attempt to define sampling that is not included in the overview above: the delimitation from other terms and the suggestion of alternative vocabulary. Sampling is not equal to the terms remix, quotation, collage, and montage, to name only the most important of the terms sometimes used interchangeably with it. As Eduardo Navas (2012, 12) points out, "sampling is the key element that makes the act of remixing possible." Remix is thus understood as a result of one or more processes of sampling. Accordingly, remix refers to the final musical product that contains at least one sample.[3]

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3 I do not define the term "remix" beyond this very short and vague definition. This is an endeavor even more complex than the definition of "sampling," and it goes beyond the scope of this book. By not using the term, I also try to avoid confusion with remix as a particular musical product that is labeled as such. Furthermore, in my interviews, the term "remix" was rarely used.

Jeanette Bicknell (2001, 190) theorizes the musical quotation as "an intentional re-use: One intended to be heard as a reference to other music." Following this understanding, a sample could turn into a quote (if there is a referential intention), but it is not one *per se*. Aram Sinnreich (2010, 124) emphasizes that, compared with quotation, sampling is "the mediated expression itself, not merely the ideas behind it." In other words: "Traditional musical quotations typically cite works [and] samples cite performances" (Katz 2005, 141).

The delimitation towards the terms collage and montage is diffuse. Generally they are used in different historical contexts, or at least in relation to analog phenomena. Collage is mostly associated with haptic processes (Tollmann 2004, 292) and with the combination of external material from various contexts (Großmann 2005, 329–30). However, the term collage has regularly been used in relation to sound, in particular to describe techniques similar to sampling such as musique concrète (Burkholder 2001b). Montage is sometimes used interchangeably with collage, and, more often, in connection with film and photography. It refers to the combination and recombination of media material of a similar nature (Großmann 2005, 329–30). Neither term can be clearly differentiated from the term sampling. I would nevertheless suggest doing so to avoid terminological fuzziness, reserving collage and montage for haptic processes in the visual arts.

A final challenge is the delimitation from the term "recording." Both Eduardo Navas (2012, 12) and Justin Morey highlight that "any piece of music that is recorded in a DAW, unless done so in one take with no overdubbing, is constructed from a collection of samples of varying length" (Morey 2017, 292). This observation corresponds with some of the aforementioned broad definitions of sampling from the field. Owen Gallagher criticizes such an open understanding of the term. He differentiates between the "original recording" that is additive ("producing a new recording that did not exist before"), and "sampling" that is subtractive ("taking a sample from something previously recorded") (Gallagher 2018b, 29). As previously mentioned, equating sampling with recording would lead to such a broad understanding of the term that it would become useless, especially when discussing electronically produced music. Provided that we still want to use the term, we thus need to find a more restricted definition.

Before making my own attempt in this endeavor, I would like to comment on the efforts of some scholars to introduce alternative terms. Ragnhild Brøvig-Hanssen (2010), Robert Strachan (2017), and Eduardo Navas (2012, 15) use "cut & paste" to describe practices of sampling. Brøvig-Hanssen (2010, 164) only refers to sampling when talking about the technical process ("The voice is sampled from […]"). Rolf Großmann (2015, 2016) suggests the term "phonographic work," deriving the term from the historical practice of motivic work in the tradition of classical composer Joseph Haydn.

Although these suggestions would at least bypass some of the aforementioned definitional challenges, I still prefer the term "sampling," mainly because of its spread and general popularity. I believe that it does not make sense to describe human action without considering, albeit critically, the vocabulary established in the field.

A Short Definition of Sampling

This overview of definitions from both the field and the literature has shown one thing: "sampling" has become a slippery concept that cannot be defined universally, but must be defined relative to the scope of its application. In this book, I thus rely on the following definition. Only the highlighted part is relevant, as I will not analyze processes of self-sampling.

> **Sampling is the (digital) use of external sound material to produce new music. The processing of internal material can be conceived of as sampling if it has not been newly produced (self-sampling).**

This definition conceives of sampling as a human action, carried out by the producers of music as active agents. Four crucial aspects shall be highlighted:

(1) I have avoided the terms "pre-existing" or "pre-recorded," to include field recordings as sampling material. Instead, I rely on the distinction between *external* and *internal*. From the producer's perspective, every sound that they have not created themselves—through sound synthesis or the playing of an instrument—is external. However, as the definition above shows, sampling is not exclusive to the processing of external sound material if one takes the moment of action into account. The use of own (internal) material can be considered sampling too, as long as the processed material has not been created in direct relation to the project at hand. Similarly, Gallagher (2018b, 41) emphasizes "the difference between sampled material and newly produced material" as crucial in defining both sampling and remix.

(2) The term *material* is essential for any definition of sampling. Sampling means to work with materially available sound. Material here means that the sound is present as a file that is included in the new production. Accordingly, Navas (2017) describes sampling as "materially grounded" and samples as "quantifiable." Hence, if a process of musical borrowing is not based on quantifiable material, we would have to speak of other practices such as quotation or imitation.

(3) It is important to note that sampling does not necessarily need

to be *digital*. The Mellotron (an electro-mechanical instrument) and the use of dubplates are just two musical examples that involve parallel but analog processes. Kvifte (2007, 111), Harkins (2010b, 179), and Morey (2017, 107) highlight that, when understanding sampling beyond its original, technical meaning (approach [a]), there is no reason to regard sampling as necessarily digital. This is why I put the term "digital" in brackets. However, most processes that are described with the term "sampling" are indeed digital. This is the case for this book as well.

(4) Sampling means *to work* with (to use) something (sound material) *to produce* a larger piece of new music. The definition thus describes a creative act that encompasses a whole process with multiple stages. With this understanding of sampling, I correspond to various definitions from the field (approach [d]) as well as from the literature (approach [g]). I will now draft the different stages of the creative process in question.

The Stages of Sampling

The main stages involved in the process of sampling are: research and/or listening; selection; access (download, conversion, or recording); storing; and editing (processing/manipulation). Figure 2.1 displays some further steps in brackets: leveling, revision, and mastering. I do not consider these steps part of the actual sampling process. However, they do indicate that the sampling process as such is part of a greater process: that of musical production in general. This corresponds to Behr, Negus, and Street (2017), who describe sampling as part of a continuous "spectrum of activities."
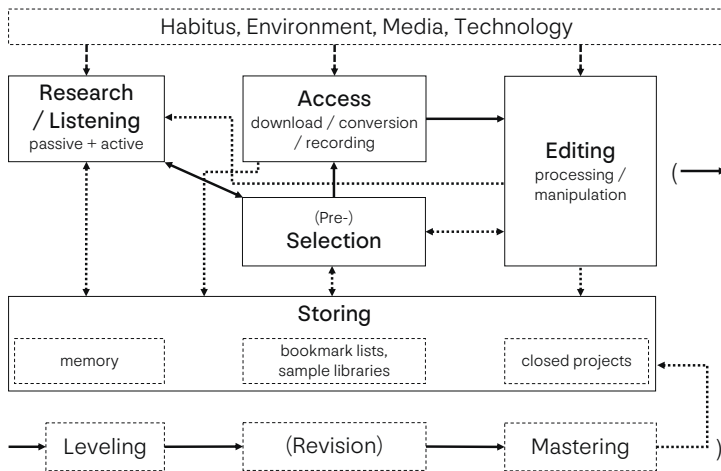
Figure 2.1: Sampling as a multilevel process

Samples are saved in various kinds of stores: memory, bookmark lists, sample libraries, and closed projects. The latter indicates that the process of sampling could be cyclical: a sample processed in one project can become a sampling source in the next.

The order in which these steps are executed depends on the

respective sampling strategy. Moreover, not all steps have to be addressed in every sampling process, and each step could be undertaken more than once. The solid arrows indicate an ideal, direct succession of the stages, while the dotted arrows point to possible variations. Finally, the dashed box at the top of the diagram refers to potential external influences on the various stages of the process.

The main aspect missed by most of the aforementioned procedural definitions of sampling is the inclusion of a research and/or listening stage. However, there are some exceptions to this, with authors such as Warner (2003, 97), Chapman (2011), Borschke (2017, 96), and Behr, Negus, and Street (2017) having already emphasized the role of listening in sampling. This understanding is further expanded by Morey, who theorizes "listening as authorship." In his study on sampling practices in British dance music he describes listening as an important, creative part of the act of sampling. Among his interviewees, "the ability to listen and select was considered as compositionally significant as any production or technique-based skills" (Morey 2014, 48; 2017, 279).

If we consider sampling as a multilevel process, the listening stage must be the point of departure. Interestingly, in a pedagogical manual for Live by Ableton, the most important production software for electronic popular music of the early 21st century, this step of music production is also emphasized. In *Making Music. Creative Strategies for Electronic Music Producers*, Ableton's head of documentation, Dennis DeSantis (2015, 30–33), recommends the development of listening skills to those producers who want to enhance their electronic compositions. DeSantis distinguishes between two listening modes:

> *Active listening simply means listening as the primary activity, and it's an important skill to develop. Rather than using music as the background for another activity [(passive listening)], try listening without doing anything else. This requires time, quiet, and focus, which are skills you need for your own production work anyway. (DeSantis 2015, 31)[4]*

Regarding sampling, both active and passive listening can mark the point of departure. In the figure above, I have labeled this stage with the term "research," as in some cases targeted research on sampling sources is a separate and important step.

> **The main aspect missed by most of the procedural definitions of sampling is the inclusion of a research and/or listening stage.**

See interlude in Chapter 11.

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4   The concept of "active listening" is borrowed from communication studies and seems to receive some attention among electronic music producers (Clayton 2016, 256–72; Wegerle 2019b).

To close this extended definition of the term "sampling" I highlight five key characteristics of the sampling process. These aspects were observed in the present research and will be illustrated in the following chapters.

(1) The process of sampling is considerably shaped by moments of selection. Sampling material is selected from different kinds of stores while actively or passively listening to music, when conducting targeted research, or during the process of editing. Thus, over the whole process, a single sample can be selected more than once. The emphasis on the stage of selection in sampling in particular, and cultural production in general, is also made by Westrup (2014) and Navas (2017).

(2) The process can happen over a longer time period. The storing stage allows the producer to interrupt the sampling process. A sample can be revisited after being stored for a while in the producer's own memory, bookmark lists, sample libraries, or closed projects. It might be years between the first encounter with a sample (research/listening stage) and its final processing in a track. This poses various difficulties to the researcher of sampling processes.

(3) The process is cyclical. Each step links back to the research and listening stage. At every moment of the process, new samples can potentially enter the emerging composition, and closed projects with their own processes of sampling behind them could become sources for new sampling projects. By taking this thought a step further, sampling could potentially be considered a basic principle of musical practice. Focused on musical performance, Mark Butler describes the sampling practice of one of his interviewees as an "accumulative cycle of musical creation": "Composition forms the basis of improvisation, which in turns feeds back into composition, and so on. Along the way, multiple forms of musical existence are generated" (Butler 2014, 48).

(4) In most cases, the whole process takes place on an explicitly personal level and so remains hidden from a broader audience. The examination of underlying motivations and intentions can thus substantially contribute to a better understanding of the characteristics, functions, and effects of popular music.

(5) The process of sampling illustrates what has been widely recognized as a basic characteristic of digital culture: the merging of the roles of the consumer and the producer. Morey highlights that listening could be conceived of as both production and consumption. At times, as he argues, it has become impossible to separate these two roles (Morey 2014, 51). In his book on technology and popular music, Paul Théberge (1997, 213) claimed as one of his main theses that "making music with new

The examination of underlying motivations and intentions can substantially contribute to a better understanding of the characteristics, functions, and effects of popular music.

See case studies of "Perversas" (Chapter 9) and "Methy Imbiß" (10).

technology has indeed become a process of simultaneous production and consumption." This definition has shown that the producer of sample-based music has become a consumer of (potential) sampling material.

I will return to the presented model in Chapter 11, where I will analyze a sampling process on the basis of anthropological field-work (direct observation). This interlude will allow us to follow the sampling process in the moment of action, verifying the steps introduced above. If not at the moment of production itself, these stages rapidly overlap with one another in the memory of the producers. The more time that has elapsed since the moment of production, the more challenging it becomes to separate the individual steps of the sampling process.

I do not therefore rely on this model in the case studies, as they are all approached in retrospect, with a distance from the moment of production of between one and three years. However, I draw on this chapter's general conception of sampling as a multilevel process as a theoretical groundwork. In the case studies, I retrace particular sampling processes and their key influences as far as possible, according to the knowledge that is still accessible.

Defining Cultural Concepts

When sampling is the object of the present study, a few cultural concepts are consistently used to explain this object. The notion of "the political" defines what kinds of tracks and sampling strategies are analyzed. The concept of "the material" is used to describe the sound-clips the sampling producers work with, and the concept of "meaning" is applied when talking about the extra-musical connotations that particular samples evoke. In the following pages I will introduce and define these cultural concepts.

A Signifier of the Social: the Political

This book is not about political music: it is not my main concern to discuss the relationship between music and politics or to depict the analyzed tracks as political. As Ute Canaris (2005, 30) has pointed out, the evaluation of music as political relies on specific contexts of reception. This question thus exceeds the scope of this study. However, this book is about *political* sampling material, sampling strategies that *politicize* seemingly "neutral" material, and *political* sampling motivations and intentions. The notion of "the political" is thus highly significant to my focus. Below, I aim to clarify my understanding of "the political" as well as the distinction between "political" and "politicized" sampling material.

This book is not about political music.

According to the Oxford Dictionary (2018a), "the political" relates "to the government or public affairs of a country." This definition

contains two dimensions. The first is a narrow understanding of "the political." It conceives of "the political" as something closely linked with the actions of nation states, parties, or other institutions and agents involved in the process of governing a country. In short, in this definition "the political" is equated with "government." In contrast, the second dimension indicates a much wider understanding of the term. "The political" is defined as something related to "public affairs." At this point, we inevitably have to ask what kinds of affairs this explanation refers to. Here, the definition becomes diffuse and much harder to grasp, at least if we want to avoid a completely open and thus meaningless definition that views everything as political.

In the literature on music, "the political" is often not defined at all. As an adjective, the term is used in combination with nouns such as value, consciousness, censorship, economy, and culture. It is presupposed that the reader knows exactly what "political" means. Moreover, "the political" is often tautologically defined as something that refers to politics. Helmut Rösing (2004, 162) notes that "the political" in music could become obvious "as a response to the socio-political reality."[5] David K. Dunaway (1987, 37) states that "music may be said to be political when its lyrics or melody evoke or reflect a political judgment by the listener."[6]

Dunaway thereby focuses on the effect of music, rather than the intent behind it, following a prevalent definitional approach. Other definitions are more helpful for my purposes. In his extended article in the German encyclopedia *Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (MGG), Hanns-Werner Heister (2016) defines "the political" in only one sentence: "The 'political' in music," he states, "is a condensed form of the social in music."[7] Heister's definition is vague again: what exactly is meant by "the social"? Canaris points in a similar direction while, again, not clearly defining the "political." In her helpful overview on the relation between music and politics, she distinguishes between, on the one hand, concrete political contexts related to the political system and its agents (narrow definition), and on the other, political dimensions occurring in different societal spheres of activity (wider definition). According to Canaris (2005, 28–29), these political contexts encompass the economy, the social, education, culture, and issues relating to gender and ethnicity.

Heister and Canaris both approximate my own understanding of the "political" as a signifier of the social.

Heister and Canaris both approximate my own understanding of the "political" as a signifier of the social. I will further clarify this definition through the conception of "politics" and "the political" developed by Colin Hay. He outlines four key features for forming a "differentiated yet inclusive conception of politics," among them an understanding of "politics"—and "the political"—

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5   Own translation. Original quote: "Reaktion auf Soziopolitische [sic!] Realität."
6   Dunaway also wrote the entry on "political music" in the *Grove Music Online* (Dunaway 2016).
7   Own translation. Original quote: "Das 'Politische' in der Musik ist eine konzentrierte Form des Gesellschaftlichen in der Musik."

as "a social activity" (Hay 2007, 65). He defines activities, choices, and decisions as social "if they have, or are likely to have, direct or indirect consequences for others" (70). Following Hay, John Street (2012, 7) summarizes that "decisions that are taken alone and affect only the individual who takes them are not social and hence not political." The further three key features of "the political" according to Hay (2007, 65) are: that "politics" offers people a choice; that it involves them (they have agency); and that it consists of a process of deliberation. As Street (2012, 7) argues, it is therefore important not to equate public life with "the political" (not everything that is public is automatically "political"), but also not to banish "the political" from the private sphere (a private action can affect other people and thus be "political").

Following these thoughts, I argue that music or musical elements such as samples can be perceived as "political" if they discuss, or at least point to, socially relevant issues. According to Hay, these issues are debated (and deliberated) by particular actors within society with a measurable effect for a specific group of people. It is therefore not crucial whether the musical producers themselves are political actors in Hay's sense.[8] In my case studies, these "socially relevant issues" are, for example, gender roles (Lara Sarkissian), forms of sexuality (Ian McDonnell), migration (Mauro Guz Bejar), and colonial history (Vika Kirchenbauer). There is only one example—James Whipple, with his strategy of sampling the sounds of war—which adheres to the narrow (and conventional) definition of "the political" as introduced earlier.

I argue that music or musical elements such as samples can be perceived as "political" if they discuss, or at least point to, socially relevant issues.

When speaking of "political" sampling material, it is further important to differentiate between material that can be conceived of as "political" in its source context—either by the producer or by myself as a researcher—and other seemingly "neutral" material that is "politicized" in the process of sampling. I draw this vocabulary from Helmut Rösing's draft model systematizing the relations of music (2004). He has rightly pointed out that the labelling of music as "political" is a project that is highly dependent on context and involves all steps within the process of musical circulation ("musikalischer Zirkulationsprozess"). He thereby highlights that the political character of music can change during this process and formerly non-political music can be "politicized." Accordingly, particular sampling material is "politicized" by its producer when the producer charges the sample with any kind of "political meaning" that was not necessarily connected with the sample before. This politicizing use of samples can be (at least partially) observed in the case studies of Lara Sarkissian, Vika Kirchenbauer, and Mauro Guz Bejar, while the case study of Ian McDonnell illustrates

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8   Only some of the producers featured in this book could be regarded as political actors. Musical products generated by them could be further characterized as "intentionally political" (Dollase 1997, 122).

the opposite phenomenon: a political sound used in a depoliticizing manner; or, in other words, aestheticized.

The Realm of the Extra-Musical: Meaning

Having clarified my understanding of "the political," I want to introduce a term that constantly appears in discussions of sampling strategies: "meaning." Samples contain and transform meaning; producers select samples because of a particular meaning; they manipulate them and create new meaning. Especially when discussing the sampling of political material, the concept of "meaning" is omnipresent.

With reference to Stuart Hall, Michael Rappe (2008, 175) characterizes a popular music track as a "map of meanings." Ole Petras (2011, 281) coined the expression "patchwork of signs" in relation to popular music. John Fiske (1989, 124) considers "the study of popular culture [to be] the study of the circulation of meanings." The analysis of popular music, and the analysis of sampling processes in particular, thus inevitably has to deal with various layers of meaning. However, what is meaning? Jean-Jacques Nattiez, from whom I have already borrowed the categorization of poietic, neutral, and esthesic analysis, has offered a short and simple definition:

> An object of any kind takes on meaning for an individual apprehending that object, as soon as the individual places the object in relation to areas of his lived experience – that is, in relation to a collection of other objects that belong to his or her experience of the world. (…) "Meaning" may be defined by a formula more lapidary still; meaning exists when an object is situated in relation to a horizon. (Nattiez 1990, 9)

This definition emphasizes that meaning depends on context. In other words, the same object placed in a different context produces new meaning. When we conceive of "meaning" as contextual, it should be clear that there is no such thing as a singular and fixed "original meaning." Instead, Ralf von Appen (2014, 220) argues that meaning is created in specific situations of musical activity. Hence sampling, as a production technique which transfers material from one context to another, can be characterized as a meaning-generating process par excellence. Steve Collins (2008) highlights that "sampling is not implemented in creative endeavors to avoid the effort and cost of producing original music, but rather to add layers of meaning to music."

Although I would not completely deny the existence of utilitarian sampling motives such as avoiding effort and costs, I basically agree with Collins' observation. I consider meaning to be crucial at two points. Firstly, meaning is attached— by either myself or the producer—to the sample in the source context. Secondly, I analyze how, and to what extent, this meaning is

Sampling, as a production technique which transfers material from one context to another, can be characterized as a meaning-generating process par excellence.

transferred, adapted, manipulated, changed, or complemented by the producer during the process of sampling. A third point is consciously excluded: the various meanings attached by recipients. Vanessa Chang (2009, 145) is right when she notes that the sample is an "infinitely flexible signifier" and that it "resists the absolutism of linear signification." This means that no particular meaning must necessarily be transferred, even if the sampling material contains controversial content such as the sounds of war, as I will show in the case study of James Whipple.

At some points in the book I speak of samples that contain "extra-musical" meaning, demarcating them from samples that only refer to themselves. Following the definition from Nattiez (1990, 9), this expression is tautological: when meaning is produced, the object—the sample in our case—is placed "in relation to areas of [the producer's] lived experience." Hence, meaning is always extra-musical. However, when using the expression "extra-musical meaning," it is my aim to underline exactly this particular quality of "meaning." As we will see later, one of the most common distinctions producers make when describing their sampling approach is between choosing a sample because of its (extra-musical) meaning (the sample is played by a particular musician, it derives from a particular socio-cultural context, it refers to a particular feeling, it reminds me of a particular situation, etc.) and because of its material qualities (the sample consists of a fast melody, a high and long lasting note, a dense texture, a short and sharp rhythmic pattern, etc.).

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Physically Treated Digital Code: Sampling Material

This "material nature" of a sample links to another concept that needs to be discussed: "the material." I use this term in two different senses. In the first sense, material means the matter with which the sampling artist works. Although samples consist of digital code, the editing steps in a DAW resemble the treatment of physical material: producers cut, paste, move, alter, and manipulate audio clips on the screen, even "touching" the clips with the mouse cursor. Samples form the bricks of a new musical work, and, in turn, the work consists of these materials. Thus, material is "what artists work with," as Theodor Adorno puts it in his *Aesthetic Theory* (Adorno 2006 [1970], 148). However, Adorno's understanding is broader than the one I use here in the sense of "sampling material." For Adorno, material represents more than just building blocks:

> It [the material] is the sum of all that is available to them [the artists], including words, colors, sounds, associations of every sort and every technique ever developed. To this extent, forms too can become material; it is everything that artists encounter about which they must make a decision. (Ibid.)

Admittedly, there is a certain strangeness to using the term

"material" in relation to sonic phenomena. Joanna Demers (2010, 64) rightly objects that "the definition of musical material is slippery at best." She refers to the fact that

> material *as a physical, tangible or repeatable object simply does not exist in music. Every musical sound is distinct and one of a kind, even those supposedly captured on recordings, because what are captured are not sounds themselves but the traces they leave in other media as sympathetic vibrations. (Ibid.; italics original)*

Nevertheless, Demers points to the use of the notion of "sound material" by musicians for centuries. This became obvious during my own interviews, in which many producers used the term to describe their compositional practice. Young Palace, for example, relied on it: "In my pieces, I generally put 'sound as such' or 'sound as material' into focus."[9] Owing to the spread of the term within the field and the aforementioned physical-seeming nature of sampling, I decided to rely on the concept of the "material" in this study as well.

In the second sense of the term "material," it describes the particular sampling approach outlined at the end of the previous section: instead of selecting samples because of (extra-musical) layers of meaning, producers choose samples because of their "material" nature. Thus, the focus lies on the "material" characteristics of the processed samples, such as pitch, timbre, and rhythm. Again, this understanding of the material relies on a narrower understanding of the concept than that provided by Adorno above.

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Having defined the cultural concepts and terms most important to this study, I will now proceed with a discussion of its field of research.

The Field: Experimental Electronica

In the discipline of cultural anthropology, the field has traditionally been understood as geographically confined. In recent decades, this notion has expanded towards a formation constituted by the research itself and describing "the manifestation of the research object in people, groups, places, discourses, and objects," as Miriam Cohn (2014, 75) puts it.[10] Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson had already called for a decentering of "the field" in 1997:

> We might emerge from such a move with less of a sense of "the field" (in the "among the so-and-so" sense) and more of a sense of a mode of study that cares about, and pays

attention to, the interlocking of multiple socio-political sites and locations. (Gupta and Ferguson 1997, 37)

In the meantime, the field has expanded from real places to encompass digital and virtual spaces. Andreas Wittel (2000) pointed to this development at an early stage. In summary, Esther Gajek (2014, 53) emphasizes that, in recent anthropology, "it is no longer the homogeneity of a real place that is primary, but the heterogeneity that emerges from networks of references and relations."[11]

This research focuses on multiple sites within the field of experimental electronica. The notion of "multi-sited ethnography" was introduced by George Marcus (1995, 95) to describe an approach that focuses on "multiple sites of observation and participation that cross-cut dichotomies such as the 'local' and the 'global,' the 'lifeworld' and the 'system.'" As a result, each case study represents a particular site. (I will further discuss Marcus' ideas, and pinpoint how my own methods rely on them, below.)

Accordingly, this book relies on a modern definition of the field. Experimental electronica refers neither to a geographically defined research area nor to a contained musical community or scene. In the words of Cohn and Gajek, this field is a heterogeneous formation of particular electronic music producers and their tracks. In the broadest sense, it could be regarded as a genre; I would rather conceive of it as a loose collective term for a significant manifestation of popular culture that emerged in the late 2010s, and that is rooted in various genres of EDM. Moreover, experimental electronica emerged predominantly from online discourses. Since the late 2010s, music journalists and fans increasingly describe this particular sound as "deconstructed club music," or invent other terms such as "post-club," "experimental club," "club-not-club," or "avant-club" (RYM 2019).[12]

In this section, I aim to describe the principal features of this field. Furthermore, I will critically examine the chosen label and discuss why I prefer "experimental electronica" to "deconstructed club music." Finally, I will explain why this field offers substantial insights regarding the focus of this book—with the music's heavily sample-based nature being just one reason among several.

> *Experimental electronica refers neither to a geographically defined research area nor to a contained musical community or scene.*

> *This field is a heterogeneous formation of particular electronic music producers and their tracks.*

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11   Own translation. Original quote: "Damit steht nicht (mehr) die Homogenität eines konkreten Ortes im Mittelpunkt, sondern die Heterogenität, die sich aus dem Netzwerk von Bezügen und Beziehungen ergibt."
12   Although already present in preceding years, the expression "experimental electronica" became more apparent during 2018. See Baines 2018; Blumberg, Cornils and Herrmann 2018; Kretowicz 2018; Marcus 2018.

Music and Actors:
Abrasive Sounds from the Bedroom

There are at least two main ways to approach experimental electronica. One describes the music and the technology involved, while the other portrays the actors of the field: its producers and composers.

(a) Music and Technology

The music consists of various forms of electronically produced popular music. This means that it is composed and produced mainly with the help of electronic technology: using synthesizers, drum machines, sequencers, and/or samplers. In most cases, the personal computer (mostly a laptop) serves as the main working tool. DAWs operate as the main working surface. This form of software was especially designed for the recording, editing, and production of music. One of the most influential and widely used DAWs is Live by Ableton (Brett 2019). Since its launch in 2001, Live has "slowly but surely attained market dominance" (Butler 2014, 19), with electronic music producer Stefan Goldmann (2015, 23) calling it the "standard tool for electronic music production and performance." The software's leading position is reflected in the case studies in this book: four of the five studied tracks were produced with Live. In line with this technological context, experimental electronica is sample-based to a high degree.

Ableton's leading position is reflected in the case studies in this book: four of the five studied tracks were produced with Live.

A further feature of the music is the broad absence of vocals and lyrics. Mark Butler (2006, 34) identifies this "instrumental focus" as a key quality distinguishing EDM in general from "almost all other commercial popular music produced in America and Europe since the birth of rock 'n' roll." Butler identifies two further characteristics shared by most EDM genres: a "steady relatively fast tempo—mostly in the range of 120–50 beats per minute (BPM)" and "a repeating bass drum pattern" (ibid.).

The label "electronic dance music" (EDM) has been used in recent years by Butler and other scholars (such as Feser and Pasdzierny 2016 and Demers 2010) as a neutral catchall term encompassing a broad range of musical genres and styles ("a complex network of related styles" [Butler 2012, xii]) such as techno, house, garage, drum and bass, dubstep, trance, and their respective subgenres. As Robert Ratcliffe (2011, 235) notes, more experimental genres such as breakcore and IDM (intelligent dance music)—which are not primarily dance-oriented—can also be subsumed within EDM. This makes the term diffuse and not accurate enough for my purposes. Furthermore, the term should not be confused with the label applied to highly commercial electronic music, mostly by journalists and fans. Morey (2017, 268) wrote that this genre "became very

popular in U.S. nightclubs in the 21st century, including vocal-based house and trance and dubstep influenced techno."[13]

Nevertheless, experimental electronica tracks have roots in one or various EDM genres, and occasionally also beyond this, in hip hop for example. They consistently and intentionally cross boundaries of genre and style—this is perhaps one of their key features. The highly hybrid character of these sounds thus makes me hesitant to define the field as a genre. If we consider genre following Demers (2010, 10), "as a sort of social contract between musicians and listeners, a set of conventions that can more or less guide the listening experience," we might conclude that this phenomenon is too recent for consideration of its status as a genre. After all, this will be the task of future scholarly attempts, which will be able to take further musical developments and emerging discourses into account.

However, how does "experimental electronica" sound? The terms "deconstructed" and "experimental" indicate that there is a liberated approach to production behind these particular forms of electronic music. Beyond the absence of lyrics, the aforementioned common features of EDM (steady rhythm and repeating bass drum)—and other conventional forms and structures—are challenged, ignored, or constantly experimented with. Therefore, "deconstructed" signifies that producers have complete freedom in what they do and are not following the conventions of formerly existing club music (Baines 2018). This leads to a sound aesthetic that is often abrasive, shaped by cuts, disruptions, noises, and dissonances. On the user-based music database *Rate Your Music* (RYM) the sound is accurately described:

> *Identified by aggressive, frantic, post-industrial sound design featuring metallic or staccato sounds such as samples of glass smashing, gunshots, etc. deconstructed club aims for an excessive, apocalyptic-sounding soundscape, with constant rhythmic switch-ups and atonality. (RYM 2019)*

The music mostly appears in the form of tracks released independently on LPs or EPs. It is also presented in DJ mixes and on mixtapes. Tracks and mixes are primarily published and distributed online through platforms such as SoundCloud, Bandcamp, and Boiler Room. As this description of the music of experimental electronica illustrates, this music is far away from the mainstream: the tracks examined in the case studies reached between 1,000 and 7,000 plays on SoundCloud or YouTube within two to six years. The field of experimental electronica is a niche branch of EDM.

A sound aesthetic that is often abrasive, shaped by cuts, disruptions, noises, and dissonances.

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13   In the years during which this study was being conducted, the term became closely related to this particular genre in public discourse. This public understanding of EDM, though, can be conceived of as a subgenre in terms of the academic understanding of EDM. To avoid further confusion, I use the term only rarely in this book, and when doing so, always refer to its broader, academic meaning.

The actors behind experimental electronica are the producers and composers of its music. Morey (2017, 107) has defined the producer as an individual "who oversee[s] the creation and completion of a record but who [is] not actively involved in its composition." While these roles have been historically separate in popular music, they started to merge "with the huge rise of dance culture during the '90s" (Hepworth-Sawyer and Golding 2011). Artists in experimental electronica—as in many fields of EDM—compose *and* produce their music. In short, they have full sovereignty over the production process of their music. In some cases they even handle the distribution of their music and the management of booking requests. In this book, I thus use the role descriptors "producer" and "composer" interchangeably.

Artists in experimental electronica compose and produce their music. In short, they have full sovereignity over the production process of their music.

The production itself takes place in private (mostly urban) surroundings instead of professional studios. Often, the latter are only used for the final mastering of the tracks, if at all. This might be the only moment where people other than the composing artist enter and affect the production process. However, in many cases, mastering is done by the artists themselves. All producers from the case studies predominantly work on their music in their own apartments, mostly in their bedrooms. These producing habits gave rise to the label "bedroom producer," which is widespread and popular among both artists and producers (e.g. Goldmann 2015) and scholars (e.g. Butler 2006, 48; Hein 2016, 2017; Strachan 2017). However, Aram Sinnreich criticizes the concept of the "bedroom producer." Even if many artists identify with this term, he argues that it is used by music industry executives in a derogatory sense (see Hepworth-Sawyer and Golding 2011) to deprive producers of their artistry. Sinnreich finally unmasks the concept as a racial cliché:

> In its ability to communicate both deprecation and pride, both otherness and selfness, to suggest both the bonds of community and the exile of the outlaw, the term "bedroom producer" resembles nothing more than a well-known racial epithet that has been used against (and by) African Americans for centuries. (Sinnreich 2010, 122)

Another critique of the term as "a contested site in a struggle for musical legitimacy and credibility" has been offered by sociologist Andrew Whelan (2008, 20). In his study on breakcore he identifies another racial use of the term, but in the opposite direction from Sinnreich's example. Whelan argues that the label is primarily applied to "white (male)" musical genres (such as breakcore), while "Black (male)" genres (such as grime) are described as street music, although tracks from both genres are produced with similar technology and in similar places (31).

Following these critiques, I consciously avoid the label "bed-

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room producer" in this book. Rather, I rely on the alternative "laptop producer." Butler (2014), for example, has used the similar "laptop performer" or "laptop musicians."[14] As with the bedroom, the focus on the laptop points to an intimate producing environment. It even adds a further dimension to the reality of electronic music producers: as the laptop can be brought everywhere, some of this music—or at least parts of it—is produced and developed on the road, while the artists are traveling for DJ sets and performances.[15]

This leads on to further characteristics common to producers of experimental electronica. Many of them are closely related to DJ culture. They regularly present themselves in front of audiences, both as DJs and performers of their own productions, with the club as the main site where these events take place. The producers are thus active in various local and trans-local scenes and networks. However, there is nothing like a contained scene for experimental electronica, neither virtually nor in real life. The musicians themselves are based all over the (Western) world, with considerable concentration on a few centers.

At the time of the present study, the most important among them was the capital of Germany, Berlin. Butler has already recognized that

> since the turn of the millennium, however—and particularly since the middle of the '00 decade—[Berlin] has gradually become the most active location in the world for both club culture and EDM record production. (Butler 2014, 17, italics original)

The outstanding significance of Berlin for electronic music is illustrated by the fact that all producers in the five case studies live in Berlin either permanently (Vika Kirchenbauer, James Whipple) or partially (Ian McDonnell, Mauro Guz Bejar), or they have traveled to Berlin for musical projects (Lara Sarkissian). They each moved or traveled to the German capital from different regions of the world: Germany (Kirchenbauer), Ireland (McDonnell), the U.S. (Sarkissian, Whipple), and Argentina (Guz Bejar). This circumstance has substantially facilitated my own research, as I was able to interview all producers in the same place within a short period of time. However, this was rather a coincidence, and there was no primary criterion to focus on Berlin as a center for electronic music production in the research design of this study.

The following non-exhaustive list of (net)labels and globally operating collectives further highlights the field.

I consciously avoid the label "bedroom producer" in this book. Rather, I rely on the alternative "laptop producer."

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14   The label "laptop musician" has received some attention in recent scholarship, see Prior 2008.
15   A further alternative is offered by Whelan in the term "online musicians" (Whelan 2008, 20).

(Net)Label / Collective	Artists (Selection)	Associated Places
Blueberry Records	Dasychira, Elysia Crampton	New York
Break World Records	Elysia Crampton, Via App	Hillsborough (CA)
Club Chai	8ulentina, Lara Sarkissian, Thoom	Oakland/San Francisco
Creamcake	COOL FOR YOU	Berlin
Eotrax	Eomac, Lakker	Dublin, Berlin
Halcyon Veil	Angel Ho, Rabit, MHYSA, NAKED, Why Be	Houston (TX)
Janus	M.E.S.H., KABLAM, Lotic, Moro, Why Be	Berlin
NAAFI	Lao, Lechuga Zafiro, Paul Marmota	Mexico City
NON World-wide	Angel Ho, Bonaventure, Chino Amobi, Moro, Nkisi	various (African diaspora)
PAN Records	Amnesia Scanner, M.E.S.H., Pan Daijing, Rashad Becker, Yves Tumor	Berlin, London, Athens
Pastel Voids	bod [包家巷], Dapper Dan	New York
Planet Mu	Bonaventure, Ital, Jlin, WWWINGS, Yearning Kru, Ziúr	Hove (U.K.)
PTP (Purple Tape Pedigree)	Bonaventure, YATTA	New York
Quantum Natives	bod [包家巷], Brood Ma, Year-ning Kru	Taiwan, London
Salviatek	Lechuga Zafiro, Superfície	Montevideo

Table 2.2 : A selection of (net)labels and collectives in experimental electronica

All these actors are engaged in the distribution and promotion of experimental electronica. They are by no means the only players in the field, and most of them do not solely focus on experimental variations of EDM in their productions. Instead, the list represents networks with which the producers examined in the case studies are involved, as well as the most important actors in the field that I encountered during my research. Beyond being a primarily online phenomenon, the range of associated places further shows that experimental electronica is a distinctively global phenomenon, at least with a broad European and American spread. This corresponds with the reception of the music, which is, as far as I can judge from fan interaction on online platforms, mostly centered around Europe and North America.

As for the scope of themes addressed, there is a striking preference for political topics such as diversity, gender, queer identity, racism, social justice, and colonialism.

As for the scope of themes addressed, there is a striking preference for political topics such as diversity, gender, queer identity, racism, social justice, and colonialism. The choice of themes might be substantially influenced by the origin of many of the field's actors in marginalized communities. However, the online database RYM (2019) mentions that "these topics are not always

present, since some deconstructed club artists prefer to engage with futurism and technology for example."

Challenges of Labeling: From Deconstructed to Experimental

An attempt to label such a heterogeneous conglomerate of electronic music presents considerable challenges. Its status as a recent phenomenon, in which the musical and discursive processes of genre-building are not yet consolidated, further complicates this endeavor. With the label "experimental electronica" I have tried to find an accurate expression that is, nonetheless, as neutral as possible, and that as a result leaves space for further unpredictable developments.

I decided not to use the term "deconstructed club music" or one of the other aforementioned alternatives suggested by journalists and fans. All these expressions emphasize the club as point of origin. This might be true for many examples as this music is often rooted in the context of club culture. Moreover, it indeed "deconstructs" conventional club music into its components. These tracks can thus be heard as an "attack" on club music itself. The case study of Mauro Guz Bejar's "Libres," with its attempt to rupture "Western" four-on-the-floor beat patterns, can be viewed as an example here.

However, the reference to the club is, in my view, too dominant when using the expression as a broader collective term. To label this music as some sort of club music (or even anti-club music) is to assume that these producers are either composing for the club or intentionally opposing club culture. Considering the case studies in this book, we might recognize that, in particular, Lara Sarkissian's "kenats" and Vika Kirchenbauer's "STABILIZED, YES!" are not composed with a primary focus on the club. Rather, these tracks are experimental approaches to the composition and production of electronic music. At this point, there are some similarities to the genre of IDM (intelligent dance music), a label used by journalists and record labels in the 1990s to describe forms of electronic music suitable for living room listening (Demers 2010, 170).

I finally use the term "experimental" to capture the innovative character of the music in question. The term also seems to be accepted in the field: when I asked my interviewees how they would label their music—doubtless a task that few musicians enjoy—most of them came up with the label on their own, or agreed when I suggested it. By using "experimental," I consciously do not refer to experimental art music. In this area, the "experimental" is conceived as being outside a tradition (the European art music tradition) while the "avant-garde" is characterized as an "extreme position within the tradition" (Nicholls 2008 [1998], 518). By this definition we would need to use the latter term,

I use the term "experimental" to capture the innovative character of the music in question.

as I do not regard this music as being completely outside of the tradition of electronic popular music or club culture. With a view to the object of this study, electronic popular music, I finally decided to rely on a popular understanding of "experimental" that does not necessarily connect to the aforementioned theoretical discourses of other fields and traditions.[16]

Having explained my thoughts behind the first word, I now want to proceed with explaining the second: "electronica." As some scholars have argued, the collective terms "electronic music," "electronica," and "electronic dance music" have acquired multiple definitions not only during the twentieth century but also in different regions (namely Europe and the U.S.) and professional fields (academia and journalism).[17] Without recapitulating all these attempts in detail, I want to rely on a useful distinction made by Joanna Demers. In a holistic approach, she distinguished three "metagenres" of electronic music: institutional electroacoustic music, electronica, and sound art. The first and the third are oriented towards art music and institutional and academic contexts, while the second is related to popular music. "Electronica" thereby encompasses to a large extent what I have above discussed as EDM. However, it explicitly does not restrict itself to dance-oriented music. In the glossary of her book, Demers explains the term as follows:

> Electronic music that flourishes primarily outside of academia but also claims some independence from the mainstream music industry. Electronica is split between dance genres such as house or techno and non-dance-oriented music such as drone, ambient, or glitch. No specific formal or stylistic parameters govern what counts as electronica; the one common factor seems to be a sense among artists and listeners that electronica is ideologically distinct from both mainstream culture and institutional electronic music. The term began to appear in the 1990s as a music-industry tool to brand what had become an explosion of niche EDM subgenres such as acid house and jungle. (Demers 2010, 167–68)

What remains unclear with Demers' categorization is where to place mainstream music, as "electronic music" as an umbrella term should encompass "any type of music that makes primary, if not exclusive use of electronic instruments or equipment" (5) and mainstream music is apparently not included in Demers' concept

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16   I do not recognize a theoretical distinction between "avant-garde" and "experimental" as relevant in my case studies. That does not mean that it is not relevant for the field as a whole. However, answering this question accurately would exceed the scope of this study.

17   Demers (2010) and Landy (2007, 14–15) assembled and discussed a range of occurring definitions of these terms. Collins, Schedel, and Wilson (2013, 136) pointed to the use of the term "electronica" in the U.S. as a marketing umbrella, in Europe as referring to electronic music in general, and in Latin-derived languages as simply meaning electronic music.

of "electronica." For my purposes, the term "electronica" is useful as it demarcates itself both from art music contexts and from mainstream music. By avoiding the term "electronic dance music," I finally point to the fact that "experimental electronica" is not necessarily dance-oriented.

The musicologists Collins, Schedel, and Wilson (2013) use the term "experimental electronica" as well. In a chapter of the same title in their *Cambridge Introduction to Electronic Music* they applied it to experimental variations of electronic popular music that are not mainstream-oriented, such as Brian Eno's ambient music, Throbbing Gristle's industrial-noise, and glitch music. Ultimately, their understanding of the term takes a similar direction to my own, with my study adding more recent examples to their historical overview.

There is a final remark to be made on the question of the mainstream. As I have outlined above, "the experimental" is often thought of as opposing mainstream culture. Although these tracks arise from niches, and although they can hardly be categorized as mainstream, this is, in its absoluteness, still not an accurate description of the present field. These tracks do not oppose mainstream culture *per se*. On the contrary, they often play with it or embrace it (Zevolli 2016, 2020).

Relevance: Heavily Sample-Based and Accessible

This chapter has so far defined "experimental electronica" as the field for this study and has at the same time revealed the shortcomings of this label. The conception of this field is an attempt at grasping a particular phenomenon of popular music that has become visible in the 2010s, but should be viewed neither as a constrained scene nor as a consolidated genre. The previous pages are not least based on personal observations of the field by the author in the years prior to this study; observations which were in turn broadly confirmed by the study itself. However, we still lack a detailed ethnography of this field. This book contributes somewhat to such an endeavor, namely through a detailed analysis of a range of sampling strategies. Consequently, the fields of electronic popular music in general and experimental electronica in particular serve as ideal research areas. I have identified five main aspects that illustrate the relevance of the chosen field:

(1) Experimental electronica music is heavily sample-based. Sampling is not just one of many producing techniques; it is a core tool in terms of the creation of meaning.

(2) Experimental electronica tracks are mainly instrumental. There is no possible communication through lyrics, which makes the use of samples even more obvious and necessary.

(3) The focus on political themes in recent experimental electronica significantly raises the possibility of accessing sampling

strategies with a particular political focus, and/or involving political sampling material.

(4) As "laptop producers," the actors of experimental electronica embody most of the conventional roles in the music-making process. This allows for the observation of popular music in a nutshell, without needing to explore the complex networks of hundreds of people involved in a single mainstream production—which would far exceed the scope of such a project.

(5) Since these tracks are niche music, it is potentially possible to get in touch with the producers. This is one of the most important requirements for the chosen research question and method.

(6) Finally, research on experimental electronica brings a particular phenomenon of early 21st century music into academic focus. Due to its newness, it is no surprise that this field has been largely absent from scholarly work so far.[18]

So far I have repeatedly referred to the object of this study as "popular music." It is now time to clarify my understanding of this label, which presents considerable definitional challenges—and even impossibilities.

The Object:
Popular Music Without Being Popular

Popular music scholars continuously emphasize that there are no distinct musical features that could define popular music (Middleton and Manuel 2001), or that popular music has to be conceived of as a discourse rather than a fixed representation of a particular music (Wicke 2004, 119). It is thus reasonable to follow a flexible understanding of the term, using it strategically to place this study in an area that is, however, not defined exhaustively. Concerning my own understanding of the term, there is a simple and short explanation, and a longer one. The first is negative—which is a widespread approach to the definition of popular music—while the second is positive.

Experimental electronica is niche music. The tracks covered by this study can thus hardly be called popular music if we refer to the corresponding numbers of clicks, views, and likes alone— as an economic definition following on from Middleton (1990, 4) would require. However, there is no broader term suitable for categorizing this music other than "popular music." Following the description of the field on the previous pages, it should be clear that this music is neither folk, nor jazz, nor art or classical music—if we accept these categories

There is no broader term suitable for categorizing this music other than "popular music."

[18]   To my knowledge, the only—albeit not systematic—exception is the writing of Zevolli (2016, 2020).

as valid alternatives to "popular music."

As a second, positive definitional approach, I have compiled a range of features which locate the tracks and actors in question within popular music. Individually, these features might not be exclusive to popular music. But in combination they make a case for the application of this label. A first feature is the context of the producers portrayed in this study. They are all more or less connected to club culture. The club can be understood as a crucial site of popular culture. Accordingly, the analyzed tracks are rooted in various popular music genres such as EDM and hip hop. The music is thereby distributed and spread through (online) channels and networks characteristic of the circulation of popular music: labels, music platforms, music blogs, social media, mixes and remixes. The producers themselves are not linked to art music institutions and most of them have not received substantial formal musical training. Instead, they learned their music production skills mostly through the internet, or through peers within the scenes they operate in.

Following Giorgina Born's ethnography of French electronic music institution IRCAM (Born 1995), Butler has argued that there are still existing "borders between 'high' and 'low' forms of electronic music." He considers type of musical education and training as a dividing factor as much as sources of income ("clubs, record labels, and the music-technology industry" for the popular sphere) and the technology used ("technologies that come from this industry, such as variable-speed turntables, samplers, drum machines, and the software Live") (Butler 2014, 21–22). Butler's observations in both respects—sources of income and technology used—correspond to the producers of the present study.

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In conclusion, these tracks are popular music because they circulate through networks that exist for popular music, and because their producers live and act in social contexts and structures that are shaped and defined by popular music (e.g. club culture). The actual popularity of this music in terms of clicks, views, and likes is thus not decisive in terms of understanding this music as popular.

This chapter has so far delivered the definitional and terminological framework for this study. I have defined sampling as a multilevel process, discussed a broad understanding of the political, and commented on the concepts of meaning and the material. Finally, I have introduced experimental electronica as an understudied and highly fruitful field for the present study. As a last step, I will now comment on my methodological approach.

Exceptions are Mauro Guz Bejar (Chapter 8), who attended a conservatory in Buenos Aires, and Ian McDonnell (9), who studied sound engineering at Trinity College Dublin.

Methodological Steps

This study uses methods of qualitative research. It applies a triangulation of methods ranging from musical analysis to anthropological fieldwork (semi-structured interviews and direct observation) and the use of case studies. The study thus focuses on the qualitative analysis of qualitative data (Bernard 2011, 337). This study is at least partially explorative, as its insights on the production process of electronic popular music could be fruitful starting points for further investigation. The analytical tools developed in this book should be applied to and tested with a greater corpus of data for further improvement and verification (or indeed falsification). Here, I present the methodical steps that guided the research process, which concluded with the analysis of five exemplary sampling strategies found in the case studies which follow.

The research for this book was conducted between April 2016 and June 2019. The process encompassed eight methodical stages that led from a broad overview towards the in-depth analysis of five case studies. The stages were part of an iterative research design. I alternated constantly between phases of preparation, data collection, and analysis.[19] In the following, I briefly discuss each methodological stage.

The process encompassed eight methodical stages that led from a broad overview towards the in-depth analysis of five case studies.

(1) Search for Tracks (Preparation)

The first stage focused on the search for tracks suitable for the purposes of this study. I followed a broad range of online platforms relevant to the field of experimental electronica, such as Resident Advisor, Tiny Mix Tapes, XLR8R, and FACT Magazine. Other sources included music magazines such as Groove, Spex, The Wire, and Zweikommasieben, the catalogues of labels such as NON Worldwide, PAN, PTP, and Quantum Natives, and the sound platforms Bandcamp and SoundCloud. Furthermore, I constantly asked the artists I was interviewing about other artists that might be suitable for study (snowballing method).

In the first instance, I was looking for tracks that sample external sound or media material with obvious links to extra-musical contexts. (I only narrowed my focus to political sampling material in stage 3.) This was in service of my aim to analyze reasons for sampling in this study. The more concrete a sample's reference to the extra-musical, the higher my chances of accessing conscious strategies that were still remembered by the music's creator. I either directly recognized such samples, read that they belonged to this category, or simply assumed that they did. The inclusion of tracks

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19 This research design resembles the linear but iterative process that Robert Yin (2014, 1) has recapitulated with regards to case study methodology.

based on assumption was important, as it was my particular aim to uncover hidden sampling strategies. To further improve my chances of accessing useful information on the production process, I focused on tracks that were not older than two or three years.

One of the first tracks I accessed at this research stage was Lara Sarkissian's "kenats," which later became one of the case studies. I was interested in this track because it was presented online as being inspired by "Armenia in terms of music and poetry" (DJ Umb 2016). I assumed that samples were included in the track and wondered what stories might be behind them. In summary, this first methodical stage prepared the ensuing study, and provided a general overview of the field.

(2) First Interviews (Data Collection)

The next stage was to get in touch with the producers of the selected tracks. In total, I reached out to 105 producers via digital channels such as email, social media, and music platforms (Facebook, SoundCloud, and Bandcamp). Once contact was established, I first asked them questions about their sampling strategies, such as "what is your understanding and approach to sampling?" or "what have you sampled in this particular track or in other tracks?" From there, I decided which tracks could fit into my focus and tried to further intensify the email conversation. Out of the 105 requests I received 46 responses with usable data, making for a response rate of almost 44%. Responses varied widely in level of detail, from the producer Chino Amobi, who wrote one short sentence about a particular EP ("I used sounds in each song which I felt reflected the mood I experienced while visiting each city"), to Dr. Das, who sent four emails with extended answers totaling more than 3,500 words.

(3) Narrowing the Focus (Analysis)

Having collected a considerable number of tracks and a first corpus of interview data, I started to compare the assembled tracks. Two main criteria guided this process: (1) potential access to the producers for further interviews, and (2) the significance of the sampled material. Until this point, I had consciously left it open as to which kind of sampling material I would focus on, a methodological choice inspired, in particular, by grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1980 [1967]). Now it was necessary to narrow the focus to allow for a comprehensive study. In starting to analyze and code the data generated from the first round of interviews, I noticed a particular number of sampling strategies dealing with political sound material or using sampling to transmit a political message. It became clear that this focus would make it possible to cover a broad spectrum of different strategies.

(4) Further Interviews (Data Collection)

At the next stage, I went back to data collection and conducted a total of sixteen semi-structured interviews via Skype, phone, or, wherever possible, in person. These interviews were conducted between June 2016 and August 2018, and they lasted between 30 minutes and one hour each. With some artists, such as Bonaventure, or Drew Daniel and Martin C. Schmidt of the sampling-heavy duo Matmos, I skipped the first round of interviews (stage 2) and started directly with these longer conversations, because an email interview providing sufficient data was not possible. With the others, including the five producers featured in the case studies, I now had the opportunity to deepen insights gained in the previous interviews through longer conversations.

(5) Selection of the Case Studies and First Analysis (Analysis)

The second round of interviews finally provided me with enough data to decide which tracks I would choose for the case studies. I selected the tracks according to my aim to analyze a variety of sampling strategies. An initial application of the two analytical tools that will be introduced below, the FOV (fader of visibility), and SSR (spider of sampling reasons), helped me to compare the respective strategies for the first time and to make sure that the chosen strategies were not too similar to each other. With Lara Sarkissian's "kenats," I had a sampling strategy that was clearly concerned with questions of identity; Vika Kirchenbauer's "STABILIZED, YES!" was representative of an obvious and politically motivated strategy; Mauro Guz Bejar's "Libres" used non-contextual sound material instead of music or media material; James Whipple's "Methy Imbiß" sampled highly political material in a completely concealed way; and Ian McDonnell's "Perversas" was an example of the sampling of political sound material in a broader sense, without a political intention behind it.

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At this point, a few more candidate tracks for case studies appeared, but I did not further pursue them, whether because I was not able to conduct further interviews (Bonaventure), because the strategies behind these sampling processes were too similar to those already chosen (Olivia Louvel), or because they did not provide enough analytical depth (kritzkom).

After selecting the case studies, I analyzed the use of samples in these tracks in a systematic manner for the first time. Here I relied on the catalogue of reference analysis (Referenzanalysekatalog RAK), developed by Thomas Burkhalter (2015b), as a guideline. This helped me to analyze the tracks from a broad range of perspectives, focusing on the source context, the processing of the sample in the new composition, and the presentation of the media product, alongside the habitus, context, and viewpoint of the producer.

Subsequently, I compiled a log file for each track containing short notes on the various perspectives. It was now possible to identify remaining gaps in my information as preparation for the next round of interviews.

(6) Third Round of Interviews and Direct Observation (Data Collection)

On this basis, I contacted the producers of the potential case studies to request further interviews. At this stage I conducted a total of sixteen interviews of between 45 minutes and two hours. These interviews were again semi-structured, and, with one exception, all face to face. They took place either in Berlin (July 2017, January 2018, and April 2018) or Karlsruhe, Germany (March 2018).

I asked the producers to share their DAW project files with me before the interview. All producers but one used the same DAW, Live. Mauro Guz Bejar used Apple's Logic Pro, but was in any case unable to find the original project file. Analyzing these files was worthwhile both to prepare interview questions beforehand and to analyze the case studies later. However, these files were ultimately of limited use. Transferring Live files from one computer to another mostly entails a certain loss of data (this is also the case when producers themselves move files or update software versions). Missing plugins such as VST Instruments and effects, and varying software versions, limit access—and sometimes alter parts of the file—when analyzing a project on my own computer. This might be one reason why Live has not been embraced by research as an instrument for musical analysis. On the other hand, this might simply be because researchers rarely have access to these files.

The third round of interviews offered deeper insights into the production process behind the chosen tracks. I asked the producers to meet in front of their computer or laptop so that we could go through the project file together on screen. Within this methodological stage, I also conducted a direct observation of one of the producers featured in the case studies. While researching this book, I was able, via the platform for music research Norient, to invite Lara Sarkissian to a four-week artist residency in March 2018 at the Center for Art and Media (ZKM) in Karlsruhe, Germany. I took this opportunity to accompany the producer for two weeks in order to witness the production of a track. In doing so, it was my aim to deepen the insights gained from musical analysis and interviews through further anthropological fieldwork.

I used my own role as a scholar and journalist working for Norient for the benefit of this study. See the end of Chapter 2 for a more detailed discussion of my own position as a researcher.

H. Russell Bernard (2011, 306) defines two forms of direct observation: "You can be blatant about it and reactive, or you can be unobtrusive and nonreactive." Following Bernard, I conducted a reactive observation. Sarkissian agreed to my presence in two production sessions. There, I observed her working on her track and sampling various material. I further used my presence to constantly

discuss the sampling strategies she was applying and to conduct further in-depth interviews. The benefit of this method for this book in particular, and its potential for the study of electronic popular music in general, will be examined in the <u>interlude chapter</u>. Further below I will discuss why direct or participant observation of laptop producers is a particularly challenging endeavor.

(7) Analysis

The next stage in my methodical process involved a comprehensive analysis of the sampling processes pursued in the chosen tracks. The analysis was facilitated by the tools developed and introduced in Chapters 4 (FOV) and 5 (SSR), and by Burkhalter's RAK (2015b). Following Bernard (2011, 337), the analysis was qualitative (discussing particular case studies) and based on qualitative data (musical analysis and anthropological fieldwork).

(8) Writing

Finally, I had to write this book and thereby finalize the analyses. During this last stage, carried out between May 2018 and June 2019, some further gaps became apparent in the data collected. This demanded some further interviews, or conversations via email, with the producers featured in the case studies. Moreover, the chapters on the case studies were written using a dialogic method. I sent both a rough draft and a well-developed version of each chapter to the producer concerned, asking them to comment on what I had written, and later incorporating these comments into my writing.

A last remark at this point concerns quotations from the artists interviewed. I have directly edited typographical errors from email interviews or online texts without further reference. As we all know, most people do not care about orthography and grammar in email communication. Moreover, many producers are not native English speakers, and it was my aim to slightly edit these quotations for clarity without changing their intended meaning. Such quotations were sent to the producers for verification. Citations from literature are printed exactly as they appear in the source. Finally, when quoting from my own fieldwork data, I do not refer to the date of the email or interview for the sake of readability.

Methodological Challenges and Limitations

I will now discuss the methodological challenges and limitations I faced during this study on sampling culture in experimental electronica. I have identified six main areas here: problems of recognizability, of access, of memory, of articulation, of validity, and of density.

(a) The Problem of Recognizability

A great number of sampling processes are not recognizable to the listener, and thus not to the researcher either. This is a basic problem for studies of borrowing practices in music. Justin Morey wrote that in

> the analysis of any sample-based track, the particular direction taken by the analyst will depend on the(…) level of knowledge both of the sources of the samples and their cultural significance, relevance and resonance. (Morey 2017, 161)

A great number of sampling processes are not recognizable to the listener, and thus not to the researcher either.

Accordingly, Amanda Sewell (2013, 9) noted that "recognition is paramount." A lot of studies on sampling thus remain contingent on secondary sources such as the website and app database Whosampled.com, which collects user-generated information about sample-based music. As a result, unknown sampling strategies cannot be covered by these studies (for example Sewell 2013, see 9–11 in particular). To uncover hidden sampling practices within my own study, it was thus indispensable to establish close contact with the producers.

(b) The Problem of Access

The problem of recognizability is linked with the next problem: how do I gain access to these producers? And if I succeed, to whom do I get access? And to what kind of information? As expected, not everyone agreed to an interview: around half of my inquiries were not successful, or contact was lost before useful data could be gained. Even once contact was established, the discussion of sampling strategies proved delicate. I encountered a broad range of reasons—insofar as such reasons were detectable—for producers refusing to take part in my inquiry or for not allowing me access to certain information:

Even once contact was established, the discussion of sampling strategies proved delicate.

(1) Producers did not want to talk about sampling strategies because they had not cleared the samples, and/or were afraid of a negative reaction from the sampled artists. For example, I asked electronic industrial artist Ptyl to provide me with a detailed list of all samples used in a particular track, and he refused:

"because you never know what will happen with such a list and you never know how the sampled artists would react" (Liechti 2016b). Similarly, the dub collective SKRSINTL refused to "mention [from] which movies or sources [the samples] were taken from in order to avoid any copyright matters." Similar reactions from other interviewees and from other studies (e.g. Morey 2017, 295) illustrate that this is an issue any study on sampling strategies has to deal with.

(2) Producers hesitate to discuss sampling strategies because they do not want to reveal their artistic strategies. This could also be related to copyright issues, but touches on a further dimension. Many artists understand the creative process as extremely intimate and not intended to be shared with outsiders. One producer wrote, "I prefer to keep my strategies close to my chest," and Tomutonttu stated: "If I feel like the listener needs to know about the process behind a piece of music, I will include that info in the artwork. And in most cases I don't." YATTA referred to "inside jokes" when refusing to talk about a certain sample (Liechti 2017h). I will further discuss this issue as the problem of intimacy, in the interlude on Lara Sarkissian's "Thresholds" project.

(3) Further reasons applied in individual cases, such as language skills (the necessary level of communication in either English or German was not possible), no press contact desired (since I also act as a music journalist, artists sometimes made no distinction between my roles as journalist and scholar), information only if paid or booked ("You only get the extra goodies if you book me live." Or: "When you have a budget we can talk"), and the lack of time due to intensive traveling/touring at the moment of the inquiry.

(4) Finally, some producers may be afraid of reactions from listeners, the public, or a particular scene or community. Matthew Herbert, for example, refused to discuss the sampling of sounds from the Arab-Israeli conflict within transitional music that he composed for a Eurovision Song Contest hosted by Russia. Although he had already discussed this sampling strategy in public (Harkins 2016, 229, 245) he did not want to return to it in our interview. I suspect that this refusal related to the circumstances of that moment: at the time of the interview (November 2017) he was facing pressure from British media regarding another one of his projects, on Brexit. Accordingly, Herbert was trying to avoid getting into further controversial discussions: "I'm particularly cautious at the moment," he stated. This example illustrates that the very moment when the interview takes place can be crucial. Beyond this example, I can only assume that similar reasons play a certain role for other producers, although it is understandable that none of the interview participants articulated this.

In summary, it is important to be aware of the various reasons why access to producers or to particular information might be denied. This problem illustrates that such an approach can only generate qualitative data, but not quantitative insights. However, while there are producers who *refuse* to take part in such a study because of particular reasons, there are also producers who *do* take part for a host of other reasons. It is therefore also important to analyze the motivations of participating producers within such a study. This could be done by addressing questions such as "why do producers agree to reveal their sampling practices?" Or, "what kind of interests may be uncovered by revealing such practices?"

Finally, as imposing as the list above may appear, these problems of access can be dealt with simply by increasing the number of inquiries and keeping the focus of research as broad as possible—at least in the first stages of the study, until the researcher has collected a significant amount of data.

(c) The Problem of Memory

Successfully establishing contact with a producer does not guarantee successful research. Producers sometimes forget their sampling sources and lose their project files—reasons given for this include deletion, deficient file management, loss of an external hard drive, or a change of computer. Often, producers work in a rather chaotic manner. They sample intuitively and rely on improvisational practices. Once a track is finished, they do not remember their exact workflow. The following examples describe such unreproducible approaches to music production:

> *Producers sometimes forget their sampling sources and lose their project files.*

> – *bod [包家巷]: "I am super unorganized with my files, and I often delete project files."*
> – *BZGRL: "Going through the project files now I can't hear anything from the bells in any of the material I actually used in the end. (…) My production process is kind of messy and irresponsible."*
> – *kaisernappy: "I download and use so many samples, it is not easy for me to tell you which sample I use for a track."*
> – *J(ay).A.D.: "I don't really remember what I did."*
> – *Dasychira: "Most sounds I used are honestly referenced from all over my hard drive and it would take a long time to locate all of them."*

These examples emphasize the need for conducting anthropological fieldwork, meaning interviews and participant or direct observation. In two of my interviews it was in front of the computer screen that we realized that a particular sample was not part of the final mix (Dubokaj, see Liechti 2017a), or that a particular sample had entered the project at a later stage than previously assumed (kritzkom). Both producers remembered their sampling process

incorrectly. These interviews thus helped me to verify statements made in email communication or from the producer's memory, by trying to trace back the sampling process by means of the project file. In many cases it is true that even the producers themselves do not remember all parts of their sampling process. This problem encompasses both the general limitations of human memory and—if the production process dates back a long time—methodological problems concerning oral history.

A way of dealing with these problems is to select tracks for investigation that were recently produced. Moreover, the focus on characteristic (in my case political) sampling material increases the possibility that a producer (a) had a distinctive and articulable reason for the selection of the particular material and (b) still remembers this reason.

(d) The Problem of Articulation

It is testament to this focus on characteristic material that a further problem was less relevant for my research: the problem of articulation. When researching the reasons behind actions, it is often challenging or impossible for the interviewees to precisely articulate what they have done. Practices of improvisation or intuitive actions can hardly be reflected in words. Behr, Negus, and Street reflected on this problem:

> *[Our] interviews covered musical copying more broadly with the aim of unearthing instinctive practices that are often conducted without much deliberation and which respondents often found hard to articulate. (Behr, Negus, and Street 2017, 1)*

In my own interviews, BZGRL summarized a similar issue:

> **With any improvisatory or intuitive practice there are of course always reasons and usually quite emphatic ones to use one sample or sound or gesture over another, but outside the moment it can be difficult to analyze the thought process or put it into words.**

Hence, a study that wants to access these kinds of reasons must rely on other methods and further analytical tools. My own direct observation of a production process points in this direction as well. This method allowed me to witness the moment of production and to access information on the production process that would have remained concealed when trying to access it at a later stage.

Practices of improvisation or intuitive actions can hardly be reflected in words.

(e) The Problem of Validity

However, if producers *do* articulate themselves, a further question arises. How do I know whether these producers are telling the truth or not? Hypothetically, producers could invent any story to explain

sampling processes, especially when talking about reasons for sampling or processes that are concealed for the listener. Drew Daniel from the duo Matmos summarized the problem:

> *Artists are very good at telling a fancy story about why they do what they do but you shouldn't believe artists. Necessarily. We're liars. We're salesmen. We have a dog in the race which is sculpting a persona that we come to believe in because we've told the same story for ten years, twenty years about who we are—but that story isn't necessarily reliable, especially when it comes to questions of politics.*

How do I know whether these producers are telling the truth or not?

Dealing with young producers who have not been in the public eye—or not for as long a time as Matmos, for example—might lower the risk of getting caught in this trap. It is also important to verify the information given by interviewees whenever possible. I did this with the second round of interviews, by approaching a better understanding of the producer's context, artistic aims, and interests. Getting access to project files also helped verify their statements.

However, this does not solve the problem in relation to statements on reasons for sampling. I attempted to address this by discussing the reasons behind sampling in as open a manner as possible. I refused to define one single motivation or intention per case. Accordingly, one of the models proposed later allows space for a range of (subjective) motivations and intentions. Some of these reasons for sampling might not have been raised by the producer but are instead the interpretation of the researcher. It might even be the case that the interviewee disagrees with these suggested reasons—though this did not happen in my research.

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(f) The Problem of Density

Finally, Andreas Wittel has illustrated a problem that I call the problem of density. In his review of the approach of cultural anthropology in the digital age, he writes:

> *A shift from classical fieldwork to a multi-sited network ethnography will change the relationship between the ethnographer and the observed in such a way that the boundaries between home and the remote "field" become less clear. It will reduce the time that can be spent with one single site, which will negatively affect the search for hidden and deep layers of meanings. (Wittel 2000)*

Hence, a multi-sited research such as this study runs the risk of losing accuracy. Having many "construction sites" necessarily diminishes the resources available for each in the "search for hidden and deep layers of meanings" (Wittel 2000). I cannot provide a definitive solution to this considerable problem. Moreover, as George Marcus (1995, 99) has written, the goal of multi-sited ethnography "is not holistic representation, an ethnographic portrayal of the

world system as a totality." However, to respond to this problem, I want to add some epistemological remarks on two methodological steps in my study: Direct observation (Chapter 11) and case studies (Chapters 6–10).

It is obvious that for practical reasons (money, access, and time) a participant or direct observation for all five case studies would have been beyond the scope of this study. Although such an approach would doubtless have yielded valuable additional insights and perspectives. Moreover, the conducted direct observation was relatively constrained in time—two production sessions over three weeks. This only allowed for a limited understanding of the research context. Nonetheless, by having conducted this limited direct observation I aim to demonstrate the potential of my methodological approach for further research. Accordingly, the insights from this stage of research are presented as an exploratory interlude.

For the most part, this book uses a case study methodology. Following Robert Yin (2014, 50) and his handbook on the method, my research can be described as a holistic multiple-case design, with the five case studies representing five different contexts (the multiple sites of the field after Marcus 1995). Yin further describes three different purposes for which a research method, and thus also the case study method, can be used. According to him, a case study could be explanatory, descriptive, and/or exploratory (Yin 2014, 8). As I will argue, my case studies touch on all of these categories. They are descriptive as they illustrate distinctive strategies of sampling. They are exploratory as they develop and test methodological tools for analyzing sample-based music. Finally, they are explanatory as they help to develop a better understanding of the culture of musical sampling in particular and popular music in general.

My case studies are exploratory as they develop and test methodological tools for analyzing sample-based music.

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In summary, by investigating a total of five case studies from different contexts, it is my aim to provide a precise description of a set of possible, but not exhaustive, artistic strategies. As a result, the focus on small-scale case studies allows access to individual positions and strategies of music production. Susanne Binas-Preisendörfer emphasizes the importance of such studies:

> *A scientific exploration of the musical phenomena in a modern globalized and mediated world demands both reflexive theoretical concepts as well as very specific, small-scale studies. (Binas-Preisendörfer in Burkhalter 2016, 176)*

■

I have now discussed the six methodological problems of recognizability, access, memory, articulation, validity, and density, and have offered my own strategies in dealing with them. At this point, a final question arises: are there sampling strategies that producers

do not want to share and that still remain hidden, even after having conducted this study? The answer to this question is, simply, yes, of course. However, I am convinced that it is only anthropological fieldwork and its respective array of methods that gives us the possibility of accessing these strategies. What is required is close contact with the producers, persistent research, and a bit of luck.

The main object of this study is the popular music track. I have not, however, said much so far about the concept of the track, which I will thus turn to in the next section. This connects to the methodological discussions in the previous pages and suggests a new field of study focusing on this particular format of popular culture.

Trackology: Reading the World through Tracks

> *There can be little doubt (…) that music is an indicator of the age, revealing for those who know how to read its symptomatic messages, a means of fixing social and even political events. (Schafer 1977, 7)*

The influential composer and soundscape researcher Raymond Murray Schafer observed that music is more than just organized sound. Music contains the extramusical, it contains the world. By listening to music in everyday life or by analyzing it as a scholar, we can reveal knowledge about the world. (I will return to this argument on several occasions in this book.) One way to access this knowledge is through the in-depth and thus multi-perspective analysis of tracks of popular music. I want to suggest the term "trackology" for this (hopefully) emerging field of study. In the track, this field focuses on one of the most central objects of popular music.

I have until now avoided a definition of the concept of the "track." The term comes along with five layers of meaning. (1) A track is, simply, an individual section on a compact disc that can be triggered by a distinct number. (2) When defining the "recording," Albin Zak (2001, 24) defines the track as "the recording itself" as opposed to the song ("what can be represented on a lead sheet") and the musical arrangement ("a particular musical setting"). (3) A third definition understands the track as "a single textural layer within a composition, as defined by a distinct instrumental sound; in particular, a single instrumental sound within a sequencing program" (Butler 2006, 328). There are also vocal tracks in this sense, of course. To avoid confusion, I will highlight whenever the term is used in this way with the addition of "audio" (in most DAWs, including Live, one can work with audio tracks or MIDI tracks).

From all these definitions it becomes clear that the term refers to a musical artifact that has been generated with the help of

computers or sequencers (Binas 2010, 62). Accordingly, conceiving of the track as "machine music" (Eshun 2000, 78) places it in opposition to the "humanistic" song. (4) This links to a fourth definition in which the track is understood in opposition to the concept of the song. (Zak's second definition above used the term "song" in another sense.) The academic literature mentions various characteristics of the track, such as an emphasis on rhythm and sound instead of voice and pitch (as in the song); a potentially open, loop-based structure; and a lack of hierarchies between melody, sound, and rhythm (Bonz 2008, 127; Butler 2006, 328; Ismaiel-Wendt 2011a, 54–55; Kraut 2011, 86). Accordingly, the concept of the track is mostly used within electronic popular music; however, as the first definition in particular illustrates, it is not restricted to these genres.[20] (5) A fifth understanding, finally, uses the word in its literal sense, referring to a path, route, trace, or journey (Ismaiel-Wendt 2011a, 208; Poschardt 1997, 250).

In this book, I understand the concept of the track in two ways. (1) in its narrower sense as an artifact of electronically produced music that can be distinguished as much as possible from the song. (2) in its broader sense, in line with the aforementioned fifth definition. Hence, "trackology" doesn't focus solely on the study of tracks in the narrow sense. Trackology also addresses the study of, for example, pop songs, which are today almost without exception produced by electronic means. In short, trackology calls for the seeking out of traces in popular music, taking its central artifact—be it a track or a song—as the point of departure.

> *Trackology calls for the seeking out of traces in popular music, taking its central artifact—be it a track or a song—as the point of departure.*

Having introduced the main object of trackology, the track, I now want to shed light on the goals and aims of this field. Tracks are probably the artifacts of popular music culture most present in everyday life today. We hear them in restaurants through radio speakers and in public spaces via mobile phones, we listen to them while doing sports, and we encotunter them when watching TV and movies, consuming adverts, or browsing the internet. On the other hand, tracks are anything but mundane; through their global production, distribution, and reception, they reflect a highly hybrid world that is shaped by processes of globalization and digitization.

Trackology serves as a tool to make sense of this world. It establishes an applicable method of multi-sited ethnography (Marcus 1995; Wittel 2000) in which tracks are the initial point of research. They generate research questions as well as leading the direction of the research. Marcus describes a bundle of techniques through which multi-sited ethnographies define their objects:

[20] Johannes Ismaiel-Wendt emphasizes that there is no sharp distinction between the concepts "song" and "track" and that the transition from the track to the song is fluid (Ismaiel-Wendt 2011a, 54–55).

These techniques might be understood as practices of construction through (preplanned or opportunistic) movement and of tracing within different settings of a complex cultural phenomenon given an initial, baseline conceptual identity that turns out to be contingent and malleable as one traces it. (Marcus 1995, 106)

In line with the second of his six approaches—called "follow the thing"—trackology simply "follows the track." Finally, trackology bridges the gap between approaches that focus on the musical material (textual analysis) and others that merely focus on its context (cultural and anthropological analysis).[21] In summary, trackology relies on a methodological loop between music (track) and context (in the case of this study, the producer), playing back and forth between musical and textual analysis and anthropological study.
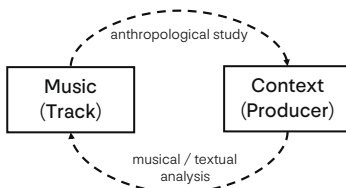
Figure 2.2: The methodological loop of trackology

I know of at least two similar approaches within the existing academic literature, the first coming from cultural theorist Johannes Ismaiel-Wendt (2011a). In his book *tracks'n'treks* he coins the term "TRX studies." By analyzing eight tracks from various genres of popular music, his aim is to uncover colonial and postcolonial knowledge of the world ("Weltenwissen"). He defines "TRX studies" as an alternative approach to research developed on the basis of postcolonial theories:

TRX studies are postcolonial analyses of music, oriented toward aesthetic strategies for the representation of spaces and times against the backdrop of colonial history. They understand songs as a semiosis that stages cultural geographies. They form the mode of discussion that reflects the battle around geographies or the attempt to dissolve them. (Ibid., 53)[22]

Like Ismaiel-Wendt, my aim with trackology is to establish a close focus on tracks as a tool for uncovering knowledge of the world. However, I would not restrict this approach to aspects of

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21 Richard Middleton (1993) had already recognized a gap between popular music analysis and musicology in 1993. The foundation of the Network for the Inclusion of Music in Music Studies (NIMiMS) by Philip Tagg et al. in 2015 illustrates that this debate remains relevant in popular music studies almost thirty years after Middleton's claim (NIMiMS 2018).

22 Own translation. Original quote: "TRX Studies sind postkoloniale Musikanalysen, die auf die ästhetischen Strategien zur Repräsentation von Räumen und Zeiten von kolonialgeschichtlichem Hintergrund gerichtet sind. Sie begreifen Songs als Semiose, die kulturelle Geographien inszeniert. Sie sind der Diskussionsmodus, in dem der Kampf um Geographien oder der Versuch ihrer Auflösung an Musik reflektiert wird."

colonial/postcolonial history. A similar approach was suggested by Michael Rappe, who describes his method of "music archeology" as a

> *search for traces whereby—based on the concrete aesthetic product—as many musical and visual signs as possible, as well as subjective impressions, affects, and fantasies, are assembled and transformed into processes of interpretation. (Rappe 2008, 174–75)*[23]

It is this search for traces within popular music that is the core interest of trackology.

One danger comes with the approach I have outlined. By placing individual tracks or songs at the core of a study, there might be a temptation to give too much weight to these tracks and to, at least partially, return through the back door the concept of the musical work associated with art music. Popular music in general, and electronic forms in particular, have difficulties with this concept.[24] In order to avoid this trap, the single track or song should always be considered as an initial point of study and/or as a case study. One should avoid sticking to the track beyond this initial point, or overestimating its individual importance or meaning.

Speaking from Where? The Researcher's Position

The final concern of this chapter is to reflect on my own position as a researcher. I am aware that this subjective position plays a significant role in shaping a study. Every scholar inevitably brings their own habitus into research. In the following, I will outline six relevant biographical moments and core beliefs. These "indicators of position" allow me to discuss specific aspects of my own perspective on the object of study in particular and on the world in general. These indicators may—at least partly—explain how I came to ask the questions I am asking. They also helped to build the framework through which I have accessed the field of this study. It is not necessary to read the following pages in order to follow my argument, but the perspectives they contain may make it easier to retrace my steps, and thus offer a more transparent approach to this study.

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23 Own translation. Original quote: "Es handelt sich um eine Form der Musik-Archäologie, um eine Spurensuche, bei der, vom konkreten ästhetischen Produkt ausgehend, möglichst alle musikalischen und visuellen Zeichen, aber auch die subjektiven Eindrücke, Affekte und Fantasien zusammengetragen und in Deutungsprozesse überführt werden."

24 To mention just a few of these difficulties: the forms in which tracks or songs appear as musical products range from very elusive and spontaneous utterances to conceptual "work-like" compositions; tracks are published, distributed, and performed in different versions; canons are (largely) absent or secondary; and "musical meaning is generated within a *field*, not a discrete work" (Middleton 1990, 95; italics original).

(a) Popular Music as a Seismograph of the World

Popular music was not a familiar part of my childhood surroundings. There were rarely strict prohibitions, but popular music in particular provoked harsh reactions. I was not allowed to buy Aqua's *Aquarium* (1997) as my first record, and the song "Zehn kleine Jägermeister" ("Ten little hunters")—a parody of "Zehn kleine Negerlein" ("Ten little negros") by the German punk band Die Toten Hosen (1996)—caused controversy thanks to its lyrics. Although my wish to own Eminem's *Marshall Mathers* album (2000) was fulfilled, the gift was considered highly suspicious. I did not understand the reasons for these reactions, and I always felt unsatisfied by any explanations given. If anything, these early encounters with popular music showed me that it is not just an aesthetic adventure but a thing that is *of* and *about* this world. This might have informed one of my main interests in the study of the subject today: the potential of popular music to tell us about the world and its people. In other words, these experiences have led me to conceive of music as a seismograph (Jacke 2006; Beyer, Burkhalter, and Liechti 2015).

> **Popular music is not just an aesthetic adventure but a thing that is of and about this world.**

(b) Popular Music as an Ambivalent Project

It might not be surprising that I consumed popular music uncritically as a teenager. For example, I listened to and loved Moby's "Why Does My Heart Feel So Bad?" (1999), a chart hit of the time. It was only years later that I read the critique of Moby's sampling strategies in that song and the album it comes from (Hesmondhalgh 2006; Clayton 2016, 126–27; Diduck 2019). Despite this justified criticism, the song remains for me connected with positive memories. Such experiences shaped my perception of popular music as an out-and-out ambivalent project: while some might perceive a particular strategy as problematic, a track might still be highly valuable and meaningful for others. Such experiences aroused my interest in a differentiated view on popular music. I am not only interested in a broad range of subjective readings (or rather listenings). I am, in particular, interested in the positions behind the music: the motivations and intentions of its makers. This is what this book is about.

(c) Politics, Spectrums, and Diversity

My private surroundings have always been attuned to political issues. This has significantly shaped my own actions and, in turn, my academic endeavors. Despite the above observations on the ambivalence of popular music, I am convinced that this music remains a powerful tool to speak out about global injustice and to share individual, potentially marginalized narratives. It is my aim to make such positions visible and to critically discuss instances in popular

music that counteract this project. I therefore try to resist the temptation of simple explanations. I am convinced that the world is far too complex to be described with dualistic concepts. Hence, in the following, I will regularly relate to spectrums as modes of categorization and explication.

A final aspect connected with the political is the (also anthropological) aim of being close to people. It is not my goal to write a history of the great white men of popular music, but to contribute to a more diverse history. Therefore, big names in sampling in experimental electronic music only play a secondary role in my study, if any.

I am convinced that this music remains a powerful tool to speak out about global injustice and to share individual, potentially marginalized narratives.

(d) Beyond Scenes

I have never been part of a subcultural scene. The only exception was the third wave of ska music in Europe during the early 2000s, which strongly influenced my socialization within popular music culture. In my hometown of Bern, Switzerland, I used to lead a ska band as a guitarist and singer, and I wrote my final thesis paper at *gymnasium* (Swiss upper high school) on the history of the genre. However, my musical taste has always been quite broad, and I was never interested in sticking to a particular scene. This is also the case with regards to club culture. By the time of the birth of my first child, right before starting this research, I had largely stopped going out clubbing. Furthermore, beyond some basic knowledge of the DAW Live, I have never produced electronic music myself. Rather, I consider my perspective to be external to the field I am examining.

(e) Between Academia and Journalism

This external position might be a disadvantage in the field, especially when it comes to technical aspects of music production. On the other hand, it could also be an advantage, as it allows the researcher to ask simple questions and to take novel positions. There is, however, another factor that greatly facilitated my access to the field. Since 2013 I have been part of Norient, a Swiss-based non-profit association and worldwide network with a focus on global developments in niche music. Among other projects, we run the online platform Norient.com. Norient was known among some of my interviewees, who were highly motivated to contribute to it.

With my series of blog posts titled "Sampling Stories" (Liechti 2016) I had a tool to give something back to my interview partners shortly after our interviews. In doing this, I crossed the borders between academia and journalism. (In some rare cases this was also a disadvantage, as some artists refused to talk with journalists, see discussion above.) Moreover, as part of the Norient editorial board, I had observed the field of study for some years even before starting work on this project. Being part of Norient also made my direct

observation possible. Norient had the opportunity to invite two artists into Hexadome, a cultural project offered by the Institute of Sound and Music (ISM) in Berlin. By choosing Lara Sarkissian as one of the two artists, I was able to follow her for three weeks during her residency at Center for Art and Media (ZKM) in Karlsruhe, Germany.

(f) Between Historical Musicology and Cultural Anthropology

The choice of my subject of study, musicology, was shaped by both a misapprehension and a necessity. I wanted to study musicology because I was deeply interested in almost all kinds of music and their accompanying actions, backgrounds, and contexts. However, as I had to learn, the discipline of historical musicology is still significantly shaped by (although not restricted to) a canon of works drawn from Western art music. At that time, it was not possible to study cultural anthropology or popular music at a Swiss university. By chance, during my basic studies, the University of Bern established a professorship for cultural anthropology of music. As a result, I finally had the chance to broaden my focus in the study of musical phenomena. Today, as a consequence of my academic career, I still define myself as both a historical musicologist and a cultural anthropologist. From the first I draw an interest in the musical material, and from the second my motivation to learn more about the musical practice of people: how, why, and through what kinds of actions, with what aims and with what consequences for a broader society people encounter music. And, in particular, what music means to people. Both perspectives are reflected in the methodological approach of this study.

■

These six indicators of position—many more remain unmentioned—influenced and shaped my research. They represent my own position as a researcher before and during this project. However, these indicators are constantly subject to change, refinement, and possibly even disavowal.

This chapter has broadly discussed the theoretical and methodical framework of this study. As well as outlining my own position, I have clarified my understanding of the study's key terms (e.g. sampling, the political, and popular music), described the field of experimental electronica, and elaborated on my methodological approach. The next chapter will now present an overview of how scholars have approached sample-based music in the past. This will serve as a basis on which to develop the analytical groundwork of this study in subsequent chapters.

3

The Analysis of Sample-Based Music

Some scholars have established typologies or taxonomies on practices of sampling but few have addressed the question of why artists sample.

Scholars from various disciplines have been analyzing sample-based music since the late 1980s. In doing so, they have categorized and classified practices of sampling in many ways: some through well-established typologies or taxonomies, others more incidentally when describing and analyzing sampling compositions. Often, these attempts have been isolated from the broader academic literature and made with a narrow focus on the study in question. Hence, we still lack a general overview of such analytical attempts. In this chapter, I will summarize a broad range of them, examining which aspects and parameters have been focused on. This detailed overview will, not least, help to identify gaps in the study of sampling practices.

Research Overview: Terminological and Typological Attempts

This section is structured around six main analytical approaches. They classify the most important parameters addressed in sampling analyses. On the one hand, these approaches arise through study of the existing literature. On the other, they are oriented towards the elements of the extensive typology of musical borrowing

compiled by J. Peter Burkholder (2001a).[1] Burkholder's system cannot be neatly applied here: sampling is a particular practice of musical borrowing, and the object of study shifts from classical to popular music. Nonetheless, it becomes clear that my approaches find their equivalents in the six main questions of Burkholder's typology:

Own Approaches	Approaches by Burkholder (2001a)
1. Sample source	1. What is the relationship of the existing piece to the new piece that borrows from it?
2. Appearance in the new composition	2. What element or elements of the existing piece are incorporated into or referred to by the new piece, in whole or part?
3. Tactics of sampling	4. How is the borrowed material altered in the new piece?
4. Relation to the source	1. see above
5. Relation to the new composition	3. How does the borrowed material relate to the shape of the new piece? 5. What is the function of the borrowed material within the new piece, in musical terms? 6. What is the function or meaning of the borrowed material within the new piece in associative or extramusical terms, if any?
6. Reasons for sampling	6. see above

Table 3.1: Approaches to the analysis of sample-based music

This table is neither exhaustive nor exclusive. Many analyses blend multiple approaches, and some terminologies or taxonomies cannot be exclusively attached to a single approach. However, the table is a useful matrix of orientation when reviewing the status of research on sampling practices. I will now continue with an introduction of all six approaches and a discussion of the research that has been done relating to each. Table 3.5, finally, provides a concluding overview and a short critique.

(1) Sample Source

The first approach when classifying samples is to ask about their source. Where are the samples taken from? What is the material quality of the sample? What kinds of sources are used as sampling material? A useful terminology for making general distinctions can be drawn from Paul Théberge (1997, 213). He distinguishes four basic categories of sound. Accordingly, a sound can be domestic or foreign, musical or natural. At least the first two could be

Where are the samples taken from? What is the material quality of the sample? What kinds of sources are used as sampling material?

[1] Based on Burkholder's typology, Thomas Burkhalter (2015b, 2016) has developed the catalog of analytical questions RAK, which was used as a guideline for analysis in this study.

applied to the categorization of samples: a sample can be <u>self-recorded/internal</u> (domestic), or it can stem from an external source (foreign).

The latter two terms (musical and natural) need to be modified slightly. Natural sounds fit into the umbrella term of "environmental sounds." This term not only covers proper "natural" sounds, but also includes human-made sounds. Avoiding the term "natural" also acknowledges the critique of, for instance, musique concrète composer Michel Chion (2010, 43–44). Chion argues that sound that has been recorded by a microphone can never be "natural" as it is always shaped by the circumstances of recording. Returning to Théberge's terms, it is reasonable to define "musical" sounds as a separate category since this covers the most common form of sampling (i.e. the processing of the sounds of instruments or musical recordings).

It is necessary to add to "environmental" and "musical" a third category, which I call "media material." This category encompasses sounds that are neither environmental field recordings nor musical clips, such as bits and pieces from movies, or other video material. Many authors adhere roughly to these distinctions even if they occasionally alter their contours. Geoffrey Cox, for example, describes four types of musical quotation:

> "traditional" quotation from other composers' written scores; "performative" quotation via the sampling of other composers' recorded music; recorded environmental sound as quotation, and self-quotation from either written or recorded sources of my own material. (Cox 2007, 4)

The first category does not apply with regards to sampling, but we can adopt the other three. To apply our taxonomy, Cox describes the sampling of music from other composers (external, musical), of environmental sound (external, environmental), and of self-recorded material (internal, musical).

Mark Butler identifies two forms of sampling in the field of EDM. He distinguishes sounds that are "stored in electronic keyboards and drum machines" as "samples of acoustic instruments loaded into the [digital] instruments by their manufacturers" from "samples of discrete 'sound bytes': For instance, excerpts from speeches (…), lines from movies, and snippets of musical popular culture" (Butler 2006, 61). The first of his categories could be classified as "musical," while the second mixes "environmental," "musical," and "media material" and remains highly diffuse throughout. In summary, sampling material can be described using the following matrix of origin and quality:

Quality / Origin	external	internal
environmental		
musical		
media material		

Table 3.2: Matrix of origin and quality of sampling material

Sampling material can occur in all six possible combinations; even the more unusual internal-environmental and internal-media configurations are realistic. The recording of self-generated field recordings and the sampling of self-made media material would cover these two special cases. The case studies in this book cover a broad range of external source material. Lara Sarkissian's "kenats" and Vika Kirchenbauer's "STABILIZED, YES!" contain musical samples (a keyboard melody and a folk tune respectively), Ian McDonnell's "Perversas" and James Whipple's "Methy Imbiß" media material (video footage from YouTube), and Mauro Guz Bejar's "Libres" environmental sounds (chain and water sounds).

Beyond quality and origin, sampling material could also be distinguished in terms of the context of the source, with regards to genre, style, or ethnic or geographical origin, for example. Lothar Mikos (2003) lists five reference points (sampling sources) that he considers important within the area of hip hop: (1) Black music, (2) white rock music, (3) local popular music, (4) social reality, and (5) popular culture. Such a distinction relies substantially on the context in question and cannot be generalized without difficulty. Moreover, this categorization must be based on a high number of analyzed examples to be meaningful.

(2) Appearance in the New Composition

A second way of analyzing samples is by examining their appearance in the new musical artifact. First, samples could be distinguished by structural properties such as their length. On one end of the scale there are "small sonic chunks" (McLeod 2005, 68) or short, "isolated sound fragments" (Cox 2007, 16)—music producers and artists often use vocabulary such as "one-shot punctuations" or, in short, "one-shots" (Ableton 2018)—and on the other end there are longer, "more extended samples" (ibid.; Metzer 2003, 163), "entire choruses" (McLeod 2005, 68), or "central motifs" (Ableton 2018).

Based on this vocabulary, Robert Ratcliffe (2014, 98) proposed a "Typology of Sampled Material within Electronic Dance Music." He groups the material sampled in EDM into four main categories, with the first three categories taking length as the primary criterion: (A) short, isolated fragments, (B) loops and phrases, (C) larger elements, and (D) transformed material.[2] On a second level, he outlines several sub-categories "depending on the musical function

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2   Morey (2017) expanded Ratcliffe's model with two further categories: he suggested introducing the idea of "apparent mediation" (the sample becomes apparent as such through the manner of processing or its materiality; based on Brøvig-Hanssen 2010) and, second, the idea of the "sample as a meme" (Morey 2017, 212–13). Morey is not entirely clear on which level of Ratcliffe's model these additions should be made, presumably because they would affect all categories and subcategories. Morey's first addition is addressed later in this Chapter, while the second addition is ignored because it touches on the reception of the samples, an area not covered by this study.

and referential qualities of the material." These categories will be discussed further below.

On a similar scale, Justin Williams (2015, 209) applied concepts from Richard Middleton to sampling analysis. When discussing different types of repetition in popular music, Middleton (1990, 269) differentiated between two basic models: "musematic" repetition (the repetition of musemes, the smallest unit of musical meaning) or "discursive" repetition ("the repetition of longer units, at the level of the phrase, the sentence or even the complete section").[3] It is no surprise that sampling studies, with their emphasis on copyright in particular, consider this parameter to be crucial (McLeod 2005; McLeod et al. 2011). Counter to copyright law, which does not make a distinction between shorter and longer samples, these authors argue that there is a difference between the sampling of a small snippet or a longer hookline.
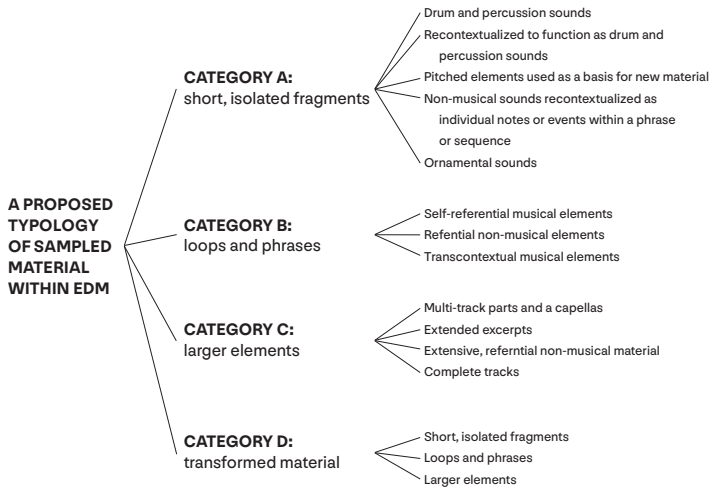
Figure 3.1: A proposed typology of sampled material within EDM (Ratcliffe 2014, 99)

The case studies in this book will generally focus on the use of longer excerpts as sampling material. Except for the chain sound in Mauro Guz Bejar's track "Libres" (a short, isolated fragment) all samples could be categorized as "discursive" (Middleton) or "larger elements" (Ratcliffe). However, Vika Kirchenbauer's sampling of a U.S. folk tune could also be categorized as a combination of a great number of "short, isolated fragments," if one takes the individual sample-clip as a point of reference.

When focusing on the appearance of the sample in the new composition, there are two further crucial parameters: audibility and recognizability. The question of audibility asks whether a sample can be heard by the listener; the question of recognizability whether a sample is familiar to them. These two parameters are distinct, but they often overlap in terms of the vocabulary used. As the first

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3   For the sampling of very small snippets see also the practice of microsampling (Chapman 2008).

author to address these parameters on a general level, Joanna Demers (2010, 44) distinguishes between samples where the source content is "blatantly recognizable," and others where it is "totally obscure."

Still, it remains audible forms of sampling that are most often analyzed. David Sanjek (1994, 247), for example, suggests "four general areas" of possible forms of sampling. All areas concern sampling strategies on the audible end of the scale,[4] and the first two identify the parameter of recognizability as crucial:

> First, there are those records which sample known material of sufficient familiarity (…) [and] [s]econdly, there are those records which sample from both familiar and arcane sources, thereby attracting a level of interest equal to the lyrical content. (ibid.; the third form will be cited further below)

Aram Sinnreich (2010, 129–32) mentions that the question of recognizability was "one of the most contentious" among his interviewees: "Everyone I spoke to had a different take on the subject, and the opinions varied widely" (129). He or his interviewees used the terms "familiar" and "obscure" to describe the shades of recognizability of a sample. Geneva Smitherman directly addresses the parameter of recognizability and the degree of manipulation of a sample when proposing two types of sampling as a strategy of communication in hip hop. The first "triggers the cultural memory associated with a given musical work" and the second "simply duplicates that work" (Smitherman 1997, 16).

Another access point regarding the question of audibility is the framework for distinguishing between forms of imitation supplied by Richard Dyer (2007). In his model, Dyer introduces differentiations on three levels. The first asks whether an imitation is concealed or unconcealed. Speaking in terms of sampling, a sample could thus be either muted or audible. The second level asks whether an imitation is textually signaled or not. In the words of Christopher Tonelli:

> Textual signals are elements of an imitation perceived to encourage listeners to recognize the work as imitation. Textually signaled imitation is perceived to contain such elements; "not textually signaled" is thought to be absent of them. (Tonelli 2011, 10)

Translated to sampling, this would mean that the sample or other elements in the new composition draw attention to the fact that it is a sample, or that the new composition contains a sample(s). On Dyer's third level, a sample could be read as "evaluatively predetermined" or "evaluatively open," meaning that the reception of the sample is either open or predetermined. This brings us into the realm of reception analysis, which is beyond the scope of this study.

The question of audibility asks whether a sample can be heard by the listener; the question of recognizability whether a sample is familiar to them.

4　This is also the case for most of the general categorizations of sampling by Goodwin, and partly for those by Großmann, discussed below.

The case studies in this book will, again, analyze a broad range of samples in terms of audibility (from audible to almost muted) and recognizability (from fully recognizable to totally obscured). Both parameters will be further addressed in the development of our first analytical tool, the FOV, <u>below</u>. There, I will also return to a discussion of Dyer's framework.

A final means of describing samples in the context of the new composition is through use of associative or informal language. Joseph Schloss, for example, describes samples by using a language directly drawn from his interviewees, including terms such as "off the wall," "upbeat and danceable," or "funky as hell" (Schloss 2014 [2004], 92–95).

(3) Tactics of Sampling

A third approach tries to distinguish between different strategies and compositional techniques, such as forms of sample processing, manipulation, and editing. Distinctions are typically made by addressing questions of quantity (how many samples have been used?) or process (how did the process of sampling evolve?). In theory, there are an infinite number of possible sampling tactics. This approach thus assembles qualitative descriptions of sampling strategies. This book will provide further descriptions of this sort, presenting additional sampling tactics in detail.[5]

Paul Harkins (2020, 119–32), for example, examines how musicians and producers use the sampler in a variety of genres and describes a set of basic, typical sampling tactics. An "appropriation-based approach" starts by using a sample in a non-referential way before revealing its identity towards the end of the song or track. In a second, "additive" approach, a whole track is built around a particular sample, after which the sample may disappear from the project. Among the case studies in this book, Ian McDonnell's "Perversas" will be most conducive to a discussion of elements of both approaches. Harkins further describes "accidental sampling" as part of the process of recording, a practice that will inform the discussion of reasons for sampling below (ibid.). Finally, Harkins discusses the practice of microsampling. In this sampling tactic, "small samples from sound sources such as recordings and radio are identified, extracted and rearranged to create new melodies and textures within musical compositions" (Harkins 2010b, 180).[6]

Justin Morey and Phillip McIntyre illustrate how producers of contemporary dance music use the constraints of sampling as a compositional tool. The authors identify three tactics that were

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5   To a certain degree, this parameter might be considered a "meta-parameter." By describing sampling tactics, the scholars blend various parameters discussed in this section (mainly 1, 2, 4, and 5). It is thus not appropriate to exclusively classify these tactics in one or the other category.
6   See Chapman (2008) for further discussions on the practice of microsampling.

consistently mentioned in interviews they conducted. The first involves chopping samples "by hand" instead of using automated software processes to cut samples into slices. This tactic is motivated by the aim to retain a "human element" in the sampled material (Morey and McIntyre 2014, 52). A second tactic overlaps with Harkins' "additive approach," while the third involves treating one's own recordings as samples (self-sampling; 53–54). Morey (2017, 128–29) further identifies a tactic which he labels a "scattergun approach to sample collage." In this sampling practice, "part of the point seems to be to cram as many different samples as possible, from as many different sources as possible, into one track."

In his frequently quoted article "Plunderphonics," Chris Cutler reviews five "applications" of sampling. The first he calls "there it is." Making reference to John Cage's *Imaginary Landscape* numbers 2 and 4, he identifies this tactic as random in approach: the "practice implies that music picked randomly 'out of the air' is simply there." Cutler considers this tactic to be "more a kind of listening than a kind of producing" (Cutler 1994, 107). The other applications surveyed by Cutler encompass the relation of the sample to the new composition ("partial importations" and "total importation"), the recognition of samples ("sources irrelevant"), or the traceability of the processed material ("sources untraceable"). They will be discussed further below.

xtine burrough and Frank Dufour distinguish between two different practices of sampling (Navas, Gallagher, and burrough 2018, 92–103). The first operates with "homogenous samples, which are identical in kind and acquire meaning only in the process of substitution or combination," while the second uses "heterogeneous samples (different in kind, sizes, and qualities) [that] rely on their attachments to intrinsic individual meanings" (95).

Two further tactics are identified by Kembrew McLeod, whose study is informed by legal trials relating to copyright infringements in U.S. hip hop during the early 1990s. Focusing once again on the quantity of the processed samples, McLeod's first sampling approach uses "hundreds of fragmentary samples" or "individually sampled and sliced beats," while the second only loops one "main hook" of the source song (McLeod 2005, 81).

(4) Relation to the Source

The next approach to sample analysis investigates the multiple relationships that a sample establishes with its source. How do the sample and the new composition refer to the source? This might be one of the most widely discussed issues in the analysis of sampling practices. According to Chris Cutler (1994, 108–9), sources can appear "irrelevant" or "untraceable." The former means that recognition "is not necessary or important," but possible in theory. The latter refers to

How do the sample and the new composition refer to the source?

sounds that are highly manipulated to the extent that recognition is impossible. Cutler then establishes two ways in which a recording can deal with meaning. Following Michel Chion's (2010) manifesto on the art of fixed sounds—one of the central texts of musique concrète—and his description of sounds that are completely separated from their sonic source, Cutler (1994, 97) introduces the notion of a non-referential, purified sound stripped "of its origin and memories," contrasting it with "an instance of a text that cannot exist without reference."[7]

With these two categories, Cutler defines the two extremes of the continuum under discussion. Other authors use different terminology or add further nuances to it. Guillaume Kosmicki outlines a spectrum running from unknown sources to direct references (Kosmicki 2010, 101); Owen Chapman uses the word "indexical" to describe samples that refer to something (Chapman 2011, 255); and Robert Ratcliffe distinguishes between different stages of referentiality (self-referential, referential, transcontextual).[8] Georg Fischer (2020, 51–58), finally, speaks of "50 shades of referentiality" when describing a continuum of referentiality of samples. Between the poles of the one-to-one reference (a reference that can be identified by the recipient without problems) and the inconclusive reference (where the sample is not even recognizable as a sample) there is the unique reference, which is clearly identifiable as a sample, but its source remains recognizable to insiders only.[9] These authors tend to ignore that the status of a referential sample can change over the course of a song or track. For instance, a sample could be treated as non-referential at first before becoming "indexical" later.[10]

> **A sample could be treated as non-referential at first before becoming "indexical" later.**

They are also mostly concerned with the question of whether a sound is referential or not. Dietmar Elflein (2010) offers a brief model focusing on the question of *what* is referred to. In an essay on the hybridity of genre in hip hop, he counterposes the "quotation of context" ("Kontextzitat"), where a particular sample and its context can be recognized by the listener, to the "sound building block" ("Klangbaustein"), where no precise source is recognized. (Elflein mixes aspects of referentiality and recognizability here.) Between these two poles, Elflein introduces the "quotation of sound"

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7   Chion (2010, 31) himself distinguishes between a non-narrative and a narrative, that is to say an anecdotic, sound.

8   Writing on remixes, André Doehring, Kai Ginkel, and Eva Krisper observe three equivalent ways in which a remix can relate to its original track. The first preserves the "acoustic trademark" of the original; the second still bears relation to it but "concepts of authorship and the work's identity" begin to blur; while in the third case, relations to the original no longer play an important role, and the product is considered "artistically independent" (Doehring, Ginkel, and Krisper 2019, 291).

9   The original text in German uses the terms "eineindeutige Referenz," "uneindeutige Referenz," and "eindeutige Referenz" (Fischer 2020, 51–58). Own translation.

10   See the "appropriation-based approach" by Harkins (2020, 119–32) introduced above

("Klangzitat"), where a sample refers more generally to a certain sound or genre rather than to a particular sample and context. Describing this continuum with another terminology, he distinguishes between a proactive ("offensiv") and a hidden ("versteckt") approach (16).

Due to the focus of this study on political sound material, the case studies will mostly cover sampling strategies operating on the referential end of the spectrum. Obviously, the parameter of referentiality (does the sample refer to something?) and the parameters of recognizability (is the sample recognizable; is it familiar to the listeners?) and audibility (is the sample audible?) are closely linked. But they allow for nuanced distinctions to be made.[11] For example, a recognizable (as well as an audible) sound might be indexical as well as non-referential, or an audible sound might be recognizable or not recognizable. These nuances will be addressed when developing the fader of visibility FOV later.

Taken as a whole, this approach illustrates that sampling establishes a transtextual relation between two sound sources (texts).[12] Based on the literary theory of Gérard Genette, Serge Lacasse (2007, 36) defines transtextuality as "the ensemble of any type of relation, explicit or not, that may link a text with others." He considers sampling to be "intertextual," a sub-category of transtextuality. In intertextual relations, a text contains elements from a previous text (38). Lacasse further adds the category of "hypertextuality," in which a new text (the hypertext) is built using a previous text (the hypotext) as a foundation. Hypertextual practices can also contain sampling, as in the case of the remix, John Oswald's plunderphonics, or cento.[13] Lacasse further understands sampling mainly as an "autosonic quotation." He defines "autosonic" practices as reproducing an original sound, in contrast to the "allosonic," which *imitates* a source.

While the distinction autosonic/allosonic is not hugely helpful for describing sampling practices—all forms of sampling are, by definition, autosonic—the pair of concepts syntagmatic/paradigmatic could potentially be useful. According to Lacasse, a transtextual practice either "deal[s] mostly with subject or content" (syntagmatic) or else involves a "transformation or imitation of a style or system" (paradigmatic) (55–56). Lacasse argues that sampling as autosonic quotation is a syntagmatic practice. However, the

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11   Similar vocabulary is used for all three parameters in the academic literature. For example, the non-visible (or audible) ends of these scales are described as obscure, hidden, concealed, transparent, or arcane.

12   In this book, I try to avoid the notion of the "text" in relation to musical compositions. As others have argued (Wicke 2003, 121; Just 2019), I believe that this vocabulary, taken from literary studies, is inaccurate and in the worst case even misleading. However, in Chapter 5, when establishing the "contextual approach" as a category of the spider of sampling reasons SSR, the terminology returns through the back door. For want of convincing alternatives, I will use the term here as a strategic necessity.

13   Lacasse applies this term from literary theory—once again borrowed from Gérard Genette—to musical works in which an "unusually large number" of samples build a new composition.

case study of Lara Sarkissian will illustrate that sampling could be considered paradigmatic as well: in her track "kenats," she transfers a particular style of keyboard playing from a male musical practice into female authorship by means of sampling.

(5) Relation to the New Composition

The fifth analytical perspective focuses on the relation of the sample to the new composition. In other words, this approach examines the function(s) of the sample within the new musical artifact. Often, sampling researchers touch on this issue only superficially. McLeod and DiCola (2011, 30), for example, briefly differentiate between samples that "provide a texture" and others that become the "central hook" of the new composition. Cutler (1994, 108) is more systematic when he identifies two sampling applications, "partial importations" and "total importation." The former uses samples as "important voices" and constructs "the rest of the material [the new composition] (…) around them," while in the latter, "existing recordings are not randomly or instrumentally incorporated so much as they become the simultaneous subject and object of a creative work" (ibid.).

> *This approach examines the function(s) of the sample within the new musical artifact.*

Felicia Miyakawa describes four different functions of samples in rap music. According to Miyakawa, samples provide structure or formal functions (Miyakawa 2005, 108–9); they produce intertextual meaning (111); they create an atmosphere (ibid.); or they contribute to some sort of "historical dialectic" to "reinforce ties between rap's past and present" (121). In identifying these key functions, Miyakawa simultaneously addresses reasons for sampling, which will play an important role in the development of the analytical tool SSR below.

The most thorough studies on the question of the functions of samples were conducted by Robert Ratcliffe and Amanda Sewell. Sewell investigates the treatment of sampled sounds by hip hop producers in order to develop a typology. She describes "three main types of samples: structural samples, surface samples, and lyric samples" (Sewell 2013, 1). According to this schema, the sample can be responsible for the rhythmic foundation and appear throughout the new track in a looped form (the structural sample); it can further "decorate, enhance, or emphasize the groove of the track" (the surface sample); or it can provide "words, phrases, or even entire verses of text" (the lyric sample). This text and its meaning are further "essential to the role and character of a lyric sample" (67, 26). Sewell offers a range of subcategories that can be used to effectively describe the function of a sample in a track. Her typology is based on hip hop tracks, using information gained from online databases of sample sources, such as whosampled.com.

The models provided by Sewell and Ratcliffe have both proven

inadequate to describe my own case studies. Their categories do not map precisely onto the tracks under study, meaning several categories have to be combined to explain them. As a result, the typologies lose their accuracy. Both models remain valid for their respective fields of research, but they need to be revised and expanded for other fields; not only to account for sample-based music from other stylistic contexts, but also to consider hidden sampling strategies in particular.

Structural: looped (repeated end-to-end in sustainable patterns throughout a track)
    Percussion-only: borrowing only non-pitched rhythmic instruments from the source
    Intact: borrowing drums and various combinations of bass, keyboard, guitar, or other instruments, all of which sounded simultaneously in the source
    Non-percussion: using original bass, keyboards or other instruments, but lacking any sampled drums
    Aggregate: using drums and various combinations of instruments, but each sampled from a distinct source
Surface: decorate or emphasize the structural samples
    Constituent: only a beat long and appearing at regular intervals atop the groove
    Emphatic: appearing at the beginning or end of a track
    Momentary: appearing only once in a track but in an unpredictable place
Lyric: spoken, sung, or rapped text
    Singular: heard once during a track
    Recurring: heard repeatedly during a track, usually in the choruses

Table 3.3: A typology of sampling in hip hop (Sewell 2014a, 304)

(6) Reasons for Sampling

The question of *why* artists sample represents one of the largest gaps in the research on sampling practices. This is where this book steps into the breach. Joanna Demers is one of a handful of scholars who has tried to answer this question on a more fundamental level. Focusing on experimental music, she distinguishes between two forms of sampling.[14] The first she calls utilitarian. This form of

> *sampling broadens an artist's palette and allows for sonic combinations impossible to re-create in live performance. Many musicians do sample for precisely this reason, and there is no deeper significance to their actions. (Demers 2010, 52)*

The second form "regards sampling as a means of intertextual commentary between one work and another" (ibid.). Beyond Demers, further attempts to explore reasons for sampling have been undertaken by, for example, Andrew Goodwin and Rolf Großmann. Both suggest three "strands" (Goodwin 1990, 270) or "rough scopes

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14   Demers bases her understanding of the term "experimental" on the tradition of high arts, while this book follows a popular interpretation, see own definition in Chapter 2.

of creative strategies" (Großmann 2005, 322) of sampling. Both authors first address the sampling of (mainly) instruments as a means of studio production. The often-quoted Goodwin calls this "hidden sampling" and regards it as "motivated largely by economics rather than aesthetics" (Goodwin 1990, 270), while Großmann (2005, 322) uses the term simulative to describe it. The motives behind this strategy would be, firstly, to simulate a particular instrumental sound, and secondly, to save money.[15]

Goodwin's second "strand" relates to the practice of making remixes and edits of previously released songs and tracks. For Goodwin, these remixes amount to a "refusal to settle for the pleasures of pop formula offered in the original" (Goodwin 1990, 270–71).[16] Großmann, meanwhile, refers to DJ culture as one of the most influential lineages of the sampling tradition. In this instance, sampling is about the appropriation and redefinition of media material through different means (Großmann 2005, 324). When conceptualizing these second forms of sampling, Großmann and Goodwin do not articulate well-defined motives. Behind these strategies I thus assume a conglomerate of key motives, such as appropriation, reference, the search for fresh and new sounds, and the intent to simultaneously follow and break with musical traditions.

The third forms of sampling outlined by the two authors are the most open and least defined. Großmann describes "experimental strategies" (325), which use sampling extensively to develop a self-contained aesthetic. The attainment of a "new aesthetic" is the crucial parameter for this definition; the same goes for Goodwin's final category. He refers to artists who use sampling as a central compositional element, and who have "made an aesthetic out of sampling… and in some cases a politics out of stealing" (Goodwin 1990, 270). With "quilt-pop," David Sanjek (2001, 248) describes his third form of sampling in similar terms.

Finally, based on Goodwin and Großmann, musicologist Malte Pelleter and media and communication scholar Steffen Lepa try to bring together three distinct types of sampling usage in hip hop:

> – Simulation/Composition: *"Sampling" as a musical tool that is used in order to appropriate and control all kinds of sounds and hence empowers the artist to the production of new compositions.*
> – Quotation/Reference: *"Sampling" as an intertextual reference-making practice that is used in order to appropriate meanings and contexts.*
> – Historicity/Materiality: *"Sampling" as a transparent technique of musical production that self-reflexively reveals its own relation to material and history.*

15　In the present day, the latter has lost much of its significance as a primary motive, since sampling has become a ubiquitous studio practice.
16　Sanjek (2001, 248) also refers to remixes as a particular form of sampling.

While the first two categories clearly describe motives and intentions behind sampling, the third category both combines these preceding two and describes a consequence of sampling: sampling in hip hop produces authenticity and historicity. In a similar way, Miyakawa (2005, 120–21) conceptualizes "sampling as historical dialectic" and Jennifer Lena describes the practice of "symbolic distinction": "the practice of linking a sense of history and historical accomplishments to rap songs through the use of particular genres, artists, and songs" (Lena 2004, 305). Lena compares "symbolic distinction" with "pragmatic distinctions": "samples that are chosen for inclusion because there are pragmatic reasons for sampling" (304).

A further distinction between two forms of sampling has been proposed by Russell Potter. More than proper motives and intentions, Potter describes two kinds of attitudes behind sampling. Borrowing from literary theorist Henry Gates Jr.'s conceptualized verbal strategy of "signifying," he identifies a "motivated" and an "unmotivated" form of sampling. The former uses sampling material in a "parodic and agonistic" way and the latter in an "empathetic and reverential" way (Potter 1995, 28). Regarding intention, Potter notes that the "unmotivated" mode does not mean "the absence of a profound intention but the absence of a negative critique" (162–63, n7).[18] The analyses provided in this book's case studies will show that Potter's distinction is insufficient when applied to the field of this study. While the tracks by Lara Sarkissian and Vika Kirchenbauer could adequately be characterized as "motivated" forms of sampling, the other three case studies (Ian McDonnell, James Whipple, and Mauro Guz Bejar) do not fit into any of Potter's categories. Further terminological nuances are needed.

What to do with this mishmash of thoughts and attempts at classification? As we can see from this section, a mix of intentions, motives, and attitudes behind sampling, as well as consequences of sampling, have been identified in the academic literature. To make things more confusing, they combine perspectives of production and reception. Nevertheless, for my purposes it is helpful to summarize these attempts.

What to do with this mishmash of thoughts and attempts at classification?

1. utilitarian and pragmatic

- broaden an artist's palette of compositional tools (Demers; Pelleter and Lepa)
- utilitarian sampling: using sonic combinations, impossible to recreate live (Demers)
- motivated by economics (Goodwin)
- simulation of instruments (Großmann; Pelleter and Lepa)
- control of sounds (Pelleter and Lepa)
- samples chosen due to pragmatic reasons for sampling (Lena)

2. intertextual and meaning-related

- intertextual commentary between one work and another (Demers)
- quotation and reference as intertextual practices (Pelleter and Lepa)
- following the tradition of DJ culture (Großmann)
- remixes and edits as a refusal to settle for the pleasures of pop formula offered in the original (Goodwin)
- producing authenticity and historicity (Pelleter and Lepa)
- sampling as historical dialectic (Miyakawa)
- symbolic distinction: the practice of linking a sense of history and historical accomplishments to rap songs through the use of particular genres, artists, and songs (Lena)
- possible attitudes: motivated or unmotivated (Potter)

3. aesthetic

- developing a self-contained aesthetic (Großmann)
- attaining a new aesthetic (Großmann)
- "quilt-pop": recordings constructed wholesale from samples to create a new aesthetic (Sanjek)
- artists that made an aesthetic out of sampling and a politics out of stealing (Goodwin)

4. accidental

- combination of the digital sampler and laws of unintended consequences to create interesting juxtapositions (Harkins)

Table 3.4: Reasons for sampling discussed in the academic literature

I have assembled the reasons for sampling identified by sampling scholars into four rough categories. The first encompasses reasons that are utilitarian and pragmatic; the second summarizes reasons that relate to intertextual relations and that focus on layers of meaning in the processed material; while the third centers on the aesthetic qualities of the sampled material. Finally, the fourth category describes the accidental sampling of sounds. I have not yet introduced this category as it is ignored by the featured authors. It is only Harkins (2010a, 10) who describes a particular sampling tactic whereby "the digital sampler and laws of unintended consequences [are] combine[d] to create other interesting juxtapositions."

To be precise, sampling by accident means the absence of intention. However, it does not mean the absence of motivations or motives: a producer can consciously allow these accidents to happen, or can consciously create an environment where accidents might happen. Moreover, if we are interested in reasons for sampling in general (why has a particular sound been sampled?) we need to include accidental sampling as a separate approach, as chance could be a significant reason behind a particular sampling process.

I will rely on this summary, with its four rough categories of reasons for sampling, when developing the spider of sampling reasons SSR below.

■

1 Sample source	2 Appearance in the new composition	3 Tactics of sampling
Origin – domestic/foreign (Théberge) – internal/external **Quality** – environmental – musical (Théberge) – media material **Context** – genre, style, geographic, ethnic, … (Mikos)	**Length** – short, isolated fragments (Cox/Ratcliffe), or one shot punctuations – loops, phrases, larger elements (Ratcliffe), or central motifs – discursive (longer phrase) and musematic (riff-based) repetition (Middleton) **Audibility / Recognizability** – from audible to concealed/muted – from textually signaled to not textually signaled (Dyer) – from familiar/ recognizable to obscure (Demers/ Sinnreich) **Description / Denotation** associative or informal language	**Process-Related** – appropriation-based, additive, accidental (Harkins) – chopping by hand, start and discard, self-sampling (Morey/ McIntyre) – "there it is"/random importation (Cutler) **Related to Quantity** – microsampling (Harkins) – many fragmentary samples vs. looping one main hook (McLeod) – homogenous and heterogeneous samples (burrough and Dufour) – scattergun approach to sample-collage (Morey)
4 Relation to the source	5 Relation to the new composition	6 Reasons for sampling
Referentiality – from referential/ indexical (Chapman) to non-referential (Cutler) – sources irrelevant or untraceable (Cutler) – from one-to-one to unique to inconclusive (Fischer) – from proactive to hidden (referring to context, sound, or nothing) (Elflein) **Transtextuality (Lacasse)** – autosonic – intertextual/ (hypertextual) – syntagmatic/ paradigmatic	**Function** – various functions (Ratcliffe) – structural/surface/lyric (Sewell) – formal/intertextual/ creating atmosphere/ historical dialectic (Miyakawa) – partial importations or total importation (Cutler) – providing texture vs. central hook (McLeod and DiCola)	**utilitarian and pragmatic** (Demers, Goodwin, Groβmann, Lena, Pelleter and Lepa) **intertextual and mea-ning-related** (Demers, Goodwin, Groβmann, Lena, Miyakawa, Pelleter and Lepa, Potter) **aesthetic** (Goodwin, Groβmann, Sanjek) **accidental** (Harkins) *cf. Table 3.4*

Table 3.5: Approaches in the analysis of sampling practices

Table 3.5 summarizes the broad range of categorizations, descriptive terminologies, and fragments of typologies and taxonomies that have been attempted by researchers since the beginning of scholarly attention on the production technique of sampling. The table compiles the distinctions and categorizations that have been developed to describe and to analyze sample-based music and

the particular practices behind it.[19]

The most systematic investigation has been undertaken within approaches 1, 2, 4, and 5. In these areas, scholars can rely on useful terminologies and taxonomies. Depending on the field of research and the research questions, these attempts certainly need further consideration, adaption, and expansion.

This book will contribute a few individual sampling tactics to approach number 3; they are exemplary rather than systematic. From approach 1, I will borrow the introduced terminology without developing it further. Finally, as the discussion on Felicia Miyakawa's sampling functions has shown, an investigation into reasons for sampling always touches on the question of the functions of sampling (approach number 5), as a particular function can be a reason for sampling, or, conversely, a reason for sampling can become a function. However, a more general, systematic examination of the functions of sampling is still an open task, and would require additional quantitative methods.

Based on the discussed terminology, I will now develop two tools that facilitate the analysis and interpretation of sampling strategies. The first tool, the <u>fader of visibility FOV</u>, combines the parameters of audibility, recognizability, and referentiality from approaches 2 and 4. It allows us to analyze how a particular sampling strategy treats a sample in terms of its visibility. This is one key instrument enabling a thorough description of sampling strategies.

→ Chapter 4

The second key instrument is the <u>spider of sampling reasons SSR</u>, which focuses on the reasons behind sampling. The discussion of approach 6 above has shown that this is one of the greater gaps in research on sampling. When we want to analyze reasons behind sampling strategies, the broadly reviewed categories introduced by Cutler, Goodwin, Großmann, Pelleter and Lepa, and Sanjek are, firstly, too general and fragmentary and, secondly, focused on other genres of popular music.[20]

→ Chapter 5

Both tools will be developed with the aim of providing flexible models that allow for continuous categorization instead of dichotomous classification. Therewith, I favor this approach due to the tendency of classification systems to neglect liminal spaces between categories and to oversimplify complexity. Moreover, the FOV and the SSR are offered as a suggestion for further studies on sample-based music in various musical fields. They will be applied and tested in the case studies in Chapters 6–10.

19 Where I have not noted an author in brackets, the terms were developed by me, or else are simultaneously used by various authors and thus cannot be attributed to particular authors.
20 Pelleter and Lepa, Potter, Sanjek, and Smitherman focus on hip hop, Cutler on John Oswald's plunderphonics, and Großmann on sound art and hip hop, while Goodwin remains on a general level. Furthermore, Goodwin's thoughts date from the early 1990s and are thus partially outdated (see n15).

4

The Fader of Visibility (FOV)

An analytical instrument that shows the complex nuances involved in answering the question of how visible a particular sample is in a new composition.

The first analytical tool introduced in this book shows the complex nuances involved in answering the question of how visible a particular sample is in a new composition. As the subsequent case studies and the underline interlude later in this book will show, this question is crucial both in production processes and when analyzing reasons and attitudes behind sampling processes. The FOV addresses further sub-questions such as:

– How present is the sample in the new track?
– Is it in the back- or foreground?
– Is it possible to hear the sample in the new composition?
– Does it refer to anything? If so, to which context?

I consciously use the term "visibility" instead of "audibility." The following paradox explains this choice: a sample can be visible although it is not audible in the new composition. This happens when, for example, a producer has not processed the samples in question in an audible way, but publicly speaks about them, or mentions their sources in texts such as liner notes or press releases. This special case will not appear in the case studies that follow. An example is Matthew Herbert's *The End of Silence* (2013), in which the producer sampled a recording of a bomb explosion during the Libyan civil war. Although the sample is not audible, it is visible, as Herbert discussed it extensively in public (Burkhalter 2015a, Velasco-Pufleau 2020). Hence, audibility is not required to achieve a particular

degree of sample visibility, though it will always raise the profile of the sample in question.[1]

To address the question of visibility, it is necessary to consider more than one parameter. The FOV combines five: audibility, signalization, referentiality, recognizability, and extra-musical signalization. The simultaneous consideration of all these parameters allows for an in-depth and comprehensive discussion of the question of visibility. By adding a sixth parameter, evaluation, I finally want to illustrate the applicability of the tool for use beyond this study.

The display format is based on the faders found on sound engineering gear such as mixing consoles. In comparison with a trigger switch, the fader allows for the display of continuous scales rather than fixed dualistic categories. Only a few authors have discussed similar continuums in relation to the analysis of sample-based music; most prominent are the scales of Georg Fischer (2020; "50 shades of referentiality") and Dietmar Elflein (2010; range from proactive to hidden referentiality), and Christopher Ballantine, who investigated borrowed material in the works of classical composer Charles Ives:

> *There is a continuum of intelligibility stretching from an "open secret" at the one extreme to a "closed secret" at the other, and for each listener any one of Ives's pieces using borrowed materials will have its place somewhere along that continuum. (Ballantine 1984, 84)*
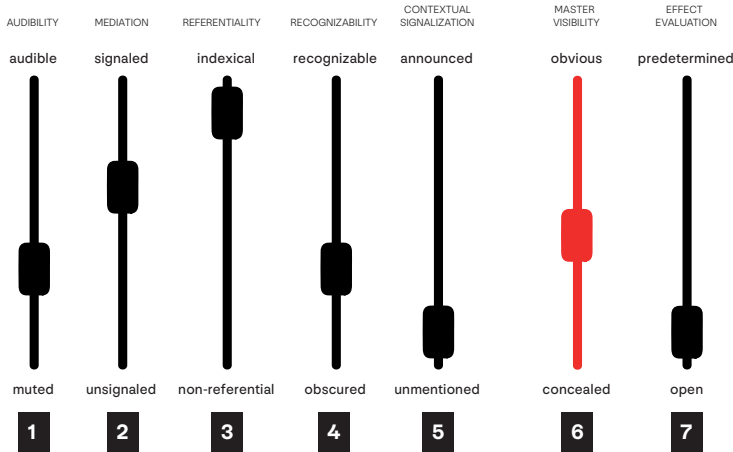
Figure 4.1: The fader of visibility FOV

Ballantine acknowledges the subjectivity of such questions. Listeners' answers will differ substantially from one another. The answers provided are highly dependent on a range of external factors, such as the habitus of the listener. In this study, the FOV will reflect the viewpoint of both the researcher and the producer.

The main advantage of this display format is its ability to represent interpretive tendencies. In many cases, it is difficult to clearly

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1 It is remarkable that in theoretical writings on musique concrète the term "visibility" is used without any critical reflection. See for example Chion 2010, 33.

define whether a sample is audible (or recognizable) or not. The faders allow statements such as: "It is most likely that a certain sample is heard or recognized by a certain group of listeners for this and that reason," or: "It is quite unlikely that this sample will be heard or recognized by anyone." The former statement would cause the master fader to move towards the obvious end of the scale, while the latter would result in faders number 1 (audibility) and 4 (recognizability) being oriented towards the "muted" position.

At this point, I would like to revisit the model of imitative practices in music by Richard Dyer. This model provides a couple of useful terms for my purposes. As Dyer is interested in the artistic concept of pastiche and a comparison with other imitative practices, much of his framework is not relevant here. I am mainly interested in the three distinctive features from the upper part of his model: concealed vs. unconcealed practices, not textually signaled vs. textually signaled practices, and evaluatively open vs. evaluatively predetermined practices. With a couple of additions, these features can be fruitfully adapted for the analysis of sample-based music.

CONCEALED		UNCONCEALED	
NOT TEXTUALLY SIGNALLED		TEXTUALLY SIGNALLED	
EVALUATIVELY OPEN			EVALUATIVELY PREDETERMINED
plagiarism	copy	pastiche	emulation homage
fake forgery hoax	versions		travesty burlesque mock epic
	genre		parody

Table 4.1: Model of imitative practices by Richard Dyer (2007, 24)

103

I will now introduce the different faders of the FOV and thereby explain what I take from Dyer, and what I add to his model.

The Faders

Fader 1, Audibility: From Audible to Muted

A sample is fully audible if it is most likely that listeners can hear the sample in the new composition: for example, a prominent hook line or single instrument notes. On the other hand, a sample is completely muted if there is no chance of hearing it in the final mix. There are various potential reasons why a sample might be muted: its sound level might be too low; it might have been manipulated too heavily; it might consist of frequencies that are not audible to the human ear; or it might be of extremely short length. Between these poles, samples could be partially audible, or manipulated to a degree where they are barely audible but not completely muted. The case studies will cover the whole range from almost muted

samples (James Whipple) to fully audible samples (Lara Sarkissian, Vika Kirchenbauer, and Ian McDonnell).

Fader 2, Signalization: From Signaled to Unsignaled

The second scale is drawn directly from Dyer's model and his distinction between textually signaled and not textually signaled imitation. This terminology makes it possible to illustrate that the new composition signals that it contains sampled material, or that the sample itself signals that it is a sample. This could happen by (added or already present) sound effects (such as vinyl or radio crackle), the material appearance of the sample (sound quality), or manipulating techniques (such as chopping samples). The crucial question is not whether a sample is audible or not, but whether it is audible that a particular sound clip is sampled. While it is not obvious that the keyboard melody in Lara Sarkissian's "kenats" is sampled, the Sacred Harp tune in Vika Kirchenbauer's "STABILIZED, YES!" is signaled as a sample through the way that it is processed and its aesthetic appearance.

A particular form of signaled sampling would be what Ragnhild Brøvig-Hanssen describes as "opaque mediation." She points to the importance of the use of mediating technology in music production and argues that mediation "has tremendous importance for musical expression" (Brøvig-Hanssen 2010, 174):[2] "Mediation always leaves a signature (its self-presentation) during the act of conveying" and can thus never be "a neutral transition of sounds" (162–63). Brøvig-Hanssen describes two aesthetics: the first, "opaque mediation," "highlight[s] the degree of exposure of the relevant mediating technology," while in "transparent mediation (...) the ideal is a use of mediating technology that the listener can completely ignore" (159). In its mediation of sounds from a source to a new composition, sampling is a typical example here. In conclusion, if mediation is recognizable ("opaque mediation") this also signals that the respective track contains sampled sound material.

Fader 3, Referentiality: From Indexical to Non-Referential

According to Allan Moore (2012, 217), music is referential "in three fundamentally different ways: within itself; to itself; outside itself." One could thus argue that a sound is referential *per se*. I do not follow such a broad conception of reference here, and I only consider a sound to be referential if it points to an extra-musical element, which according to Moore's conception would be either "outside itself" or "to itself," but not "within itself." Chion (2010, 31) labels these sounds as "anecdotal," as distinct from "non-narrative" sounds. A demonstrative example might be the particular sound of

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2   In her book *Digital Signatures*, Brøvig-Hanssen further develops the concept of opaque and transparent mediation (Brøvig-Hanssen and Danielsen 2016).

an instrument. A sampled trumpet can either refer to the particular trumpet style of a famous trumpeter (indexical), or it can just be used to include the sound of a non-specific trumpet in the new composition (non-referential). The fader, thus, makes it possible to display the degree of referentiality of a sample. The higher the controller is positioned, the greater the significance of any references to extra-musical content.

While it is, in theory, possible to objectively evaluate the position of the controller for the other faders, it is particularly challenging here. Whether something is referential or not depends on the knowledge of the respective listener. Hence, a sound might be highly referential for one person and non-referential for another. In my analyses, I will use this fader to represent the producer's view. A high position of this fader thus indicates that the sampled material is highly referential for the producer themselves (such as the war sounds in James Whipple's "Methy Imbiβ," or the Sacred Harp tunes in Vika Kirchenbauer's "STABILIZED, YES!"). A middle or low position signifies that the referential qualities of the processed samples are less or not important (such as the YouTube footage in Ian McDonnell's "Perversas," or the keyboard sounds in Lara Sarkissian's "kenats").

I therefore distinguish between hard and soft references. Hard references point to a particular source context, while soft references point to a musical style in general, or a non-contextual sound— that is, a sound that is not connected with a particular context. This is, in principle, the same distinction drawn by Elflein (2010) between a quotation of context (hard reference) and a quotation of sound (soft reference). Since the focus of this study is on political sampling material, there will be no examples provided where the fader is positioned at its lowest point.

Finally, whether all of these references are perceived by the listener—or if they are perceivable at all—depends not least on the positions of the other faders.

Fader 4, Recognizability: From Recognizable to Obscured

One could argue that the fader of recognizability is akin to the first fader (audibility): if a sample is audible it is at the same time recognizable; if it is muted it is, conversely, unrecognizable. However, by considering this fader separately we can add a further nuance to the discussion of sampling strategies. Hence, a sample could be audible and signaled—the listener is able to hear the sample and he/she knows that it is a sample—while the particular content of the sample in its original appearance still remains unrecognizable or obscured due to heavy manipulation. This is the case in Vika Kirchenbauer's "STABILIZED, YES!" where the sample-clips are both audible and signaled, but not clearly recognizable as deriving from a tune in the U.S. Sacred Harp tradition. Recognizability (I hear the

sample *and* I recognize it) is thus more than pure audibility (I am physically able to hear the sample).

This fader shifts the perspective from production to reception. The highest position of this fader signifies that it is most likely that most listeners recognize the sample, while the lowest position indicates that recognition is not expected to be possible at all. Positions in between represent cases where it depends on particular knowledge (habitus) to recognize the sample. In a study of reception, this fader could also be used to display the actual reactions of listeners, rather than assumed or probable recognizability, as is the case in this study.

> *This fader shifts the perspective from production to reception.*

Fader 5, Extra-Musical Signalization: From Announced to Unmentioned

This fader complements the second. While the distinction between signaled and unsignaled mediation focuses on "musical" elements that are part of the new composition, this distinction focuses on "extra-musical" channels through which potential signalization can happen. Irrespective of whether the sample is audible or not, the sample and its source can be publicly announced, discussed, or indicated in cover designs, press releases, liner notes, blog entries, interviews, posts on social media, announcements during live performances, and so on. This fader, thus, covers the appearance of information related to the sample in every kind of source outside of the musical product itself, the track. In my case studies, Vika Kirchenbauer's "STABILIZED, YES!" is accompanied by considerable extra-musical signalization.[3]

This fader also makes clear that an analysis using the FOV is always a snapshot. While the first three faders rely on information from the process of production, which is ideally closed, the position of faders four and five could potentially change over time. Studies on sample-based music significantly affect the position of the current fader, and no lower position would be possible after the publication of such a study.

Fader 6 (Master), Visibility: From Obvious to Concealed

All of the faders introduced so far ultimately affect the level of the master fader. This scale functions as a summation of all parameters. The continuum extends from concealed (with a nod to Dyer) to obvious, and represents the degree of visibility that a sample can adopt. The higher the positions of the first five faders, the higher the master fader must be set. For example, a sampling practice that processes a sample that is perfectly audible, signaled as a sample by the composition itself, highly recognizable, referring to a well-known

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3   For another example, see Matthew Herbert's EP *The End of Silence* mentioned in the introduction to this chapter.

sound, voice, or context, and broadly discussed in public can be analyzed as highly obvious in terms of visibility. The subsequent analyses will present the whole range of visibility from the "obvious" end (Vika Kirchenbauer) to the "concealed" (James Whipple).

The last fader only appears as an effect, and I will not use it in my analyses. Nevertheless, I want to include it here because it illustrates the scope for adding further channels and effects to this display format, and it expands the tool for further application beyond this study—in particular towards reception analysis.

Fader 7 (Effect), Evaluation: From Predetermined to Open

Referring once again to Dyer, according to this distinction, the way in which an imitation practice (sampling in our case) is perceived is either "evaluatively open" or "evaluatively predetermined." To reach useful conclusions here a broader reception study would need to be made, in which a researcher interested in this question could identify different ways in which the sample in question is perceived by listeners. This distinction also touches on the question of intention, which will be covered by the SSR introduced in the next section.

■

The FOV facilitates a qualitative analysis of sample-based music as a multilayered musical object and helps to recognize and to display various sampling strategies. This analytical tool makes clear that the question of visibility is reliant on a couple of subordinate questions and parameters. The fader combines distinctive features with terminology that has already been introduced by other sampling scholars, and illustrates crucial aspects of processes of sampling in a new, in-depth manner.

The display format could even be used for comparative analyses, if a sufficiently large number of tracks were considered. At this point, it is important to mention that only qualitative statements can be displayed with this tool, as the setting of every fader relies on subjective interpretation. To counter the temptation to use the tool quantitatively I have consciously avoided displaying a numbered scale.

Finally, the fader always depends on a critical discussion of the analytical position being taken and the question of visibility *for whom*. This question cannot be answered in general, relying instead on the particular analysis being conducted and the research question behind it. For this study, the analyses were always conducted from the author's perspective, focusing on the production process of the analyzed tracks. As a next step, I will introduce the second analytical tool, the SSR.

The subsequent analyses will present the whole range of visibility from the "obvious" end to the "concealed".

5

The Spider of Sampling Reasons (SSR)

A flexible coordinate system that helps to display and to discuss complex combinations of reasons behind processes of sampling.
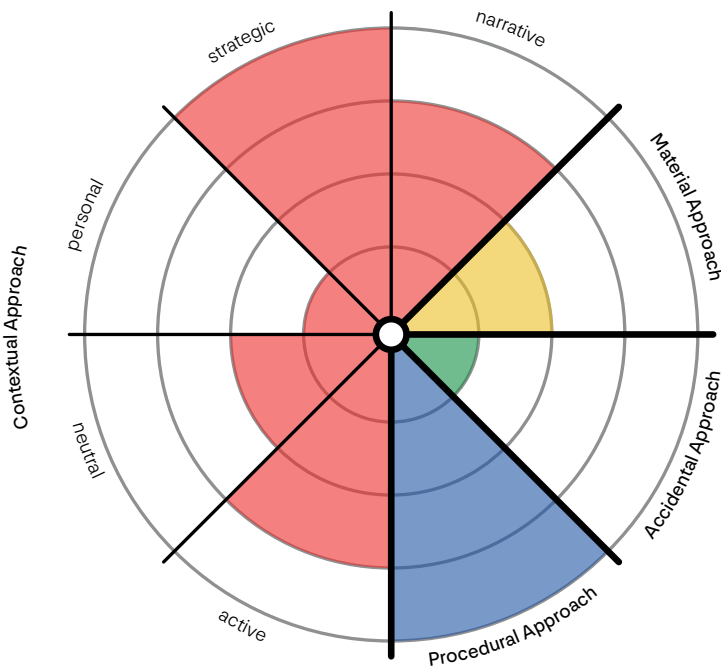
Figure 5.1: The spider of sampling reasons SSR[1]

1 This display format has been developed on the basis of smartspider diagrams, which are used for personal profiles displaying the political attitudes of nominees for democratic elections. The diagram has been kindly provided by smartvote Switzerland (www.smartvote.ch).

The spider of sampling reasons (SSR) deals with motivations, motives, and intentions behind processes of sampling.[2] In research on sampling this aspect has often been neglected, or has not been analyzed in an expansible manner. With the SSR, I thus aim to provide a flexible coordinate system that helps to display and to discuss complex combinations of reasons behind processes of sampling.

The SSR organizes reasons for sampling into four main approaches: contextual, material, accidental, and procedural. The first of these approaches is further subdivided into various perspectives. It is not the aim of the tool to identify any single or "original" reason—I do not believe such a thing exists—but to display a range of additive reasons that seem more likely in a given sampling process. It is always a mixture of reasons that determines the delicate decision-making behind the selection of particular samples.[3] The model is displayed in a circle in order to avoid a default prioritization of certain categories over others.

I have developed the SSR based on the answers my interviewees gave to one of the central research questions of this study: why do producers of experimental electronica sample political material, or use the production technique of sampling to speak about political subjects? The categories have been tested and refined in analysis of the case studies. Accordingly, reasons for sampling that occurred more often among my interviewees are emphasized more strongly than others. The contextual approach was elaborated on in the most detail, since the sampling of political sounds almost always relies to a great extent on contextual reasons. Hence, when addressing a different research question or field of research, one would need to revise and expand the model.

However, the basic structure of the SSR—the four approaches at the first level—could potentially be useful for the analysis of a broader range of sample-based music. I have verified these categories by comparing data from the academic literature and from interviews conducted in the first stage of my research, where I had not yet defined the final focus of this study. To continue, I will now

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2   These terms are all used to describe human action, but they relate to slightly different concepts. An intention is closely related to a particular action and represents the actor's concrete aim behind this action. Kieran Setiya (2018) describes this form of intention as the intention with which someone acts. In contrast, motive and motivation can be regarded as more general and abstract reasons for actions. A motive represents "that state of mind which makes a particular result attractive enough to the agent for him to effect it," or it "is a propensity to act one way rather than another in situations of particular sort" (Hoffman 1984, 389). Motivation is often understood "in the sense of what produces the desire" to perform some act (Scheer 2001, 400). I finally use the term "reason" as an umbrella term, also including reasons that are neither intentions nor motives or motivations. Moreover, it is often challenging to define to which of these concepts a reason can be ascribed—concrete intentions aside. Hence, I use the terms motivations and motives on a general level, related to reasons with no concrete aim behind them.

3   In a short ethnography of a sampling process, Jochen Bonz (2008, 108–10) illustrates the difficulties (or probably even the impossibility) of clearly ascribing sampling practices to one or another approach, for example either to the contextual or the material.

describe how I deduced the four main approaches, before making a few general remarks on the functionality of the model and its mode of display. Finally, I will discuss each approach, illustrated by interview data.

The Four General Approaches of the SSR

When asked about their reasons for sampling, producers mostly described two distinct approaches. The first is an aesthetic approach, where a sound is selected for its aesthetic nature, and the second is a referential approach, where (extra-musical) meaning determines the selection. This distinction appeared throughout my interviews to differing degrees, and was explained with differing vocabulary. It has informed the first two approaches in my model: the contextual and the material. One musician who developed a similar categorization was electronic industrial artist Ptyl:

> *Why do you sample sounds when the source seems not to be important?*
> **I need certain sounds in their entirety, overlaying with other sounds and/or effects. I don't want a specific song. What I want to have is a specific guitar or a specific drum in my own song. And this specific sound is always shaped by a specific production process. So, you can say that I'm not really sampling the musicians, I'm sampling the production.**
> *This means that you never use sampling as an instrument for referring to something?*
> **Yes, I do. But that's another layer of sampling in my work than what I just explained. On this second layer the sounds I'm using are actually reminding people of something specific such as other songs, a time, persons, or anything else. In this case the sample will actually serve as part of the message of the song and sometimes even replace lyrics. Instead of saying something, I can put the sound there. And when I put the sound there, because the listener knows what this sound is about, they will also understand what I want to talk about.**
> *Do you sample on both layers in all of your songs?*
> **In all songs I have at least the first layer, the technical one. That's the foundation of the music in terms of how it's been made. But in many other songs, there is also the second layer.** *(Liechti 2016b)*

Sampling on the first "technical" layer means to sample a sound because it has a particular aesthetic nature, while the second layer is more concerned with (extra-musical) meaning. Another example is provided by experimental producer Tomutonttu. He made a similar distinction when asked what makes him start working with

a sample, and how important the original meaning of a sample is: "I'm more in the school of 'how does it sound' than 'how was it made.'" Accordingly, the producer is more interested in how a sample sounds than what it means, where it comes from, or what it refers to. In other words, his reasons for choosing particular samples are based on the aesthetic appearance of the sound rather than the layers of meaning behind it.

Beyond these two main approaches, a couple more were mentioned in my interviews. A third approach could be summarized as sampling as a means of production. This procedural approach encompasses sampling motives[4] linked with the production process itself. In this instance, sampling helps to improve the production process, making it more comfortable or intuitive. Furthermore, some producers understood sampling as a concept (or a conceptual need) or as a social act. In the final and fourth approach, producers reported that sampling sometimes happens by accident.

Comparing these findings with the existing literature on sampling reviewed above, it is clear that the two categorizations broadly correspond. Based on these sources, I have developed my own terminology for use in the SSR:

Literature Review (Table 3.4)	Interview Data	SSR
intertextual and meaning-related	sampling as a referential tool	contextual
aesthetic	aesthetic reasons	material
accidental	sampling by accident	accidental
utilitarian and pragmatic	means for production	procedural
	conceptual	
	sampling as a social act	

Table 5.1: Categories of reasons for sampling

The intertextual and meaning-related approach from the academic literature directly corresponds with observations derived from the interview data (sampling as a referential tool). In the SSR, I label this category as "contextual" (red). It summarizes all reasons for sampling that relate to any (extra-musical) meaning of the sample source. In other words: when a particular sound was attractive enough to use because of its context. I consciously avoid using the terms "intertextual" and "referential" to describe this approach. I consider "intertextual" to be misleading, since almost every form of sampling establishes an intertextual relation. I avoid the word "referential" to prevent further confusion, since one could argue that every sound is referential *per se*.

The "material approach" (yellow) encompasses reasons for sampling where the nature of the material is key in the process of selection. I have labeled this category with the term "material" to

For a critical reflection on the term "material" see Chapter 2.

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4   Here it is more a question of broader motives or motivations than of concrete intentions.

emphasize that it is the musical "material" (sounds, melodies, textures, etc.) that is crucial here. This category corresponds both with the interview data (sampling for aesthetic reasons) and with the "aesthetic" category from the academic literature. I have avoided the term "aesthetic" because this is a slippery concept, and not all reasons for sampling encompassed in this approach might be connected with "the nature and appreciation of beauty," which is the core concern of aesthetics (Oxford 2019d).

The third category, the accidental approach (green), is mainly drawn from my interviews. It encompasses reasons for sampling that have occurred due to chance circumstances or factors. The academic literature largely ignores this aspect of sampling, except in the case of Harkins (2010a).

The last category, the procedural approach (blue), functions as a catch-all for a range of further reasons for sampling. They are all based on the possibilities or consequences that are enabled or implied by the process of sampling. Producers sample because sampling as a production technique allows them to limit themselves, to save money, to avoid blank project files, to simulate an instrument, to pursue a broader concept, etc. In short: sampling facilitates the process of musical composition. The academic literature broadly describes this approach as "utilitarian" or "pragmatic." From my interviews, three strands are placed in this category: sampling as a means of production, conceptual sampling, and sampling as a social act. I will explain the particular sampling strategies behind these notions later.

There is a difference between general motives and motivations (why is a producer sampling at all?) and particular sampling motives and intentions (why did a producer sample a particular sound?). While the SSR has been developed with a focus on the latter, many procedural motives relate to the former. It can often be challenging to determine to which level a particular reason for sampling belongs (see discussion below). Using sampling as a compositional tool does not tell us much about the reasons why a particular sample has been selected. Moreover, procedural reasons might often appear supplementary and almost never primary. By dealing with political samples or samples that have been politicized, I identified, in most cases, deliberate reasons that could be categorized in either the first or the second approach (or both). Nevertheless, it makes sense to include this collective category in the model too. Although the reasons for sampling it encompasses might not be primary motives, they do play a role, and can at least partially explain sampling processes. However, to keep the model as simple as possible, I have decided to display this approach without further specifying it through sub-categories.

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To sum up, the SSR displays a total of eight categories simultaneously. The four main sampling approaches are represented by a particular color. The contextual approach is represented by five sections, while the other three approaches feature one section each. The importance of a particular category can be indicated by modifying the size of the respective section. The scale encompasses five unnumbered levels, at the first of which the whole section is left empty, and at the last of which all four segments of a single section are covered with the relevant color. This instrument allows us to place emphasis on the various reasons for sampling: the bigger the colored area, the more important the respective approach appears for the analyzed sampling strategy. Often, one category could be regarded as constitutive or prevalent. However, emphasizing particular categories does not mean prioritizing some reasons for sampling over others in the chronology of the production process.

Approaches to sampling can change over time.

The model proposed here certainly has its limits. One is its temporal inflexibility. Approaches to sampling can change over time. In the case of the accidental approach, another motive or intention arises as soon as the sampling material is consciously recognized. In many cases motives might even shift constantly. It is not possible to make such a transformation visible with the SSR. Although the model allows for the display of a range of reasons for sampling, rather than one single intention or motive, the prioritization of the categories captures a particular moment in the history of the analyzed track; ideally, this might be the moment of the track's release.

I will discuss such an example in the interlude in Chapter 11.

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I have now introduced the SSR as a useful and flexible tool for the analysis of processes of sampling. The model allows for a detailed display of reasons for sampling as a conglomerate of various overlapping motivations, motives, and intentions. I will now continue with a discussion of each of the four approaches and their subcategories, illustrating them with examples from my interviews. The aim of this chapter, finally, is to reach an overview on the question of why artists sample in experimental electronica.

Contextual Sampling: Driven by Meaning

Most of the producers I asked about their reasons for sampling offered at least some answers which fall under the contextual approach. For them, the extra-musical context of the samples played an important role when they selected external sound material and worked with it. This fact is neither a surprise nor significant, as I mostly interviewed the producers of tracks in which I had recognized or assumed that the sampling material contained strong (contextual) meaning.

When interpreting these answers, I was confronted with the

two aforementioned levels of reasons for sampling. The first level responds to the question of why a producer is sampling in general. The second level focuses on the motives and intentions behind the selection of a particular sample. Reasons from both levels overlap or are even superimposable, and it is thus often challenging or even impossible to properly distinguish between them. During the interview process, producers constantly switched from describing their general sampling approaches to underlining them with concrete examples and explaining particular sampling motives and intentions. Conversely, it is often not possible to take these motives and intentions, explained in relation to concrete examples, as general reasons for sampling. This problem is further complicated by the fact that it is not possible to detect an exclusive chain of causality: I cannot tell whether I do something because of A, or do it because of B with A as the consequence (or the premise) of B. To deal with this problem, I have decided to establish two different categorizations on two levels of generalization. To precisely explain the reasons behind a particular sampling process we must always argue on both levels and simultaneously use both suggested categorizations.

The first level proposes a distinction between three general and overlapping fields of sampling motives. The second level is displayed in the SSR. The perspectives assembled here have been developed mainly based on the analysis of sampling strategies behind particular tracks.

Inspiration, Communication, and Content: Sampling Motives
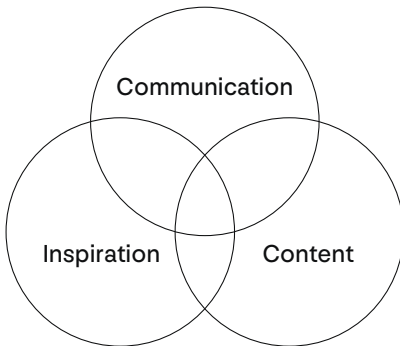
Figure 5.2: Overlapping fields of general motives behind contextual sampling

Figure 5.2 illustrates three general fields of sampling motives. Producers sample out of communicational motives[5] (they want to express or convey a message, a concept, or a story by using particular samples); they sample because of a special interest in the

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5   I speak about motives here to indicate the general character of this level. When speaking about more concrete reasons as part of the SSR, I will rely on the terms motivation and intention (see n2 above).

topical content with which the sampled material is connected; and they sample because they are simply inspired by the source material. The overlapping circles in the figure indicate that these fields are not exclusive: a producer can act out of more than one motive simultaneously—and they often do.

General Motive 1: Inspiration

The first field describes instances where a producer chooses a sample because they are inspired by particular source material. Such an inspiration can be vague and hard to grasp, or it can be concrete: sound material can trigger associations, thoughts, and memories which, in turn, become reasons for processing the material in question. Often, and as distinct from the other two fields, the meaning that a sample brings from its source context does not play any further role in the sampling process. An example of this comes from Katie Gately, who in my interview described her process of selection as partly relying on extra-musical dimensions: "If a sample is texturally exciting and has strong meaningful associations then it becomes overwhelmingly seductive to work with" (Liechti 2017c).[6] She further specified what it is that attracts her when sampling sounds:

> *The samples I gravitate towards tend to be of two kinds. First are the striking sounds. The ones that take me out of my daily life and inspire the possibility of a bigger, imaginary world. Second are the ones that feel very close, personal and overtly emotionally expressive. (Ibid.)*

Both kinds of samples described by Gately trigger extra-musical associations and memories, which is why she processes them in her tracks. The first kind of sounds trigger associations that are more abstract and fictional. These sounds inspire her to think about the conception of a "bigger, imaginary world." However, the second group of sounds relates to concrete and personal memories, especially from childhood. In this way, Gately uses sampling as a quasi-psychological tool for treating biographical experiences, as I have illustrated elsewhere (Liechti 2017c). Gately processed these samples neither because she wanted to communicate something, nor because she was interested in the topical content connected with them.

Ian McDonnell, the producer behind <u>one of the case studies in this book</u>, provides another example. When sampling, his aim is to add "richness" to the composition, as he told me:

> *Often, the original sound you intended to record is not the most interesting thing. It's like sculpture in a way—*

The first field describes instances where a producer chooses a sample because they are inspired by particular source material.

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6   I have edited and published some of my interviews in the series "Sampling Stories" on Norient (Liechti 2016a). When this is the case, I directly refer to these sources by conventional in-text citation.

starting with a dense sound and then carving it to reveal something else. I suppose that is why I like to sample— good samples are so rich, in a way that purely synthe- sized sound is sometimes not (…). But the layers of sonic possibilities contained in one sample, and also the layers of meaning—cultural, geographical, physical, personal, where you sampled it, what that sample means, and what it means to manipulate it—give it a richness I find very at- tractive.

I used to enjoy using really messed up samples (maybe inspired by Aphex Twin!), but not so much anymore. Now I am looking for samples with more interesting humanitar- ian, spiritual or political resonances.

Accordingly, a perfect sample should not only contain a vari- ety of "sonic possibilities"—this would fall under the material ap- proach—but also various "layers of meaning." The primary intention here is an additive one: it is about adding extra-musical elements to the composition. What is important is that the samples have differ- ent layers of meaning, which enrich the composition itself as much as the process of composition. This richness in the given sampling material inspires the producer to work with it.

Both examples show a close relationship to the material ap- proach: the border between material and contextual reasons is indeed fluid here. In many cases, aesthetic reasons for choosing a sample might be even more important. In summary, extra-musical meaning plays a role in the field of "inspiration," but it is not primary. Even more than that: as soon as interest in the extra-musical content grows, the process leaves the realm of vague inspiration, and one of the other two fields might be more appropriate to de- scribe the strategy in question.

Inspiration is an essential reason behind many sampling processes: to sample means to be inspired by sound.

Almost all of the case studies in this book show ele- ments of inspiration. This might show that inspiration is an essential reason behind many sampling processes: to sample means to be inspired by sound material. However, in most cases, another field ultimately becomes more crucial. There is one case study in which the field of inspiration is of paramount importance ("Perversas") and another in which I could not identify any substantial reason in this field ("STABILIZED, YES!").

General Motive 2: Communication

Sampling is further used to express or convey something. The communicated "something" can range from a vague reference point or a political message to a more elaborate story or broader concept. In most cases, the receiver of this act of communication is the potential listener, but this does not have to be the case. It is

also possible for producers to include statements or messages in their tracks without making them obvious or recognizable to the listener. In these cases, the communicative act remains unfinished (such as in "kenats" by Lara Sarkissian) or is intentionally self-addressed to the producer's persona.

The inclusion of reference points has already been described by Ptyl. He told me that the sounds he uses seek to remind "people of something specific such as other songs, a time, persons, or anything else" (Liechti 2016b). He understands sounds as "allusions" and considers them to be "bookmarks": "Sampling allows the listener to go to the origin and to learn some stuff." Similarly, San Ignacio considers samples to be "epigraphs (a symbolic and clearly well-used fragment, with a mainly inspirational purpose)." He simultaneously links back to the first general motive mentioned: inspiration.

Mauro Guz Bejar, the producer of the case study "Libres," also aims to construct a message through sampling. He understands "sampling as a weapon of expanding or remembering a message." Similar to Guz Bejar, producers often use sampling as an active strategy for the expression of political opinions.[7] Another representative of this strategy is Bonaventure. Through sampling, the producer aims not least to "be part of conversations," as she explained:

> *I'm basically using music and samples to make sure that the politics are also in the clubs and in the mouths of people that are younger and I think it's also super important to use the sonic heritage to talk about subjects that are a little bit more serious. And yeah, I came to realize that it's not only about partying and having fun and I think this project also allows me to be part of conversations in a way. Because I'm not doing any vocals. It's not really my style actually to talk about this kind of stuff, but through the music, I could also reach out to people.*

Sampling as a tool to disseminate opinions or to take part in conversations and discourses is also important for other producers, such as Chino Amobi: "In working with these well-known sounds, I open spaces for diverse, dialectic, and controversial interpretations; I raise questions and inspire discussions both small and large" (Amobi 2015). Similarly, Mauro Guz Bejar also talked about sampling as "a way to agree with some ideas."

In the quotation above, Bonaventure pointed to a characteristic aspect of electronic popular music in particular: the absence of the singing voice, or the lack of more elaborate lyrics. Sampling steps into this breach, and is widely used as a strategy for replacing lyrics. Ptyl mentioned that in some cases the "sample will actually serve

Producers often use sampling as an active strategy for the expression of political opinions.

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7   These distinctly political strands of sampling have been repeatedly addressed by sampling scholars, especially in the field of hip hop. Théberge, for example, referred to rap, where sampling practices can "become a form of political action and empowerment" (Théberge 1997, 205).

as part of the message of the song and sometimes even replace lyrics" (Liechti 2016b). For Dapper Dan, sampling is "a means of creating an environment in which an intensity beyond the limits of articulation can be achieved." This aspect becomes apparent in the case studies, particularly in Vika Kirchenbauer's "STABILIZED, YES!."

Dr. Das also uses sampling as a political tool for communication. He understands sampling as "an act of militancy—a commentary on how it felt to be second generation 'migrants,' and a reaction to prejudice and cultural exclusion" (Liechti 2017b). Dapper Dan regards sampling "as a fundamentally political act" and a "means of articulating politics." He further considers sampling to be a tool for "writing history." This political motivation corresponds with the notion of the "archive," which was mentioned from time to time during the interviews. Establishing an archive through sampling can be considered a highly political project, as Alice Aterianus-Owanga (2016) illustrates in her case study of Gabon. Beyond the field of experimental electronica, Jamaican dancehall duo Equiknoxx also use sampling for the purposes of documentation, as described in an interview with FACT Magazine:

> *[Jordan] Chung believes that there is something meaningful in the simple act of recording your surroundings, namely as an antidote to the horrors of the human-made world. "We live in an age where we're able to do these things and it's important that if the average man feels like he wants to capture this thing just to be a part of his soul or even to shape the world, it's important that this person is able to do it – even for future generations to have these things for reference," he says. "What a particular street in Jamaica sounds like now might sound different in the next ten years and the man that recorded that just for his own fulfilment or joy… they might even end up in the national library one day." (Welsh 2017)*

Among my interviewees, Lara Sarkissian perhaps best exemplifies the adoption of such a strategy. She uses sampling as a deliberate "way of archiving and accessing sounds" from her Armenian heritage.

Many producers sample by directly addressing the contextual meaning of their source material. Others use their samples more symbolically, aiming to combine a larger number of samples to express or convey a greater concept. Producer LXV, for example, described a sampling approach in which samples are "intentionally obscured from their original context" but nevertheless "convey ideas that lead to a greater concept as a whole." The producer aims "to create an environment based on a conceptual worldview as opposed to directly connecting multiple physical locations on a surface level." Brood Ma and Ital likewise described the use of samples in service to greater concepts. Brood Ma mentioned that "a

Sampling is widely used as a strategy for replacing lyrics.

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lot of the samples I use are exploring, or trying to disassemble, the idea of masculinity" (Simshäuser 2017, 43)[8], while Ital connected sampling to the increasing amount of information available online:

> *At the time, I had the feeling (and still do today, although I'm more used to it) of information and the web insidiously encroaching on every aspect of human existence, and detcided to give voice to this by weaving lots of weird, semi-corrupted, often time-stretched mp3 sounds into the fabric of the album.*

The construction of a story could also be included in this category. Matthew Herbert feels that when he is sampling (mostly highly political) sound material "it's storytelling after all." A similar approach, although perhaps more personal and less political, was described by Dasychira:

> *With field recordings on my iPhone, I get to illustrate my daily existence, from my morning commute to Manhattan to going outside with friends. Sampling is the way I craft stories out of my music. (…) I construct often visual metaphors out of samples and sounds to tell stories that are somewhat autobiographical.*

I have so far discussed communicative sampling motives where the listeners are potentially addressed through concrete reference points, messages, concepts, ideas, or stories.[9] Beyond this, communication with the listener can also be established through more abstract elements such as experiences, memories, atmospheres, and spaces. Dapper Dan described trying to picture a particular atmosphere that he experienced when growing up, as "a form of reaching out to someone who can articulate that experience too." James Whipple, featured in one of the case studies later, uses samples to "create or replicate different spaces and transitions between spaces." He emphasized the communicational intent behind this process: "You can play with the subtleties of hearing because you're creating different spaces that the listener unconsciously or consciously situates himself in when they're listening."

This section has assembled a broad range of communicative conceptions of sampling. With regard to this study, it might be especially tempting to assume similar conceptions due to its focus on political material. However, the case studies will show that communicative motives are not always key. On the contrary: I identified such motivations as primary in only two tracks ("STABILIZED, YES!" and "Libres"). In two tracks, other fields are of higher significance ("Perversas" and "kenats"), while

Communicative motives are not always key.

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8   Here I quote Brood Ma from an article in *The Wire* instead of from my own interview data, as this quotation summarizes more convincingly the point I am making.

9   I use the word "potentially" to point to the remark at the beginning of this section: that there are also cases where these communicative elements remain fully or partially concealed for the listener.

in one track, I could not identify such a motive at all ("Methy Imbiß"). This observation echoes Jean-Jacques Nattiez (1990, 17), who argues that the sphere of "the poietic [the process of creation] is not necessarily destined to end in communication."

General Motive 3: Content

The third general motive uses sampling to (critically) engage with materials, topics, subjects, or positions. Producers don't just sample because a particular sample sounds good, because it inspires them, or because they want to convey a message through it. They also sample because they want to engage with the context that the sample comes from. The strategies assembled here do not exclude the aim to communicate, or to choose samples because they inspire the compositional process. However, at least in the first instance, the extra-musical content of the sampling material is primary. Producers sample because they are *interested* in particular layers of meaning the samples bring along, and because they seek a more elaborate *engagement* with these layers.

Interestingly, I cannot draw many quotations from my interviews to illustrate this field. Most of the answers that I will quote contain traces of communicational intents. The banality of this category might be one possible explanation for this lack of data. Being simply interested in a topic seems a very banal explanation, at least at first glance. As a consequence, many producers might not be aware of this reason, and it was not mentioned during the interviews. Reasons for sampling may also change during the process of sampling. Having started with not much more than a general interest in a context or topical area, the sampling intention might morph towards a communicative message as the process progresses.

The "content" category is important to consider particularly because it evolved out of the case studies featured in this book. Vika Kirchenbauer said that sampling allows her to "engage with material in a critical manner." It is the "deconstruction" of musical source material through sampling that finally allowed her to critically engage with themes of colonialism, power, and oppression. James Whipple, meanwhile, included war footage from Eastern Ukraine in his track "Methy Imbiß" because he was deeply interested in the political events of the time when he was producing his first album.

Especially when sampling historical material, a choice of sample can often be explained with a general interest in the aspects of history being sampled. In the existing academic literature, the importance of time to the technique of sampling has been constantly emphasized. Simon Waters (2000, 64), for example, considers sampling a "tool of time

Producers sample because they are interested in particular layers of meaning the samples bring along, and because they seek a more elaborate engagement with these layers.

manipulation," and Simon Reynolds (2011, 313) describes it as "a mixture of time travel and séance." Reynolds is pointing to an unusual characteristic of sampling: it can bring together people and locations from different time periods that could not meet in real life.[10] Among my interviewees, Arash Azadi referred to sampling as "a doorway to exploring different musical cultures." For him one of the main uses of sampling is "to bring [together] musical quotations from different cultures and different time periods." Others, such as DJ Kala, tended to indulge in some sort of nostalgia through sampling: "I sampled (…) to add bits of nostalgia from my surroundings growing up." Like Reynolds, DJ Kala pointed to a metaphysical understanding of sampling: "You can also view the sample as something from the past being resurrected, giving it new life."

The engagement with one's own identity and the tracing of different spaces of belonging is a more personal form of engagement with history. Researchers have argued that rap producers used sampling to express a Black cultural identity in sound (Rose 1994, Demers 2003). In any case, sampling seems to be predestined to engage materially with various forms of belonging and identities through sound. Among my interviewees, this was repeatedly understood as a significant motivating force behind the use of the technique. Dr. Das referred to sampling as "a means of accessing sounds from—and therefore expressing our relationship to—the cultures of our parents" (Liechti 2017b). Among the case studies featured in this book, Lara Sarkissian was most prominent in articulating this, describing how she samples sounds from Armenian cultural history as a way of rooting herself in a diasporic community.

Finally, Paul Théberge (1997, 205), referring to Tricia Rose's (1994) pioneering study on Black rap, describes sampling as "a form of 'dialogue' with the past." This interpretation corresponds with my interviews, in which Dapper Dan, for example, described sampling as "a way of paying respects to the history," and Bonaventure emphasized its function as homage: "I feel like sampling is just a beautiful way to give homage to artists that were there before. I think it's also a beautiful way to acknowledge work that has been done so far."

This section has illustrated the three distinct general sampling motives, whereby the selection and processing of samples can be guided by communicative aims, inspirational impulses, or topical interests. As the case studies will show, the sampling process is mostly shaped by a combination of at least two of these fields. This categorization allows for a first and rough description of sampling

10   When describing the sampling practice of techno producer Hans Nieswandt, Jochen Bonz likewise describes sampling as an anachronistic process that enables a medium where people with all sorts of positions and attitudes can meet (Bonz 2008, 110). By taking a Reynolds quotation as a point of departure, Michail Exarchos (aka Stereo Mike) offers a fascinating comparison between sample-based music and the art form of performance magic (Exarchos 2019).

practices. In the next step, we must concern ourselves with the more specific motivations and intentions behind sampling processes.

From Active to Strategic: Perspectives in Sampling Intentions

By analyzing the basic track pool of this study and evaluating the interviews I conducted, I have developed five main perspectives in sampling intentions (active, narrative, neutral, personal, and strategic) and one sub-perspective (solidary). These are subcategories of the contextual approach, displayed in red in the SSR. Table 5.2 provides both an overview on the perspectives and examples of the intentions and motives they encompass. I will now continue by illustrating each perspective in alphabetical order, with examples from my interviews.

Perspective	Example Motives and Intentions
active	to comment, to criticize, to protest; to provide alternative perspectives; to communicate a specific (political) message or statement; to document, to archive; to construct messages
solidary	to show solidarity with minorities; to sensitize; to raise awareness or funding; to speak for someone; to give voice to somebody
narrative	to express an emotion or a feeling; to open, create, or build (new) spaces, (new) worlds, or (new) moods; to spatialize; to craft stories and narratives
neutral	to be interested in the sample and its contextual meaning; to be fascinated by certain material or themes; to capture a particular moment; to contextualize
personal	to position within places, spaces, times, or communities; to discuss issues of personal biography and questions of identity; to express belonging; to recall or reimagine memories
strategic	to gain attention, a wider audience, financial success and/or recognition; to position within a certain genre, scene, or tradition; to feel part of something; to connect with other people; to provoke

Table 5.2: Five perspectives in contextual sampling intentions

(a) The Active Perspective

The first perspective combines active motives and intentions, such as sampling to convey a (political) message, statement, or opinion. Within this perspective, producers comment, criticize, or protest on—in particular—political issues and subjects. Through sampling, they document and archive such issues, and they present alternative perspectives, or "dialectic and controversial interpretations," as Chino Amobi (2015) puts it. In this perspective, samples are predominantly used to communicate. In the case studies which follow, the active perspective plays a key role in the analyses of Vika Kirchenbauer's "STABILIZED, YES!," Lara Sarkissian's "kenats," and Mauro Guz Bejar's "Libres."

Within this perspective, producers comment, criticize, or protest on political issues and subjects.

In terms of examples beyond the case studies, I must once

again cite the example of Matthew Herbert. As Paul Harkins shows, Herbert "uses the digital sampler as the basis for political statements about capitalism, globalization, and consumerism" (Harkins 2016, 243). In most cases, Herbert's sampling strategies are obvious and clearly communicated. Regarding the present perspective under discussion, we could establish the following general rule: the less obvious a sample appears, the more other perspectives of the SSR—such as the neutral and personal perspectives—need to be considered. However, I still categorize sampling strategies as at least partially "active" as long as they contain clear political messages, even if they are fully or partially concealed. In Herbert's conversation with Harkins, the producer recounted such a case:

> *There's an opportunity to smuggle those sounds into a Eurovision song contest. I did the sounds in between the films when Russia hosted it [in 2009] so I had to come up with one for Israel and they had all these happy skateboarders in Israel. I was like I can't just pretend that Israel is one happy skateboarding family so I had the sounds of these gunshots and Palestinian homes being bulldozed. You can still hear it. I can't believe I got away with it. You can hear it all. It's pretty great to be subversive on that sort of scale but I think the important thing is it's music first. It should draw people in. (Matthew Herbert after Harkins 2016, 245)*

This sampling strategy could be interpreted as a silent protest or a way of salving one's own conscience. One could argue that the sampling strategy lost its concealed character as soon as Herbert talked about it in public. However, in sharp contrast to his usually far more active communication regarding the sources and origins of his sampling material, Herbert still refuses to discuss this case. Beyond Harkins's dissertation, no further information on this sampling strategy is available.[11] I assume from this that there are more concealed sampling strategies, in the work of Matthew Herbert and others, that nonetheless contain political messages and could be attached to the active perspective.

(b) The Solidary Perspective

Because this study focuses on political sampling strategies, it is understandable that the active perspective is emphasized more than others. Due to this focus, the active perspective is the only of my categories for which I will introduce a subcategory. When asking about sampling intention in my interviews, a solidary perspective often came up. This category encompasses sampling strategies by which producers aim to raise awareness for the position of minorities.

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11   In our conversation, Herbert mentioned just one blog entry where he had discussed this strategy. (Seemingly there was at least one further interview—the one with Harkins.) However, I was not able to find the blog entry nor any other mention of the case on the internet. See Chapter 2 on methodical challenges and limitations for a further discussion of this example.

The producers do not (or only partly) belong to these groups. If they considered themselves to fully belong to these groups, the personal perspective might be more appropriate to describe their strategy. The solidary perspective will be addressed in the analysis of Mauro Guz Bejar's "Libres."

A further example can be found in the recording project *#Rojava*, initiated in early 2016 by female:pressure, a global network for women in electronic music. The project description from their own website reads as follows:

> *This campaign primarily aims at raising awareness around the resistance movement currently taking place in the cantons of #Rojava (located in northern Syria), where women participate on all levels of decision making and building a new society from scratch, with built-in social, racial and ethnic justice, religious freedom, ecological principles and gender equality. Despite vast cultural and historical differences between Western countries and Kurdistan, the campaign uses art & music to bridge these and build long-lasting real-life connections based on dialogue and respect, involving as many Kurdish musicians and activists as possible. (female:pressure 2016)*

One component of the campaign was the compilation *Music, Awareness & Solidarity w/ Rojava Revolution* (2016), released by female:pressure on Bandcamp. The digital sale revenues from this project were donated to a London-based association of Rojava women. One of the aims of the project was thus to raise funding. Some of the tracks on the compilation are shaped by the sampling of sounds from the Rojava region and from women fighters—mostly sourced from documentary movies accessible online.

In "Afraid of Women," one of the tracks on this album, sound artist Olivia Louvel sampled stomping boots, fighters arming their weapons, shouts, and voices. These sounds create for the listener a kind of drill ground atmosphere. For Louvel, it was important to sample the voices of the women fighters whom the project was addressing: "It was about giving those women a voice so I had to use their voices obviously" (Liechti 2018a). This was also the main motivation behind the track: "In the end there was a purpose. The purpose was not to make some new music, it was to give those women a voice." Louvel used her own voice in the piece—for the whispered parts in the track's introductory first half—as a way of appropriating the sampled material: "I am making my own object out of all these objects."

Such a project raises some ethical questions that might be characteristic of the solidary perspective. Why is a sound artist who has never been to Rojava, and who has no closer connection to the context, sampling such material? How does the artist legitimate their strategy? Does the track glorify fighting women? Does

This category encompasses sampling strategies by which producers aim to raise awareness for the position of minorities.

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such a project perhaps even glorify war? During the production process, Louvel confronted herself with these kinds of questions. In our conversation, she emphasized the importance of the moment when working on such a project:

> *What is my legitimacy in appropriating those documentaries, working from found footage to make an audiovisual [artwork] about these women in Rojava? I had a similar approach for the project "o, music for haiku" using haiku by Japanese poet Basho even though I have never been to Japan… and I certainly do not speak Japanese. I used the material as a texture, composing with it. It is not my primary concern, if people think I should not be doing that. My approach is spontaneous. I am driven to talk about it so I just do it. I start on impulse… and then I question it afterwards. (Ibid.)*

kritzkom's track from the same compilation, "Inner March for Utopia", provides another example. When I contacted the producer via email, she told me about a sample of the Kurdish national anthem that she had processed in the track. As I could not recognize the anthem in the track, and as the producer has never spoken about the sample in public, I wanted to trace the sample directly in the Live files at her home studio. What we subsequently found was only one note of the anthem's melody, sustained and looped. In the final mix the sample almost disappears, adding just a touch of texture. However, the snippet is still important for the track, as it represents kritzkom's engagement with the topic of the women fighters in Rojava during the production process. In the end, the sample has survived as a kind of musical DNA: it is there, concealed, but when removed something seems to be missing. kritzkom herself considers the sample to be "kind of a 'pre-text,' a text that was there before the track and that has inspired it" (Liechti 2018b).

Both tracks illustrate the character of sampling strategies in the solidary perspective, once again ranging from obvious to concealed examples. These strategies aim to speak for someone or to give voice to somebody. They also raise controversial ethical questions that the producers deal with during or after the production process.

(c) The Narrative Perspective

This perspective covers sound clips that are used as compositional building blocks to express emotions or feelings, to spatialize, or to open, create, or build spaces, worlds, or moods. Samples are used here to craft stories and narratives. These stories could be abstract and fictional as well as realistic and referring to the real world. However, it should be noted that stories can also be told through sampling with an active or a personal perspective. Accordingly, reasons

Sampling is used to add atmosphere to a composition, to construct fictional spaces, or to enrich fictional stories.

for sampling are only categorized in the narrative perspective if they do not fit into one of the other categories. J.G. Biberkopf spoke about "creating soundscapes" and Future Daughter about using "emotional connections associated with sound" when describing strategies with such a narrative perspective. In these cases, sampling is used to add atmosphere to a composition, to construct fictional spaces, or to enrich fictional stories.

James Whipple often samples within this category. In his track "Nemorum Incola" (on the 2017 album *Hesaitix*) he sampled jungle sounds in order to frame "things into little scenes." In the track "Mimic" from the same album, the producer processed the sound of a recording device or microphone being pulled "out of a bag or something similar" as a "transition tool" to signal "the next part of something." In "Kritikal & X," from his debut album *Piteous Gate* (2015), Whipple sampled an argument between two *Counter-Strike* gamers from a YouTube video, using it to support a particular "street scene" in the style of a Shakespearian play he had in mind (Liechti 2017i).

Another example is a sampling project from RE:VIVE. For the compilation *010* (2016), this initiative from the Dutch Institute for Sound and Vision invited artists to work with archival sounds from the city of Rotterdam. Some sampled the bells of the city's biggest church, the Grote of Sint-Laurenskerk. But these producers didn't aim to communicate something about this particular church so much as evoke a certain atmosphere. Roly Porter, for example, noticed that

> there is something in the nature of church bells that helps you widen your perspective on a city. (...) Often, because the environment is built up, it is hard to look beyond your current position in a city, but church bells pull you into a larger perspective. In the track, I attempted to process the bells in a way that gave the impression of the sound being stretched over an increasing distance, beginning in close vicinity of the church and then opening out as though hearing them from the other side of the city, or traveling away from them. *(Liechti 2017e)*

Meta described sampling the bells as a way to bring emotion into his track:

> When I was creating my track, "Eva," I knew I wanted to use the bells for a melody to bring emotion to the dense industrial sounds I'd been working with. The bells were the best option to create some tones with. Adding these tones boosted the track to the "greater power" it needed. The track no longer sounded like it was just a machine, it had become a machine with divine power. *(Ibid.)*

Both Roly Porter and Meta used the church bell sample to set up a particular atmosphere. Roly Porter spatialized his track, while Meta used the extra-musical connotations of the sound to "humanize"

his composition. A further example of narrative sampling is Chino Amobi's EP *Airport Music for Black Folk* (2016). In the EP's tracks, named after European cities, he sampled sounds such as gunshots and field recordings from airports to express a desired feeling: "I used sounds in each song which I felt reflected the mood I experienced while visiting each city."

The producer Brood Ma told me that he has sampled debates from the Houses of Parliament in London, though he declined to mention the exact tracks in which he processed this material. Because the samples were processed in a concealed way, it is thus not possible to identify the tracks in question. When asked about the motivation behind sampling these sounds, the producer sketched a sampling strategy that uses sound material not to express a (political) message or commentary (active perspective), but to convey a certain mood or atmosphere—in this case the cacophonous character of the sample material:

> *If you were ever to watch Prime Minister's question time in the U.K. and then see the parties screaming at each other (...), it's like a cacophonous thing which I kind of like. (...) It's almost like a horror effect in some of the stuff I did. I'm not so into sampling things so directly, you know like political speeches and things like this. I think my music is quite about feeling something, so I will take those signifiers and just make them more kind of textural than directly have like, as I said, a political speech or whatever, because I want music to be a bit more timeless as well.*

Extra-musical layers of meaning play a role in all of these examples. The bells had to come from a church from Rotterdam; Chino Amobi's samples convey an abstract feeling, as do the fervid and cacophonous British parliament debates sampled by Brood Ma. However, the producers are not tempted to construct a concrete message out of these layers of meaning (which would align them with the active perspective). Instead, they use these sounds as a point of departure and a compositional building block. In the case studies, the narrative perspective is reflected most strongly in Ian McDonnell's "Perversas."

A sample's material appearance can also help to express a certain atmosphere or feeling. In the narrative perspective in particular, it is sometimes challenging to distinguish between a contextual and a material approach: has a particular sample been selected because of its (extra-musical) meaning or because it sounds the way it does? If the latter is the case, we would need to highlight the material approach in the SSR in addition to, or instead of, the narrative perspective (as a subcategory of the contextual approach).

(d) The Neutral Perspective

The next perspective encompasses all contextual reasons for sampling that approach their source material in a neutral manner. There is no active or strategic motivation, personal connection, or narrative intention behind them. (Of course, this perspective might change in the course of the sampling process.) This perspective is invoked whenever a producer engages with particular material out of pure interest. Interest in and fascination for the material guides the process in the first instance. Without a deeper analysis of the sampling processes in question, it is difficult to come up with striking examples here. This is because categorizing a sampling strategy under this perspective is a mostly speculative exercise. In most cases, more information on reasons for sampling is needed before one can decide whether the neutral perspective is in play.

This perspective is invoked whenever a producer engages with particular material out of pure interest.

The duo Lakker, one of whose members is Ian McDonnell (who is featured in one of the case studies), provides one example. For their album *Struggle & Emerge* (2016), the duo were invited by the aforementioned Dutch initiative RE:VIVE to process archival sounds documenting the relationship between the Dutch people and the sea. I suggest a neutral perspective here because, given their lack of personal relation to the topic, it is reasonable to imagine that the producers might have been purely interested in working with these sounds and their contexts (leaving aside their being motivated by the opportunities the project itself offers, which would be covered either in the strategic perspective or in the procedural approach). An in-depth example of a sampling strategy shaped by the neutral perspective will be provided in the case study of James Whipple's "Methy Imbiß."

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(e) The Personal Perspective

In this perspective, samples are processed because they relate to producers' biographies and contexts. Sampling is applied in order to address or discuss personal experiences, articulate identities, or express belonging. In this perspective, sampling is about positioning within places, spaces, times, or communities, closely related to the producer's own identity. This perspective allows producers to incorporate their own lived experience into their music.

This perspective allows producers to incorporate their own lived experience into their music.

Ukrainian producer Zavoloka, for example, made recordings on Maidan square in Kyiv during winter 2013–14, originally with the intention of documenting the ongoing revolution in her home country. She had no specific aim to further process the recordings, until Russia's annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in spring 2014 left her with the urge to position herself as Ukrainian. In 2014 she produced the record *Volya* (2014) out of samples from her field

recordings. I asked her about the moment when she finally decided to work on these tracks:

> *Some weeks later Russia started the war with Ukraine. That was the moment when I thought that I, as a Ukrainian, have to say something. I then simply called this EP "freedom" (English for* Volya*). In a way this was like a meditation for me, kind of my personal fight. Usually I never do this kind of political art.* (Liechti 2017d)

Bonaventure, meanwhile, repeatedly deals with the topic of race on her debut EP *FREE LUTANGU* (2017). Her engagement with this subject is motivated by her multi-ethnic identity as a mixed-race individual; indeed, it was her experience of racism, alongside a tragic death in her family, that brought her into music. Since the beginning of her musical career, the producer has thus used music in general and sampling in particular as a vehicle to discuss questions of racism and identity (Kretowicz 2016). In the track "Mulatre" ("mulatto"), for example, she mixed samples of Black and white origin:

> *During my upbringing, a lot of people were actually asking me if I feel more white or more Black, which is a question that is super alarming. (...) People around me really ask me to choose somehow. I felt last year that I need to do a track whose words really say fuck you to that and where I could mix everything. Like very white stuff that influences me but also stuff from the Black culture and also stuff that is more generally pop music.*

In "Mulatre," she mixed together, among other samples, a snippet from Mozart's famous choral piece "Lacrimosa," Malian singer Oumou Sangaré, a traditional choir from Benin, Beyoncé, and Michael Jackson. While these samples are all processed in an audible way, Bonaventure pursues a different strategy on "Supremacy," the first track on the same album. Here, the main sample, a political speech by the Black author, activist, and artist Sister Souljah, is also fully audible. But it contrasts with another sample in the drums: the sounds of dead bodies falling from a roof onto a floor, taken from a documentary on the Rwandan civil war and genocide. These samples remain completely concealed, while again dealing with the topic of race.

Other sampling strategies shaped by an engagement with personal identities and biographies have been mentioned in the preceding sections, among them Katie Gately, with her use of sampling as a quasi-psychological tool for treating biographical experiences (Liechti 2017c); Dasychira ("I construct often visual metaphors out of samples and sounds to tell stories that are somewhat autobiographical"); and Dr. Das (for whom sampling is "a commentary on how it felt to be second generation 'migrants'"). In the case studies which follow, this perspective is most clearly adopted by Lara Sarkissian in "kenats" and Mauro Guz Bejar in "Libres."

(f) The Strategic Perspective

In the final of our five perspectives, sampling is a strategic tool. Samples are chosen because the producer hopes to gain attention, to reach a wider audience, or to attain recognition and/or financial success. A typical example would involve sampling a famous hookline to secure a surefire hit.[12] However, the desire to gain attention need not be limited to the commercial sphere. By strategically including specific signature sounds, producers place a track in a certain scene or genre and try to connect with the communities around them. Producer Mauro Guz Bejar referred to these kinds of samples as "anchor points for people to gather around." Bonaventure regarded samples as "starting points into conversations." Moreover, she added that sampling allows her to feel part of communities:

> *I started to sample because I was really looking for this community feeling, I was looking for ways of giving tribute to people that I'm listening to and all that I was listening to. (…) I really like to use that also as starting points into conversations. And yeah, it also gives me the feeling that I'm part of the community.*

Well-known samples that are used in this sense include the amen break (extensively processed in drum and bass), the air horn (dancehall and reggae), and the Ha-sample (vogue/ballroom).[13] Ian McDonnell told me that a similar strategy was important in the earlier stages of his career:

> *In the past, I've often used samples, say from jungle music or from reggae samples in jungle music, to feel part of that whole world of music, which I had no direct connection to, but which I loved and wanted to be part of in some way.*

> *When I started out, I really wanted to position myself within the dance music, club music world; that's what I felt most passionate about. And I wanted to use these samples that were part of the language of electronic dance music because I wanted to be part of that world. And I wanted it to be obvious. That's what it was. I wanted people to be drawn to the music, for that reason.*

Other strategies that could be included in the strategic perspective are more provocative or experimental. As DJ Empty, Matthew Herbert released a dance music record (*Meaningless*, 2017) consisting of samples of bombs, shells, and bullets. In an interview, he explained his motivation behind the record: "I wanted to see if people would just dance to anything. What impact would it have?

Samples are chosen because the producer hopes to gain attention, to reach a wider audience, or to attain recognition and/or financial success.

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12   Strategies like this become more relevant in mainstream popular music. Déon (2011, 285) and Sinnreich (2010, 131, 168) refer to this practice.
13   For a history of the Ha-sample see Host (2012); for the amen break see, for example, Morey (2017, 185) or Harrison (2015).

Would anyone make inquiries? Nobody gave a shit" (Burkhalter 2015a, 187). In other words, Herbert strategically used samples to trigger reactions in the listener. In this case, attention was not guaranteed, but was rather the object of an experiment.

Finally, strategic sampling can also be applied negatively. That is to say, samples might not be used because the producer is worried about the attention they could attract, or any other unwanted reaction they might provoke. Sound artist Olivial Louvel, for example, processed the voice of a Kurdish woman fighter from the Syrian Rojava region in the aforementioned track "Afraid of Women." When the track was later broadcast by the BBC, Louvel had to cut the part with the sample. The producer recalled:

> *I did not have an exact translation of the Kurdish voice on the track's last minute. BBC have some regulations especially when it is a language that sounds Arabic and so they could not play the last part. They were probably worried it might contain a message of hate or something like that. (Liechti 2018a)*

Hence, the strategic perspective not only concerns producers who want to trigger desired reactions or gain attention, but also those who avoid samples or alter their use of them for fear of particular reactions or of losing attention. In many cases, such strategies might occur unconsciously. Assessing the strategic perspective might thus often rely on subjective interpretation. Many producers may not want to speak openly about strategic reasons for sampling, especially if they are motivated by economic considerations.

In the realm of political sampling, another potential strategy could be included here: propaganda. I will not discuss this highly controversial strategy further, as I cannot rely on suitable data. Indeed, this is the case for the entire strategic perspective, which is the only perspective that will not be present in the case studies below.

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After this detailed discussion of the contextual reasons behind sampling strategies, I will now turn to the other approaches featured on the SSR. In the case studies I will primarily rely on the contextual approach, meaning the other three approaches are not examined in the same depth. Doing this would require further studies with different methods and a different focus. However, as the case studies below illustrate, a sampling strategy can almost never be reduced to one single approach or perspective. Hence the bigger picture, including other relevant approaches, is crucial for a better and more complete understanding of the culture of sampling.

Material Sampling:
Like a Musical Instrument

When producers stated that they "try to look away from political and cultural meaning" (Future Daughter) when they sample, or that they "try to free material on which (….) [they] work from context which isn't musical" (Genetics & Windsurfing), they were mostly referring to the second approach in our schema of reasons for sampling: the material approach. Sampling, in this approach, is "sampling for musical reasons" (Mauro Guz Bejar) or "sonic reasons" (Ian McDonnell). This approach is primarily guided by an interest in the question "how does it sound," rather than "how was it made" (Tomutonttu). Future Daughter compared sampling to the use of a musical instrument:[14] "We see the computer as our main instrument, and to us, samples work as equal to sound from a traditional instrument." Ratkiller, speaking more generally, considers samples to be "separate notes." Such an understanding of sampling emphasizes the musical quality of a sample as key in the process of selection.

For a critical discussion of the term "material" see Chapter 2.

This approach is primarily guided by an interest in the question "how does it sound," rather than "how was it made."

I use the "material approach" to describe those sampling strategies that primarily deal with the musical or material aspects of samples. They are concerned with finding ways to conceal or ignore the layers of meaning, such as associations or references, that the sampling material brings along with it. Similarly, Joanna Demers (2010, 61) briefly mentions a "materialist approach toward sampling," describing "a natural consequence of a musical environment where all sounds are viewed as objects," and where solutions are developed to manage the associations that are brought to new works "from their original environment."

I have identified two main arguments made by my interviewees. Some argued that they sample because of particular qualities of the source material—mostly to do with its sound. Others argued that they sample to create something new within, or add something new to, the emerging composition. Inspiration (the first argument) and innovation (the second) can thus be regarded as two motives on a general level—comparable with the first-level categorization of the contextual approach illustrated earlier in this chapter. Material sampling reasons could conceivably be divided on a further, second level, according to parameters of musical quality such as harmony, melody, rhythm, timbre, and texture. However, as mentioned before, I will not focus on further categorization of the material approach in this study.

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14   Vanessa Chang (2009, 146) has emphasized the distinction between "sample-based music [that] uses sounds instrumentally" and "using instruments to make sounds."

(a) Inspiration: Sampling Because of Particular Sonic Qualities

J.G. Biberkopf described the process of sampling as a way to "bring out certain qualities" of the samples, while Future Daughter emphasized that they mainly put their "interest and energy into sonic characteristics." These "qualities" and "characteristics" distinguish the sampling material from sounds created by synthesis, as Arash Azadi explained: "Sampling for me is a way to capture sounds, motifs, phrases, or themes that are unique in character and also acoustically rich in a way that they stand [out] from common electronically produced sounds." Ian McDonnell echoed this point: "I suppose that is why I like to sample—good samples are so rich, in a way that purely synthesized sound is sometimes not."

On another occasion, when trying to describe what attracts him to samples, McDonnell referred to their "interesting sonic quality" or "layers of sonic possibilities." Genetics & Windsurfing, when describing a similar aspect, pointed to the "expressive and complex" nature of the sampled sounds, while Ptyl highlighted the importance of considering the entirety of sampling material: "I need certain sounds in their entirety" (Liechti 2016b).

All of these producers appreciate the possibility in sampling of considering a sound as a whole. Sampling allows them to take into account not just notable parameters like pitch, length, and volume, but further characteristics such as timbre and texture. Genetics & Windsurfing emphasized the ability to combine various sounds through sampling: "Thanks to the sampling method I have sound material formed in different ways in my sound structures." However, sonic parameters are not the only ones of interest to sampling producers. As Sufyvn illustrated, any other musical parameter could play a key role in the process of selection: "Most of the time, I'm only interested in the technical side of sampling, collecting sounds for only the melodic value, and a certain atmosphere that a sound can carry with it."

Sampling allows producers to take into account not just notable parameters like pitch, length, and volume, but further characteristics such as timbre and texture.

By referring to a "certain atmosphere" Sufyvn links back to the quality of sound. Furthermore, it becomes apparent that the category of "atmosphere" is not only relevant to the contextual approach (narrative perspective), but also to the material approach. It is challenging to clearly attribute it to either the contextual or the material approach. The more concretely a particular atmosphere is defined through contextual associations and/or linguistic descriptions, the more appropriate it might be to describe the sampling reason in question as contextual.

(b) Innovation: Sampling to Create Specific Tones

Other producers describe being motivated to sample by the process it enables. They emphasize the possibility of creating some-

thing out of samples, or of adding something new to the composition. Dasychira, for example, explained that "it's not all samples, but often synths combined with samples layered to create a specific tone." Similarly, Ian McDonnell is interested in particular tones: "[Samples] can add texture and tone in interesting ways." Dubokaj pointed to the creation of figures: "[Sampling] is never about quoting another artist. If anything, it brings flavor, or the motivation to create a figure out of it, or to let something develop out of it."[15] Finally, Brood Ma emphasized the creation of "weird layering or unexpected rhythms."

It lies in the nature of things that it is difficult to describe what is happening in the material approach, and that these descriptions must remain to a certain degree abstract. Hard-to-grasp factors such as intuition, feeling, and compositional instinct are even more important here than in the contextual approach. It also becomes clear that this second explanation (b, innovation) is somewhat similar to the first (a, inspiration). Once again, we are confronted with the problem of generalization when analyzing reasons for sampling: is a sample chosen because it can do something (create something new within, or add something to, the composition), or because it has a certain quality in its original form? This question might not be answerable, and in any case depends on whether one is focusing on the general or the particular level.

It lies in the nature of things that it is difficult to describe what is happening in the material approach, and that these descriptions must remain to a certain degree abstract.

Accidental Sampling: Unintended Consequences or Simple Availability

The third approach in the SSR regards the parameter of chance. It is the only of the four approaches to have been largely ignored by the academic literature so far. I have identified three examples of strategies in which chance plays a role.

(a) Unintended Consequences of the Recording Process

The first strategy has already been described by Paul Harkins—one of the few scholars to have conceptualized accidental sampling. He noted that the Edinburgh-based group Found used sounds that had been "captured accidentally during the recording process." These "unintended consequences" remained part of the compositions; the producers decided to "reshape or leave intact" these samples "rather than edit [them] out" (Harkins 2010a, 9). Among my own interviewees, hip hop producer Ibaaku provided a similar

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15   Own translation. Original quote: "Es geht mir nie darum, einen anderen Künstler zu zitieren. Wenn schon einen Flavor, oder eine Motivation, eine Figur zu kreieren daraus, oder etwas daraus heraus entstehen zu lassen."

example. In his track "Muezzin" (on *Alien Cartoon*, 2016) he sampled a Muslim call to prayer; accidentally, as became apparent during our conversations:

> *How did putting this sample into the track come about?*
> **Muezzins are part of the soundscape in my country. In general, they use rather rudimentary equipment: megaphones, bad microphones, or very bad speakers. You can hear them blast from miles away. But I didn't have to enter a mosque, it came to me naturally because I live in front of a mosque. So, I was deep in the creative process, experimenting, and it came by accident. The call slipped into the recording I was making at one point. I did not notice it at first. But when I heard it, I felt like I had to use it. I like accidents in music. It's my way of doing things. I love to let space for intuition.**
> *Does the muezzin sample carry a special meaning to you that goes beyond the circumstances of the production?*
> **At the end, there is always a meaning to these kinds of accidents. The muezzin sample fits so well because it sparks the idea of a spiritual ritual, which is the intention behind some of my music.** *(Liechti 2017f)*

Similarly, Matthew Herbert understands the practice of accidental sampling as an important part of his compositional process. In our conversation, he referred to his manifesto "P.C.C.O.M." ("Personal Contract for the Composition of Music"), written in 2005 and revised in 2011, which lists eleven self-imposed limitations to the selection of his sampling material.

> *I think nearly every time I sample something by accident and in my manifesto I wrote years ago it says I'm not allowed to edit sounds at the end because that's where you find extra information. (...) I'm really interested in all those extra noises because it tells you things. It tells you if somebody else was in the room, what the weather was like. I did some recording last week or a couple of weeks ago with a singer and I forgot to turn the heater off, so all the samples have a really strong *rrrrschrrr* [imitating the sound] sound over them and I was like "ah fuck we need do it all over again" and she said—and naturally it should be me saying this—she was like: "No, no, don't do that because that tells you that it was cold today you know?" You can hear that there were ticking noises in the studio because we were trying to keep warm and of course backed what we've done. (...) I had a friend that has a program that goes through it and removes everything unwanted, every plop, crackle, and hiss. And it's like photoshopping for me. It's like the death of audio somehow.*

Depending on one's <u>definition of sampling</u>, one might doubt whether these sound clips are samples at all, since they are instantly

recorded and do not stem from a previously existing recording. I nevertheless include these examples because the external sound materials are not only considered samples by the producer himself, but could also be perceived as such by listeners.

(b) Beyond Intention:
Conceptual Noise that Cannot Be Erased

A second form of accidental sampling arises when layers of sound are sampled without being the explicit focus of the producer's sampling act. In other words, a sound might be sampled for a particular reason, but editing during the production process might cause other layers of the sound to emerge or be brought into focus. Producer Ian McDonnell explained the accidental character behind "Emergo," from Lakker's album *Struggle and Emerge* (2016):

> There's another example on the Struggle & Emerge record where we have a kick drum in one of the tracks, "Emergo." And the kick drum came from a wind sound, like a white noise *fffft* [imitating the sound], from a recording of somebody on a boat. And in that wind sound there happened to be loads and loads of sub bass—it was a rough wind sound, with a rough mic sound and there were lots of low frequencies. So, when we were working with that sound we cut out the high frequencies until I realized it was a really nicely grounded sound that was quite like a kick drum, a sub bass heavy kick drum. That then became the kick of the particular track. It often happens that in the carving away of certain frequencies something will reveal itself that wasn't there initially. Or obviously it was there, you just didn't hear it.

Similarly, the producer Yearning Kru acknowledged that

> with any sample comes a whole weight of material that somehow shines through however manipulated the end result becomes. (...) With sampling it's more that you have to deal with the conceptual noise that can't be erased, and this leads to a creation beyond what was intended.

Amanda Sewell (2013, 38) discusses a similar case without explicitly describing it as accidental. In her example, the producer's focus was on a melody layer behind some sampled vocals; the vocals nevertheless remained part of the composition.

The degree of chance in these cases is always unclear. Especially as these sampling strategies are influenced by a producer's personal experience and intuition. Producers know which sounds might offer the chance to uncover "unexpected" sounds; they know where to expect "conceptual noise" (Yearning Kru). Accordingly, these strategies could be described as intentionally unintended.

A sound might be sampled for a particular reason, but editing during the production process might cause other layers of the sound to emerge or be brought into focus.

Ian McDonnell expressed it this way: "I've been doing it so long now that I'll often hear a sound [and] I go 'okay, I know there's more there that I'm not hearing.'"

Yearning Kru pointed to an important question: what comes beyond intention? This question points to a limitation of the SSR. What is missing—because it was not prevalent in the examined material—is a more elaborate discussion of the parameter of affect. As Richard Dyer (2007, 4) wrote, there is a coexistence of "self-consciousness" and "emotional expression." The SSR primarily explains sampling processes on a self-conscious level. The accidental approach is the only of our categories to acknowledge that sampling reasons might go beyond intention, too.

What comes beyond intention?

(c) Sampling Because of Simple Availability

A final accidental sampling strategy entails the sampling of sound simply because it is available. This happens, for example, when a song is sampled just because it was broadcast on the radio at the moment of recording. The particular song is therefore not sampled because it refers to a particular meaning or for its material appearance. It is sampled just because it's there. The track "Mish Aktar" (2016) by Muqata'a offers an example of this strategy:

> *The melodic samples I used are from random radio recordings I made during the production of the piece. Local radios in Palestine play a lot of the classical Arabic music "Tarab" and that is what I usually sample, but from vinyl. This time I decided to just turn on the radio and see what sounds I find, and this is what was recorded. So, the actual title of the track and name of artist are unknown to me.*

This form of accidental sampling also covers the accidental aspects identified in the case studies which follow. Three tracks sample material from YouTube (Lara Sarkissian's "kenats," Ian McDonnell's "Perversas," and James Whipple's "Methy Imbiß"). The selection of the sampling material was in every case more or less dependent on YouTube's algorithms. These algorithms ultimately defined what the producer could access when looking for particular material ("kenats"), or when spontaneously browsing the video platform ("Perversas" and "Methy Imbiß"). One could argue that chance is not at play here, as these algorithms are programmed and well-defined. However, I still consider this chance because the producer could not foresee what material they would encounter.

Procedural Sampling:
Conceptual, Utilitarian, and
Social Aspects

This final sampling approach is an amalgamation of various reasons for sampling which can be categorized as neither contextual nor material. More than the meaning or the quality of the sampled sounds, these sampling motivations touch on the characteristics, possibilities, or consequences that the process of sampling as such enables or implies. I have identified three main strands to this approach, covering conceptual, utilitarian, and social aspects.

(a) Conceptual Sampling

In my conversation with electronic noise duo Naked, they described sampling as a means to an end: "Our approach to sampling is functional, as a means to an end to portray our own ideas, or to paint our canvas. In a time of absolute political and social chaos, destruction as a means of creation feels essential." Sampling, for Naked, is a conceptual need: they sample because they see an essential importance in the act of destruction, which is inherent in every act of sampling. Sampling allows Naked to directly react to the political and social circumstances they live in. This motivation does not explain—at least not completely—why they have chosen a particular sample. It must instead be understood as a motivation on a general level. Naked sample because it allows them to conceptually integrate the act of destruction into their compositional practice.

Dasychira described a similar sampling motivation. Instead of reflecting a sociopolitical context, he sees sampling, with its heterogeneous character, as representing a personal mindset: "I get to create a multi-dimensional sonic context that feels like the most accurate representation of my creative headspace." Even more generally, bod [包家巷] pointed to the democratic potential of the production technique: "If me of all people can do that, then it's proof that anyone can do anything, that you don't have to be a suburban kid who grew up and started making music to be cool. I want to use this power for good, I guess."

(b) Utilitarian Sampling

Another strand of procedural sampling is utilitarian in nature. Joanna Demers (2010, 52) has previously introduced this label, which in my usage can encompass a broad range of different motivations. While Gan Gah was the only of my interviewees to directly refer to the comfort offered by sampling—"It makes the production job a

> *More than the meaning or the quality of the sampled sounds, these sampling motivations touch on the characteristics, possibilities, or consequences that the process of sampling as such enables or implies.*

little easier & facilitates the creative process"—other producers offered more specific reasons. Drew Daniel, from the sampling duo Matmos, mentioned his own lack of talent: "For me, the answer to the question 'why sampling?' is my incompetence, my musical incompetence. (…) It's a workaround for your own lack of talent or lack of musical ability."

In short, sampling allows producers to work with whatever instrument they want, regardless of whether they can play it or not. The same is true for the use of one's own voice, as I will explain in the concluding chapter. Sampling also solves problems of access, as the case study of Lara Sarkissian will illustrate. The producer reflected: "I tend to sample a lot of sounds of instruments that I do not have access to, or [to] people who play them."

Moreover, sampling abolishes economic barriers in musical composition. Sampling to save money—one no longer has to pay a whole orchestra—used to be a key motivation, at least in the early days of sampling, when Goodwin (1990) developed his thoughts on the technique. Since sampling has become a ubiquitous production practice, such motivations likely play a subordinate role. The only of my interviewees to cite this reason was Brood Ma: "I feel that sampling is often the fastest, most economical way to communicate an idea." Today, the relation between economic cost and the possibilities of sampling might even have reversed: following the first legal verdicts on copyright infringement, it has in some cases become more expensive to clear a sample than to order an exact replay of it.[16]

However, while sampling offers more freedom to the producer—in terms of musical ability, access, and budget—it can also be used to limit production possibilities. In digital production, the possibilities for music producers have become almost limitless. Looking for forms of limitation has thus become an important compositional step for many producers. Vika Kirchenbauer samples exclusively from a defined pool of material, and James Whipple uses samples as a "compositional crutch." Often, Whipple starts new compositions on top of old projects, sampling to avoid having to begin a new project with carte blanche: "It's hard for me to write on silence. I have to have something in the background to write on top of." At a certain point in the production process, he then discards these samples.

Similar strategies have been described by Harkins (2010a, 10) as an "additive approach" and by Morey as "start with a sample, then discard it" (Morey and McIntyre 2014, 53). I also observed this strategy in Dubokaj's production studio. When we looked for a sample that he thought he had sampled in a particular track, we discovered that the sample had, after a certain point, been excluded

Sampling allows producers to work with whatever instrument they want, regardless of whether they can play it or not.

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[16] For the practice of sample replay see Morey (2013; 2017, 266) or Sewell (2014a, 298).

from the project. However, the sample audibly influenced a new, self-played and self-recorded instrumental pattern (Liechti 2017a). Tomutonttu uses samples in a similar way:

> *Starting with samples is a fruitful way to end up in new musical situations that I would never arrive to by sitting at a piano for example. (...) A selection of sound is encouraged to inspire something new. The method is experimental so a lot of shit gets thrown away because of a lack of substance.*

These producers are aware that the process of sampling offers them new, unexpected sounds. (I described this reason for sampling as "innovation" in the previous section on the material approach.) They are thus forced to find creative ways to deal with these "new" sounds, as Yearning Kru explains: "The reason I like using samples and certain processes is because there are things you can't remove, that you just have to deal with" (Yearning Kru in Simshäuser 2017, 42).

(c) Social Aspects

A final sampling motivation that I include in the procedural approach is shaped by social factors. Mauro Guz Bejar, for example, considers sampling a "way to collaborate or mixing [sic] with people." For him, sampling "feels like collaborating and listening to other opinions." When conceptualized in this way, sampling reads like a counter strategy to the social isolation that laptop producers likely face given the isolated nature of their production process.

Sampling reads like a counter strategy to the social isolation that laptop producers likely face given the isolated nature of their production process.

I have included the procedural approach in the SSR to draw attention to more general reasons for sampling that do not, by themselves, sufficiently explain the sampling of particular sound material. The motivations listed above describe a view on sampling that is interested in the enabling, facilitating, or limiting effects it brings to the process of composition.

■

Why do producers in experimental electronica sample? This chapter has offered some preliminary answers to this question. With the SSR, it is possible to display the complex interplay of various levels and perspectives regarding the motivations, motives, and intentions behind sampling processes. Based on data from my fieldwork I have outlined two main approaches to sampling.

In the contextual approach (red), a sample is selected because of the extra-musical references and associations it carries. In the material approach (yellow), a sample is selected for its material appearance, its aesthetics, or its musical character. The first is driven

by meaning, while the second is driven by sound. Two further approaches complement this discussion of sampling reasons. The accidental approach (green) illustrates the often-overlooked role of chance in the creative work of sampling artists, and the procedural approach (blue) acknowledges more general motivations behind sampling that serve, at least partly, as valid explanations for particular sampling strategies.

These different levels challenge the existing discussion around reasons for sampling. On a broader level, one can explain why a producer is sampling at all, while on a more specific level, one can illustrate why a producer has selected a particular sound. The procedural approach in the SSR allows for the discussion of the first, general level, while the other approaches and perspectives are primarily focused on the second, specific level. In the three general fields of reasons for sampling (inspiration, communication, and content), I have introduced another helpful categorization to explain general contextual reasons for sampling.

Reasons for sampling must be discussed as a compound of multiple, intertwined motivations, motives, and intentions.

Furthermore, I have specified five particular perspectives (active, narrative, neutral, personal, and strategic) and one sub-perspective (solidary) in the contextual approach. With these categories, the SSR allows for the simultaneous display of various reasons for sampling within a given analysis. This takes into account that there is rarely only one determining reason behind a sampling process. Reasons for sampling must be discussed as a compound of multiple, intertwined motivations, motives, and intentions. The following section, on the five case studies, will offer just such in-depth analysis of reasons for sampling.

The model and its categories are based on qualitative research. They should not be considered exhaustive. It was my aim to develop a model which convincingly explained all reasons for sampling from my research data. Consequently, this does not mean that there are no further conceivable reasons for sampling. However, I have selectively tested my model with examples beyond the field of experimental electronica to prove its applicability for sample-based music in general.

As a final example, I want to exploratively discuss a sampling strategy from the dub/dancehall crew Seekersinternational (SKRSINTL). Their case suggests how the SSR could be productively applied to the analysis of sampling strategies. SKRSINTL described one of their main sampling motivations as the contextualization of sound. They commented on their strategy of sampling living room conversations taken from "various movie background sounds":

> *We have taken such types of "background" sounds from a few different movies and YouTube videos to give the music some grounding or context within a living world, whether*

real or manufactured – or confounding one from another. (...) The basic idea is to give the tracks added depth by giving the listeners a hint of a world where this music is actually played, discussed, and listened to by people, blasted in cars and shop fronts; as opposed to music that just exists within itself, in some isolated vacuum of one's imagination, devoid of human interaction and intimacy with the environment. (...) It's all about relationships in the broad sense of the word; we wanted to also conjure the place, space, world where this music exists and is a part of.

The crew sampled prerecorded music not from the released recordings themselves, but from YouTube videos in which these recordings were played in a social context. It was their aim to include these contexts in the music. The contextual approach, along with both the active and narrative perspectives, serve as the most suitable categories for this process. The perspective is active because the producers aimed to send a message to listeners—"giving the listeners a hint"—and narrative because the producers wanted to craft a particular atmosphere—"conjure the place, space, world." At least the material approach is also at play. In an online interview, the crew emphasized the importance of "the feel" when it comes to sampling:

> *The main thing we keep an ear out for is FEEL. The certain feel and context of a sample I think is our priority over straight phonetics or semantics, as far as vocal samples go. For example, when searching for the word-sample "murder", sampling that same word as reported in the nightly news is completely different from sampling a soundsystem deejay toasting "musical murda!" in a dance; the feel and thus the vibe it will convey will be completely different.* (SKRSINTL in Ableton 2018)

Obviously, this category of "the feel" refers to contextual *and* material aspects. However, the particular sound and sonic quality of the samples seems to be key. SKRSINTL's sampling strategy could also be explained with neutral, personal, or strategic aspects, as well as through perspectives related to the other approaches—for example, the accidental approach plays a role, insofar as discovering the sampling material was dependent on the YouTube algorithm.

Part 2

Case Studies

Introduction:
Five Sampling Strategies in Experimental Electronica

In this part of the book, I illustrate five distinct sampling strategies devised by producers of experimental electronica. The musicians and producers Vika Kirchenbauer (COOL FOR YOU), Lara Sarkissian, Mauro Guz Bejar (Moro), Ian McDonnell (Eomac), and James Whipple (M.E.S.H.) either process political sound material or use the production technique of sampling to deal with political questions and issues (politicization of sampling material). Their strategies range from obvious political concepts (Vika Kirchenbauer) to the concealed processing of political sound material (James Whipple). The reasons behind these sampling strategies cover most of the contextual perspectives outlined in the spider of sampling reasons (SSR), from active and neutral to personal and narrative. Regarding the sampling material, the tracks process previously unreleased music (Lara Sarkissian and Vika Kirchenbauer), media material from the video platform YouTube (Ian McDonnell and James Whipple), and environmental sound from an online sound database (Mauro Guz Bejar).

In these five case studies, I attempt to enter the "black box pop," a term used by popular music scholars to indicate the impenetrability of much popular music (e.g. Helms and Phleps 2012). The following chapters will thus offer a rare perspective on the often-concealed processes of production. In this way I aim to contribute to a better understanding of popular music's modus operandi.

The following chapters will offer a rare perspective on the often-concealed processes of production.

The case studies are discussed in the order of the degree of visibility of their sampling processes. I start with the most obvious and end with the most concealed. The first example, COOL FOR YOU's "STABILIZED, YES!," is a contribution to an active political agenda. The producer Vika Kirchenbauer samples a religious folk tune from a U.S. tradition (Sacred Harp) with connections to colonial history. By repitching the harmonies and chopping the sample into dozens of sample-clips, Kirchenbauer aims to criticize harmonies as colonizers.

In the second track, "kenats," Lara Sarkissian uses sampling to produce a political commentary that challenges traditional gender roles in Armenian culture. In this case, sampling functions as a tool of appropriation: a sound and a particular style of playing, which would not otherwise be accessible in the diaspora, are appropriated and sampled. This sampling strategy is shaped by both a personal and an active perspective.

In "Libres," Mauro Guz Bejar samples sound material that is "non-contextual" in the first instance. By adding a political storyboard to the track and by applying a clave rhythm pattern to the

sample—which, for the producer, is politically coded as an expression of resistance—he uses sampling as a modular construction system for political messages.

The next track, "Perversas" by Ian McDonnell, contains a more concealed sample. McDonnell processes material from a video documenting people who maintain sexual relationships with animals (bestiality), with the principal aim of adding a particular atmosphere to the track. This sampling strategy is shaped by a non-political approach, but it raises politically relevant questions on voyeurism and the treatment of social taboos.

Finally, the last example, "Methy Imbiß" by James Whipple, illustrates that politics can be materially present in popular music without being obviously audible or visible. The processing of video footage from the military conflict in Eastern Ukraine remains almost completely concealed for the listener. This sampling strategy is deeply personal, reflecting the producer's lived experience.

Each analysis follows the same structure. To explain these steps, I adopt terminology introduced by Jean-Jacques Nattiez, based on thoughts by Jean Molino. In his seminal book on musical semiology, Nattiez emphasized that "the *essence* of a musical work is at once its genesis, its organization, and the way it is perceived" (Nattiez 1990, ix; italics original). He illustrated that the analysis of music takes place simultaneously on three "semiological levels": poietic, neutral, and esthesic. The poietic dimension describes the process of creation, while the esthesic focuses on the reception. The neutral dimension, finally, represents the trace that the musical object has "physically and materially" left. In art music, this would be the score; in popular music, in most cases the recording.[1] The analyses in the following sections mainly switch between poietic and neutral perspectives. The esthesic is only present insofar as my own reading of these tracks is a form of reception as well. However, if we consider an analysis only complete when all three levels are discussed, then we would still have to expand this study with the esthesic perspective.

Each chapter starts with an introduction to the producer and a detailed description of the sampling process in focus, subdivided into sections discussing the sampling source and the processing of the sampling material. This first part aims to describe in detail *what* has been sampled and *how* it has been sampled on a more technical level. This section also contains further background information that helps to contextualize the sampled material or other aspects related to the production process. These steps are mainly descriptive and thus belong to Nattiez' neutral level.

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1   Nattiez developed his concept on the basis of art music. However, from my point of view, it can be applied to the analysis of popular music as well. Popular music is also shaped by dimensions of production (poietic) and reception (esthesic). However, due to the strong concept of the work, the neutral level might be more valued in art music.

The second part focuses on the analysis of reasons for sampling and the sample's visibility. It follows three main steps: first, the examination of *why* particular material has been sampled. This will be discussed with the help of the SSR. The second step clarifies, as much as possible, the attitude of the producer towards their sampling material. Some aspects discussed here might have already appeared in the previous step; I consider it important to approach and summarize them from a further perspective. Discussing reasons for sampling alone does not necessarily reveal a producer's attitudes towards the processed material. The third and last step involves, once again, shifting to another perspective. It focuses on the visibility of the sampling process by applying the fader of visibility FOV. This section, as well as the following, is more of an explanation of character and thus belongs to Nattiez' poietic level.

All insights gained into the sampling strategy under question will inform the last, concluding part of each analysis. In this section, I will verbalize each sampling strategy in a condensed form. I will focus on the "seismographic substance" of each track and discuss the question of what this case study tells us about the world and what insights its analysis affords. Moreover, I will discuss questions that point to a more general view on the production technique of sampling. Finally, the conclusion critically focuses on aspects that remain open and that should be a subject of further study. The structure of the concluding section will vary for each case study.

6

"STABILIZED, YES!" by COOL FOR YOU: a Political Message

This track is a contribution to an active political agenda.

I want to use "the political" not as an identity but as a lens through which to look at the world and, more importantly, at oneself. (Kirchenbauer in Hearte 2018, 56)

COOL FOR YOU is the pseudonym of Berlin-based interdisciplinary artist Vika Kirchenbauer, who is engaged in video art, writing, and the production of electronic music.[2] Born in 1983, Kirchenbauer grew up in a village in the Black Forest, a region in Southern Germany. As a teenager, she began taking music lessons. She was raised in a humble home and thus had to finance the classes herself. She learned—or taught herself—keyboard, guitar, bass, and drums. At that time, music had a twofold meaning to her: first, it represented a possible way out of her village, which she increasingly perceived as parochial, especially from the perspective of a genderqueer person. Second, since she had financed her musical equipment and classes herself, music was something that she had been able to build on her own, and hence was of great importance to her. Having moved to Berlin in her early twenties, Kirchenbauer joined a band which she eventually quit to focus on her solo projects.

Kirchenbauer is an example of a 21st century laptop producer working in experimental electronica. Her electronic compositions

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[2]   Unless otherwise stated, this chapter is based on email conversations that took place between February 15, 2017 and May 2, 2018, one interview via Skype on February 22, 2017, and two conversations at Vika Kirchenbauer's apartment in Berlin on January 24 and on April 9, 2018.

blend dry rhythms with sharp, repitched and fragmented vocal samples from Sacred Harp tunes, a U.S. religious folk tradition. This analysis will focus on the processing of these samples. Kirchenbauer makes music mostly in her apartment, using limited equipment: a laptop, a monitor screen, and an Akai MPC (Music Production Controller)—a digital sampling drum machine and MIDI sequencer. At least at the time of my research, she was able to make a living from her artistic projects. However, her musical activities only constituted a small part of this income. Before the release of her second EP *MOOD MANAGEMENT*, which is the main focus of this analysis, she generated almost no income from musical projects. Kirchenbauer handles both music production and live bookings on her own. For distribution, she collaborates with the Berlin-based label Creamcake. In August and September 2015, she participated in an artist residency at the Struts Gallery & Faucet Media Arts Centre in Sackville, Canada.[3] There, in large part, she developed the Sacred Harp-oriented sampling approach that she was still employing during my research.

I came across her second EP *MOOD MANAGEMENT* through a short review in the music magazine *The Wire*. The author's mention of the sample-based character of the tracks immediately caught my attention: "From religion and community, to mental health and colonialism, the violence of the gaze as an act of social control is powerfully felt and then deconstructed via heavily distorted a cappella samples" (Kretowicz 2017). I was interested in the EP because the review indicated a close connection between sampling and political themes. Moreover, the producer describes her artistic goals as political, as the quote at the beginning of this chapter illustrates. The following passage from her short biography on the video platform Vimeo further highlights this highly political self-concept:

> *In her work she explores opacity in relation to representation of the "othered" through ostensibly contradictory methods like exaggerated explicitness, oversharing and perversions of participatory culture. She examines the troublesome nature of "looking" and "being looked at" in larger contexts including labour within post-fordism and the experience economy, modern drone warfare and its insistence on unilateral staring, the power relationships of psychiatry, performer/spectator relations, participatory culture, contemporary art display and institutional representation of otherness as well as the everyday life experience of ambiguously gendered individuals. (Kirchenbauer 2018)*

This overt commitment to a political direction in her artistic work distinguishes Kirchenbauer from the other case studies presented in this book. In short, it is the examination of power relations

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3   See Hearte 2018 for a conversation with Kirchenbauer in the context of this artist residency.

that plays an important role in Kirchenbauer's art and the motivations behind it. As such, I was interested in analyzing how this political self-concept manifests in one of the tracks from her EP, and how she has used the production technique of sampling to reach these artistic goals.

I have chosen the last track of the EP, "STABILIZED, YES!" for this case study.[4] I was interested in this track because Kirchenbauer cuts up the sampled material much more extensively than in previous productions, meaning that the listener can hardly recognize the original source. However, as this analysis will show, the sampling process itself is highly visible.

The EP *MOOD MANAGEMENT* was released on the Berlin-based label Creamcake on February 2, 2017, and was distributed through the online music platforms Bandcamp and SoundCloud. On the latter, the track reached a total of almost 2,800 plays, 59 likes, and 4 reposts in almost two years (as of June 2019).[5]

Background: Sacred Harp

On the EP *MOOD MANAGEMENT*—including the track "STABILIZED, YES!"—Vika Kirchenbauer sampled external musical source material from a single corpus. She worked exclusively with recordings from Sacred Harp singing, a rural choral tradition that emerged from the Southern U.S. in the middle of the 19th century. The name of this choral practice is derived from the tunebook *The Sacred Harp*, first published by Benjamin Franklin White and Elisha James King in 1844. The religious hymns and anthems contained in this constitutive collection of the tradition are notated in the characteristic U.S. shape-note style.

Sacred Harp singers are non-professionals (Marini 2003, 74), and they sing a cappella. The tunes are only "performed" in regular meetings—so-called "conventions"—and, in principle, recordings are not made. Stephen Marini explains that Sacred Harp singing "is not 'public' in the usual sense because there is no audience at singings. Everyone sings" (86).

In the context of the following analysis, it is important to highlight some further historical aspects of this vocal tradition. First of all, it is entwined with colonial history. David Steel describes the creators of *The Sacred Harp* as being deeply rooted in the time of Jacksonian Democracy. In the Southern U.S.—particularly in the state of Georgia, where the first collectors of Sacred Harp tunes lived—this period was shaped not only by the countrywide implementation of universal white male suffrage, but also by violent land seizure from the native

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→ Figure 6.1

Vika Kirchenbauer worked exclusively with recordings from Sacred Harp singing, a rural choral tradition that emerged from the Southern U.S. in the middle of the 19th century.

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4   The track is named after a chapter in the book *Airless Spaces* by feminist writer Shulamith Firestone (1998). In this book, the author writes about her personal experiences of being hospitalized in mental institutions.
5   The display of the plays has been disabled after June 2019.

people and the related westward expansion of settlers. The settlers arrived not only with their tunebooks in their luggage, but also with Black slaves to cultivate the "new" land. Steel summarizes the colonial grounds on which the tradition of Sacred Harp thrived: "Yet the economic prosperity that made the Sacred Harp possible was based on the rich lands of the Native Americans and the arduous labor of enslaved blacks" (Steel and Hulan 2010, 16).

There is a further way in which the tunes of Sacred Harp find their origins in a colonial setting. Although Steel emphasized that these tunes are "not identical to the congregational singing of eighteenth-century New England," he traced "fundamental characteristics" back to this era, including "a complex of musical skills learned in singing schools and an eclectic repertory of religious part-songs by European and American composers" (xi). The vocal traditions of colonial New England, in turn, had previously been imported to the U.S. by settlers from England (39–53).

Although rooted in sacral traditions, John Bealle (1997, xiii) emphasized that Sacred Harp is a "fundamentally nondenominational religious exercise." Hence, the evangelical tradition evolved outside of the dominant denominations of that time such as Methodism, Presbyterianism, and Baptism (Steel and Hulan 2010, 62–63). In place of the church, important sites for the evolution of Sacred Harp were religious but pan-denominational camp meetings, singing schools, and the aforementioned singing gatherings.

The history of Sacred Harp reveals further entanglements with issues regarding power relations—as we will see, this is the crucial aspect in our subsequent analysis. Kiri Miller (2010, 14) has highlighted the discursive strategies by which the tradition was used to invent an idealized past ("the invention of the rural South") as a "means for self-definition through rich cultural heritage." By analyzing both its historical foundation and its status among present-day singers, Miller argued that Sacred Harp is related to some of the most persistent narratives and myths of U.S. society:

> *Both singers and scholars have invoked independence, egalitarianism, and resistance to mainstream convention as key characteristics of Sacred Harp practitioners and the styles represented in their tunebook. Like independent-minded frontiersmen, the story goes, this democratic and physically engaging singing moved from stodgy New England to a rougher but more liberated landscape. The history of shape-note singing reproduces a recurring narrative theme of American history, the westward push in search of freedom. It also articulates a central drama of American historiography: the productive tension of egalitarianism and rugged individualism. (16)*

Having evolved from a distinctly colonial context, the tradition went on to be used as a cultural legitimation and representation of the American project. Sacred Harp was also constructed as a

specifically white tradition by designating its tunes as "white spirit-uals" although there have always been African American Sacred Harp conventions (9–13). Such debates, among other factors, finally helped nurture a Sacred Harp revival in the U.S. in the second part of the 20th century (Bealle 1997, 188–244; Marini 2003, 82–85).

Sample Source

The Sacred Harp recording which was processed by Vika Kirchenbauer as a sample in her track "STABILIZED, YES!" is 33 seconds in length. Kirchenbauer downloaded an entire folder of Sacred Harp recordings from the 1950s from the internet. In our interviews, she was not sure from which platform she had downloaded them.[6] She told me that her attention was directed to the tradition in general and these recordings in particular by an acquaintance of hers who sings in a Sacred Harp convention in Berlin.

The sample file is a recording of the tune "Columbiana." Listed as number 56t, this tune first appeared in the *Sacred Harp* tunebook in the version from 1850 (Steel and Hulan 2010, 185). The score in Figure 6.1 presents two verses, praising the ordinance of the communion or the Lord's Supper, one of the central acts of worship in the Christian church. While the author of the text remains unknown according to the printed score below, Steel mentions John Newton as the possible author and 1779 as the potential year of origin. Following Richard Hulan, Newton was a British evangelical author, responsible for some of the "older hymns" in the collection (63).

Figure 6.1: Tune 56t "Columbiana" from Original Sacred Harp, "James Edition" (James 1911)

The audio file Kirchenbauer used as a source only contains a performance of the second verse. Moreover, the recording lacks two crucial parts of Sacred Harp singing: each song usually starts with the so-called pitching—the joining in of all singers to the key tone—followed by solmization, where a first cycle is sung with the syllables fa, sol, la, and mi (Marini 2003, 69–70). The absence of both pitching and solmization indicates that the recording is only a fragment of the original performance.

As other authors have already pointed out, the harmony of

6   Kirchenbauer mentioned a few possibilities though. However, they are not disclosed here on request of the producer.

shape-note tunes is in many ways inconsistent with the rules of the part-writing tradition in European art music.[7] According to Robert Kelley (2009, 4), the abundance of "dispersed harmony," the use of chords with incomplete triads,[8] and the "use of gapped scales" are "prevalent feature[s] of shape-note music." The first three parts (treble, alto, and tenor) use the pentatonic scale (C – D – E – G – A) with D appearing in the tenor only. (The tenor carries the main melody in all shape-note tunes.) The bass part finally adds the fourth scale degree (F in bar 7) while the seventh is completely missing. According to Kelley, "non-pentatonic" scale degrees (numbers 4 and 7 in the major scale) should be avoided or at least "used sparingly" in shape-note harmony.

In summary, the tradition of Sacred Harp has produced a distinct harmony that differs from its European predecessors. This is a crucial argument for Kirchenbauer in explaining her choice of the material below.

The tradition of Sacred Harp has produced a distinct harmony that differs from its European predecessors.

Sample Processing

In "STABILIZED, YES!" Kirchenbauer processed a total of 10 different sample-clips (numbered below as 1–10). When a larger sample is cut into smaller pieces to process it in the new composition, I refer to these snippets as "sample-clips" across all of the case studies.[9] These sample-clips are repeated a number of times throughout the track. In total, there are 461 audio clips that all stem from the Columbiana recording. Some of the sample-clips are further subdivided (subsequently marked as a and b). Figure 6.2 shows an excerpt of the waveform of the Columbiana recording and the respective sample-clips. The figure displays which parts of the original sample were extracted by the producer. The sample-clips are numbered according to the order of their appearance in the final track. Figure 6.3, finally, illustrates the sample-clips' locations on the score of the original tune. The red boxes indicate the sample-clips.

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7   It is reasonable to compare the Sacred Harp tradition with the tradition of European harmony in order to reach a rough understanding of the harmonic characteristics of the sample. The danger of such an approach is to conceive the part-writing tradition of European art music as a superior model. That would not be my aim at all. As Kelley (2009, 2) rightly claims, one should instead define "the idiom of shape-note harmony in its own terms."

8   In the present example predominantly missing thirds, for example all chords in bar 5, but also a missing fifth on the downbeat of bar 4.

9   I do not use "microsamples" as this term designates a particular practice of sampling whereby sampling material is cut into even smaller snippets than in my examples (see Harkins 2010b).
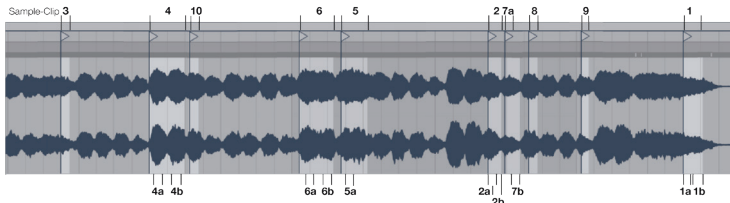
Figure 6.2: Sample-clip extraction from the Columbiana recording (screenshots from Live)
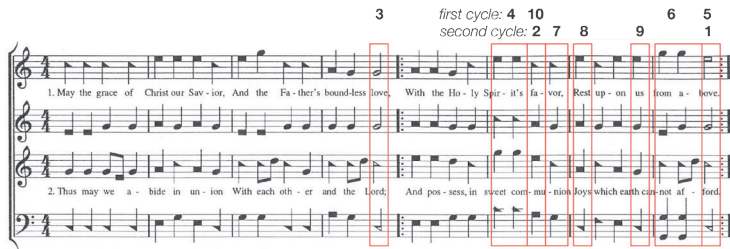

Figure 6.3: Sample-clips extracted from "Columbiana" (Sacred Harp Bremen 2019)

It is obvious that Kirchenbauer has only used the second part of the tune, beginning with the last beat of bar 4 (syllable "Lord," sample-clip 3) and ending with the last note (syllable "-ford," sample-clip 1). The stacking of two numbers (10/2 and 5/1) unfolds from the repetition of the last four bars. The clips 4, 10, 6, and 5 stem from the first cycle and the clips 2, 7, 8, 9, and 1 from its repetition. Table 6.1 provides an overview of all sample-clips.

Sample-Clip	Appea-rance	Length	Position (Score)	Syllable Lyrics	Chord (score)	Num	Chord (Track)	Predomi-nant Note(s)
1	4	1/4	Bar 8, Beat 3	-ford	C	I	F#	**A#−C#**
1a	24	1/8						**A#−C#**
1b	81	1/8						**A#−C#**
2	4	3/16	6, 3	-mu-	am	ii	d#m	**A#–D#**
2a	20	1/8						**A#–D#**
2b	16	1/8						A#–D#
3	64	1/8	4, 3	Lord	C⁵	I	F#⁵	**C#**
4	3	1/2	6, 1-2	sweet co-	C	I	F#	**C#**
4a	24	1/8	6, 1	sweet				
4b	24	1/8	6, 2	co-				
5	6	3/8	8, 3	-ford	C	I	F#	**A#−C#**
5a	68	1/8						
6	3	1/2	8, 1-2	-not af-	C/G⁵	I 6/4/V	F#−C#⁵	**C#−G#**
6a	24	1/8	8, 1	-not	C	I 6/4	F#	**C#**
6b	24	1/8	8, 2	af-	C⁵	I 6/4/V	F#−C#⁵	**C#−G#**
7a	8	1/8	6, 4	-nion	C⁵	I 6/4	F#⁵	**C#−G#**
7b	24	1/8						**C#**
8	8	1/8	7, 1	Joys	am	ii⁶	d#m	**A#**
9	8	1/8	7, 4	can-	C	I	F#	**C#**
10	24	1/8	6, 3	-mu-	am	ii	d#m	**A#**
Total	461							

Table 6.1: Sample-clips processed in "STABILIZED, YES!"

The second column displays how often the respective clips were used in the track and the third column shows their length. The track is set at 120 beats per minute and most of the samples correspond to an eighth note (0.25 seconds) while a few are longer, such as sample-clips 4 and 6, which correspond to a half note (1 second). Columns 4 to 6 refer to the score of the tune in terms of position, syllable from the lyrics, and chord. Column 7 denotes the respective scale degrees using Roman numeral analysis.

The harmonic analysis is a bit trickier, however. As is usual in Sacred Harp singing, the tunes are not necessarily sung in the notated key. At the beginning of each tune the so-called "pitcher" tries to find a key which is comfortable for all singers (Marini 2003, 69–70). In our case, the tune is notated in C but finally performed in A. Additionally, for "STABILIZED, YES!" Kirchenbauer raised the pitch of all samples by nine semitones. Hence, the processed samples can finally be heard in F$\sharp$.

Column 8 shows the chords in their transposed versions. The last column indicates which notes of the respective chords appear dominant. By means of frequency analysis, the notes highlighted in bold have been identified as the loudest ones; if there is no bold note, both notes reach a similar loudness.

As we can draw from the table, the predominant note is never the root note but mostly the fifth, and only in a few cases the third (sample-clips 1, 1b, 5 and 5a). In one case (7a), there is even a prominent note (G$\sharp$) which is not part of the noted chord (F$\sharp$5) at all. There are various plausible explanations for this. First, G$\sharp$ is the second overtone of the chord's fifth, C$\sharp$. Second, the articulated syllable "-nion," sung by individual voices, results in a range of formant frequencies. The third possible reason is the singing practice of Sacred Harp itself. Marini reports that "Sacred Harp singers are [not only] not trained in the conservatory sense" (Marini 2003, 74) but they also "sing at full volume and extreme range" (92). In his anthropological study of Sacred Harp singing sessions, Marini vividly describes the characteristic Sacred Harp sound:

> These people do not produce the round tone and vibrato typical of white church choirs. They produce a flat, piercing vocal tone without vibrato. (…) [A]ll brought with a full-throated force that sometimes shades over into pure shout. (…) Often they will sing their harmonies slightly flat or sharp, lending an archaic modal sound to the ensemble. And they deliver all of this with a laser-like chest tone quality that could shatter glass. (73)

The practice of Sacred Harp produces intonations which are not accurate in the manner one is accustomed to hearing from a professionally trained choir. Accordingly, the timbre can substantially differ between various excerpts of the same chord, or between different chords that are notated identically on the score.

The last figure in this section shows a transcript of "STABILIZED, YES!" (Figure 6.4). I decided to use rhythmic notation as the display format, because all sample-clips correspond to the length of either sixteenth, eighth, quarter, or half notes. Moreover, the Live project is strictly quantized. Each note thus represents a separate sample-clip. The numbers in boxes indicate the respective sample-clips in use. The transcript should be read as an orientation guide for the formal structure of the processing of the sample-clips. It does not represent a full transcript of the track. For example, the layers of percussion are not displayed here.
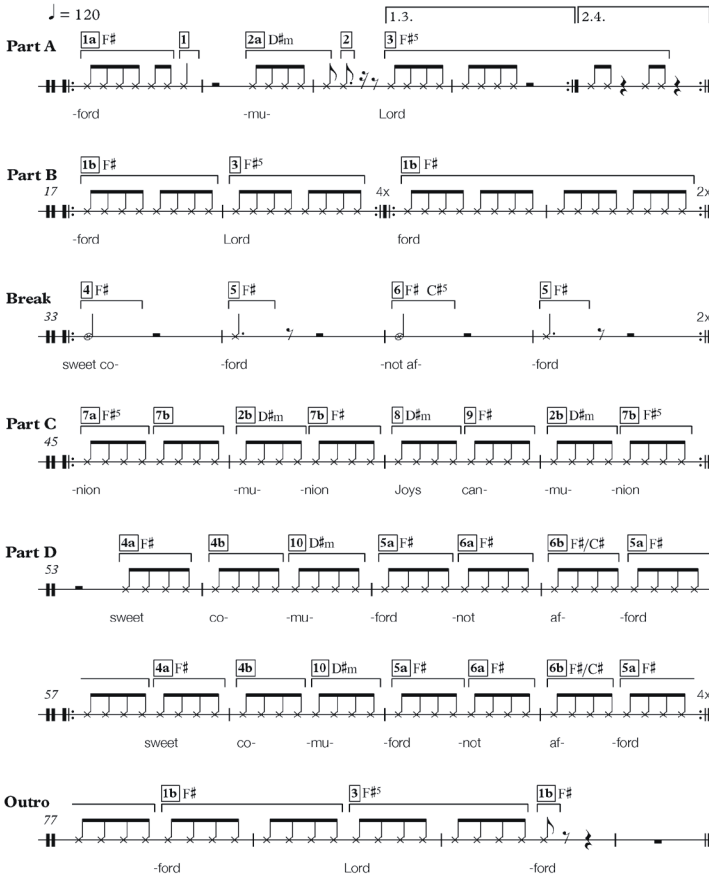
Figure 6.4: Transcript of the sample processing in "STABILIZED, YES!"

This overview reveals a sampling practice which I call "extended chopping." The term "chopping" is used in hip hop to indicate the "altering [of] a sample phrase by dividing it into smaller segments and reconfiguring them in a different order" (Schloss 2014 [2004], 106). In "STABILIZED, YES!" Kirchenbauer arranges a total of ten sample-clips. A comparison of Figure 6.2 and Figure 6.3 above demonstrates the complete reorganization of the sample-clips in the transcript. This reorganization becomes particularly apparent when considering the respective syllables from the original Sacred Harp

This overview reveals a sampling practice which I call "extended chopping."

tunes. The semantic meaning of these syllables is not relevant.[10] Beyond the characteristic sound aesthetics of Sacred Harp singing, the syllables create a sense of variation between different sample-clips, even though the clips do not vary substantially in tonal content. Kirchenbauer experiments with these subtle variations between the sample-clips. This playing with different textures becomes obvious in parts C and D of the track.

In one of our interviews, I asked Kirchenbauer to show me how she extracted the sample-clips from the source material. She demonstrated a process shaped by trial and error: she played the full sample, triggering it with the mouse in different positions in quick succession. She was looking for sample-clips that pleased her. Having found a potential sample-clip, she selected it and moved it to an empty audio track within the DAW, Live. Eventually, a range of working material was assembled in this audio track for the further process of composition. This process of selection was thus mainly led by intuition, and it is clear that the semantic meaning of the lyrics was not significant.

She played the full sample, triggering it with the mouse in different positions in quick succession. She was looking for sample-clips that pleased her.

Before deciding to copy the respective sample-clips to the section of the DAW project where the track's arrangement was emerging, Kirchenbauer further experimented with different pitches and lengths. She paid special attention to the sample-clips remaining loopable, since she aimed to repeat these bits in short succession later. Beyond slicing and pitching (up nine semitones), Kirchenbauer did not apply further effects to the sample. During the production process, she experimented with some reverb, but decided not to use it because the effect blurred the rhythmic concision of the track: "At some point I guess I tried out some reverb. But maybe the rhythmic quality seemed to get a little bit lost."[11]

The track begins with the last chord of the original Sacred Harp tune (sample-clip 1a) and ends quite abruptly with the same chord (1b). The ending is the only moment in the track where one of the short samples is played only once without any further repetition. The track stops on the third beat of bar 79 without concluding the full four-bar circle one bar later. In our conversations, Kirchenbauer reflected on this abrupt stop and connected it, albeit vaguely, with the intended function of the track as the closing piece in future live performances:

> *I think it just worked. I can't remember what I was thinking or planning to do here. I don't know when I made the*

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10   The analysis of the syllables shows one meaningful combination: In the break (bars 35/36 and 43/44) and in part D (bars 55/56, 59/60, etc.) the words "not afford" become visible. In the context of the producer's intended message behind the track—which is analyzed subsequently —these words could become meaningful in the sense of not affording colonialism. However, this has to be considered as coincidence rather than conscious authorial intention.
11   Own translation. Original quote: "Genau, ich hab' dann auch ein bisschen Reverb ausprobiert scheinbar irgendwann. Aber dann ist vielleicht ein bisschen das Rhythmische daran verloren gegangen."

track, I think it was before I had a live show, and I think I made the ending like this because I find this quite good as a final track when playing live. That there's quite a sudden crescendo in the track and there's quite a lot going on towards the end, also quite loud and intense, and that everything then ends quite abruptly. Ok, I think I probably made this because I thought this could work quite well as a final track for a live set.[12]

At 24 bars, part D is the longest part of the track and can thus be considered its climax. A few further elements support this view, such as the intensifying of dynamics which Kirchenbauer refers to in the quote above. In both part C and part D, the sample-clips change in quicker succession than before (every half bar), and in part D all sample-clips are taken from louder sections of the main sample (sample-clips 4a, 4b, 5a, 6a, 6b, and 10), as shown in Figure 6.2. In contrast, the outro processes material from the beginning of the track (numbers 1b and 3) and returns to softer dynamics.

This analysis completely ignores the percussion sections of the track since the producer focused on the sampling elements first before turning her attention to the beats. Moreover, Kirchenbauer composed these beats on her MPC without listening to the audio track containing the sample. The beat sections are thus not relevant to our description and interpretation of the processing of the Sacred Harp material.

Sample Visibility and Sampling Reasons

(a) Sampling Reasons

The SSR below visualizes the significance of the three approaches—contextual, material, and procedural—for this case study. Within the first approach I identify three perspectives as relevant: active, neutral, and personal. Before addressing each of them, I want to outline why Sacred Harp tunes are so attractive to the producer in general. In fact, nearly all tracks so far released under Kirchenbauer's COOL FOR YOU pseudonym contain samples from the downloaded folder of Sacred Harp tunes. I consider there to be four essential factors: firstly, there is a history of colonization inherent in the source material; secondly, it is "white" religious music; thirdly, the tunes sound "mildly 'exotic' to the Western ear"; and finally, the recordings contain a broad range of dissonances. In

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12   Own translation. Original quote: "Ich glaube, das hat einfach funktioniert. Ich kann mich nicht erinnern, was ich da vorhatte oder gedacht hatte. Ich weiss nicht, wann ich den Track gemacht hab', ich glaube, bevor ich so eine Live-Performance hatte und ich glaube, ich hab' das Ende wahrscheinlich auch so gemacht, weil ich das als letzten Track, wenn ich live spiele, so ganz gut finde. Dass es relativ abrupt einfach so ein Crescendo gibt und da ist ziemlich viel los gegen Ende, auch ziemlich laut und krass, dass es dann auch relativ abrupt aufhört. Also, ich glaube, ich hab' das wahrscheinlich schon so gemacht, weil ich dachte, das könnte als letzter Track von einem Liveset ganz gut funktionieren."

the following quote, Kirchenbauer elaborated on the first three of these aspects:

> *Sacred Harp isn't really from the U.S. South but originated in New England before the first collection of songs was compiled in 1844. Many of the songs find their earliest roots in early 18th century England though and came to North America through settlers. What's interesting to me is that the harmony structures that characterize the songs appear to sound mildly "exotic" to the Western ear (i.e. as the fourth and fifth are emphasized rather than the thirds). This prompted me to speculate upon harmonies as colonizers, given that music has been largely used not only by missionaries but also within state and economic colonialism. If the West perceives "world music" as "authentic" and "untouched," that blatantly ignores centuries of colonial history and (mutual) influences and relationalities. The economic setups and ties that now let the West consume music from places that seem remote are in their current form unthinkable outside the history of colonialism, its power structures and violence. These thoughts led me to researching and working mostly with these samples of (predominantly) white protestant music that I use recordings [of] from the 1950s.*
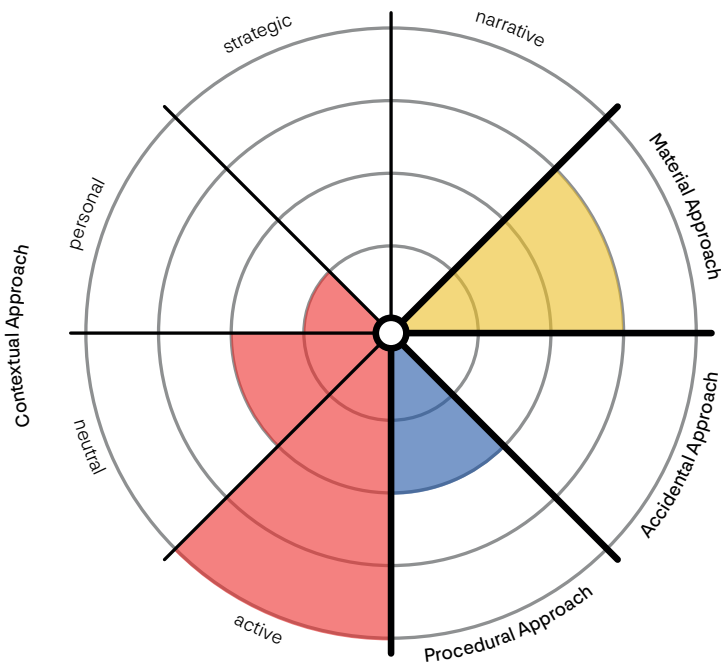
Figure 6.5: SSR: reasons for sampling in "STABILIZED, YES!"

In this quotation, Kirchenbauer repeats some of the contextual information on the Sacred Harp tradition introduced earlier, con-

firming that the tradition's colonial background was essential.[13] Kirchenbauer always emphasized that she is primarily interested in the political history of the sampled material and not in the singing individuals and their relation to God. According to Kirchenbauer, her sampling practice should not be considered as a critique of belief. However, Kirchenbauer legitimizes her use of the material by stressing that it is "(predominantly) white protestant music." Although considering herself as distanced from church and religion, she feels a cultural closeness to Christianity. This made it acceptable for her to sample this material, in contrast to other samples from more remote or minoritarian cultures such as "world music material," in her own words:

Kirchenbauer always emphasized that she is primarily interested in the political history of the sampled material and not in the singing individuals and their relation to God.

> I think it is a different structure of power, a different relation of dominance. Sure, it is some sort of appropriation—I wouldn't equate that with when white people sample any "world music" material, that's a different structure of power I think. (...) Even if I don't have a close relationship to religion, nevertheless, on the one hand I was raised and socialized in a Christian context and, on the other, I think that in our culture, Christian religions have some sort of cultural and political influence which is quite important. So I can justify it to myself differently, and I wouldn't equate someone appropriating material from marginalized groups with someone appropriating material from a culture or a set of beliefs which are more dominant in society, and to which are ascribed a different degree of power.[14]

The third aspect is the "mildly 'exotic'" impression of Sacred Harp tunes on "the Western ear." My analysis of Sacred Harmony, given above, slightly differs from that given by Kirchenbauer in the quotation above. Where Kirchenbauer mentions an emphasis

13 In "STABILIZED, YES!" colonial ties to England are not least present through the author of the lyrics, John Newton (1725–1807), who as I previously mentioned was British. Newton's biography is particularly interesting. Having worked as a slave ship captain for a long time, he changed his view and became a prominent supporter of the abolitionist movement that called for the end of slavery (Aitken 2007). Another of Newton's songs, "Amazing Grace," became widely popular later, even among Black civil rights movements. The colonial route of Newton's text "Columbiana" across the "Black Atlantic" (Gilroy 1993) and back is a vivid example of what Johannes Ismaiel-Wendt has theorized as the postcolonial heritage of popular music (Ismaiel-Wendt 2011a). However, this was not a reason why Kirchenbauer chose the tune in question, as she paid no attention to the lyrics, and was not aware of their author. Furthermore, the lyrics are only barely comprehensible in the source recording.

14 Own translation. Original quote: "Ich glaube, es ist eine andere Machtstruktur, ein anderes Dominanzverhältnis. Natürlich ist es eine Form von Aneignung—ich würde die nicht gleichsetzen wollen, damit wenn weisse Leute irgendwelches 'Weltmusikmaterial' sampeln, das ist eine andere Machtstruktur glaube ich. (...) auch wenn ich kein enges Verhältnis zu Religion habe, trotzdem in einem christlichen Kontext aufgewachsen bin oder christlich sozialisiert bin zum einen, zum anderen glaube ich, dass vor allem christliche Religionen in unserem Kulturkreis eine Form von kulturellem und politischem Einfluss hat, der schon auch bedeutend ist. So dass ich da dann das anders vor mir rechtfertigen kann und es nicht gleichsetzen würde, ob man Material aneignet von marginalisierten Gruppen oder ob man Material aneignet von einer Kultur oder einem Glauben, der gesellschaftlich dominanter ist, dem eine andere Macht zugeschrieben ist."

on fourths and fifths, I suggest that incomplete triads are one of the harmony's central elements. However, beyond the exact differences, it is important that the harmonies *can be* or *are* perceived as exotic. (The same aesthetic perception is made by many people who believe in medieval ties to Sacred Harp music; Miller 2010, 4). In this way, Kirchenbauer wants to challenge notions of authenticity that are widespread in discourses on "world music." According to her, sounds that are marketed as seemingly "authentic," such as these hymns of Sacred Harp, bear a history of colonial encounter.

Kirchenbauer wants to challenge notions of authenticity that are widespread in discourses on "world music."

The fourth aspect is finally connected with the distinct non-professional singing style of Sacred Harp and the presence of a broad range of dissonances in the music:

> *Because Sacred Harp is very amateurish and people mostly aren't hitting the same note, if I then isolate something very small and if I repeat that or if I stretch that, this basically leads to such a dissonant chord, just because people are not hitting the same note, even though they want to. And it is relatively rare to have material like that; because all other choirs, which are somehow more professional, hit the same note. (...) That you can build such a chord, that is unintended, from such a small microsample shows a little bit the dissonance also of community and of doing something together. I find this quite interesting and the material is pretty good for that.*[15]

Having outlined these four aspects of Kirchenbauer's interest in the Sacred Harp material, I will now continue to discuss further reasons behind her sampling practice, as indicated in the SSR. The most prominent category within the contextual approach—reasons that are connected to extra-musical aspects—is the active perspective. Conceiving the tradition of Sacred Harp as strongly connected to colonial history and power relations, Kirchenbauer regards harmonies as a colonizing and thus also violent force. Similarly, Kofi Agawu (2016) has argued that tonality has acted as a "colonizing force" in Africa, verbalizing that which Kirchenbauer reflects in her musical productions. Accordingly, the central aim behind COOL FOR YOU is to "decompose harmonies as colonisers." She explained this intention not only in the quote above but also in

15   Own translation. Original quote: "Dadurch, dass dieses Sacred-Harp eben sehr amateurisch ist und die Leute meistens nie den gleichen Ton treffen, wenn ich dann was ganz kleines isoliere und das wiederhole oder stretche, ergibt sich darin dann eigentlich so ein dissonanter Akkord, einfach nur dadurch, dass die Leute nicht den gleichen Ton treffen, aber eigentlich den gleichen Ton treffen wollen und das ist relativ selten, dass man das als Material hat; weil eigentlich alle anderen Chöre, die irgendwie professioneller sind, treffen halt den gleichen Ton. (...) Und dass man aus einem so kleinen Microsample eigentlich so ein Akkord machen kann, der nicht intendiert ist, der diese Dissonanz auch von Community und zusammen irgendwas machen auch so ein bisschen zeigt. Das finde ich eigentlich ganz interessant und dafür ist das Material wiederum total gut."

her short description of the project as well as in the liner notes of her two EPs. By extensively chopping and pitching the Sacred Harp material, as I have demonstrated above with regards to the present track, Kirchenbauer literally "decomposes" these "colonial" harmonies: "It's kind of a violent interference to something that is static and kind of finished," she explains. In summary, this is an intention with a clearly active perspective behind it.

Beyond this principal intention of an active critique, I have further identified personal and neutral perspectives. Both are connected and thus difficult to distinguish. In general, Kirchenbauer is highly interested in the material and its context. Her interest not only lies in the historical and political aspects of Sacred Harp but also in aesthetics and issues of community. I will focus on the latter now, before discussing the former in the below section on the producer's attitude. I have already mentioned Kirchenbauer's interest in the dissonances present in Sacred Harp singing practice and their relation to community. The whole *MOOD MANAGEMENT* EP debates "ideas of community," as one can read on SoundCloud:

The central aim behind COOL FOR YOU is to "decompose harmonies as colonisers."

> For MOOD MANAGEMENT, COOL FOR YOU continues this interest in the preconditions of a colonial confluence in music, and complicates ideas of community, as being predicated on the exclusion of one person in favour of another. In doing so, Kirchenbauer carries the skittering drums and submerged vocals of her sound into a dimension that revels in its own distortions. (Creamcake 2017a)

Obviously, the tradition of Sacred Harp singing serves as an ideal example with which to discuss this topic. Steel emphasizes Sacred Harp as "a community musical and social event" (Steel and Hulan 2010, xi) and Marini offers a similar description:

> Singings supplied an intergenerational community meeting place, an arena for courtship, an entertainment and performance center, and a site for the rehearsal of cultural values and practices. Sacred Harp singing joined the family, the school, the church, and the town in defining a seamless community bound together by sacred ties of common beliefs and institutions. (Marini 2003, 88)[16]

Focusing on the early history of Sacred Harp as outlined above, the musical tradition has always thrived on a strong feeling of community that was based on the exclusion of others (Native Americans and Black slaves). Kirchenbauer is particularly interested in conflictual processes, such as social exclusion, *within* communities. She perceives such processes as "dissonances of community and of doing something together." The musical dissonances of the collective practice of Sacred Harp thus represent similar collective

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16   Interestingly, the lyrics of the Columbiana tune are praising the Lord's Supper, one of the most important moments in Protestant liturgy to celebrate community. Again, this goes beyond the intention of the producer as mentioned in n12.

experiences. In one of our conversations, I suggested that this interest might be linked with her own biography and personal experiences. She confirmed my assumption:

> *Because I have always worked a lot, also in queer subculture, where I can definitely see somehow a shared desire for community, but also, to some extent, I am appalled by the form some discussions take, or by how big the differences are.*[17]

A further indicator that this subject is of greater and, crucially, personal importance to Kirchenbauer is her appearance at a music festival in Germany in October 2018. There, she participated in a panel discussion and referred to personal experiences with mechanisms of social exclusion in seemingly queer safer spaces (Eichwalder 2018). I therefore argue that these personal experiences of inclusion and exclusion in subcultural communities might have been a minor, yet real, motivation behind Kirchenbauer's decision to address the subject on the *MOOD MANAGEMENT* EP, and to choose Sacred Harp tunes as a sampling corpus.

All intentions and motivations that I have discussed so far could probably be applied to an analysis of every track by COOL FOR YOU. I have not yet explored why the producer chose the Columbiana recording in particular, rather than any other Sacred Harp tune. As the lyrics were not relevant in the process of selection, it was rather a matter of aesthetics. That is why the SSR gives a bigger share to the "material approach." In retrospect, it turned out to be challenging to identify the parameters influencing the selection of the "Columbiana" tune: "I think there is some sense of aesthetic choice to it that kind of makes it hard to explain," Kirchenbauer said. When reflecting on the process and on how she generally selects samples from her Sacred Harp folder, she mentioned a few factors that allowed her to at least approximate the process of selection. As a first step, she usually checks the quality of each file:

> *A lot of the older recordings are like too poor in quality to be worked with. So, whenever I time-stretch them or do any kind of heavier pitching to them, there is too much digital noise that is not super interesting to me. The first step is checking the quality of the source material, if it's even usable at all or if it's bad, if there are still qualities to it that are interesting.*

The process then differs from case to case. Sometimes she finds interesting "melodies or harmonies" or, on the contrary, she quickly detects that the material is not useful for her purposes: "I notice quite quickly, if the rhythm is too fast or if it's too heavily

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17   Own translation. Original quote: "Dadurch, dass ich immer viel gearbeitet habe, aber auch in queerer Subkultur, wo ich schon auch irgendwie eine geteilte Sehnsucht nach Gemeinschaftlichkeit sehe, aber auch teilweise erschreckt bin von der Diskussionskultur oder dem, wie gross halt auch die Differenzen sind."

yelled and too stompy, that there's nothing I can do."[18] Kirchenbauer summarizes the consideration of these aspects—such as rhythm, tempo, and the aesthetics of the voices—as the search for a particular "atmosphere." She explained that she sometimes recognizes a certain "type of atmosphere" in the tunes that she's not "interested in." She further specified what kind of atmosphere she is looking for:

> Some of [the tunes] are pretty fast and they are more kind of rhythmic in the nature that they are sung. Yeah, those would be instances where it doesn't really work for the kind of aesthetics I want to evoke, and I'm more interested in that kind of hypnotic, advanced, transcendental, religious madness.

Once the "Columbiana" recording had successfully passed the quality check, Kirchenbauer evidently found this specific atmosphere in it. The tempo might have fit her ideas (at around 110 bpm, the tempo of the recording almost correlates with the final track's 120 bpm), and there are not too many dissonances or yelling voices. However, these are only two aspects among others that might have influenced Kirchenbauer's decision to work with the Columbiana recording. It becomes clear that, although Kirchenbauer's sampling approach is dominated by the context of the sampled material, the selection of particular samples is led by aesthetic considerations.

Although Kirchenbauer's sampling approach is dominated by the context of the sampled material, the selection of particular samples is led by aesthetic considerations.

Beyond contextual and material reasons, I have identified two procedural reasons behind Kirchenbauer's sampling practice. These address the question of general sampling motivations rather than the reasoning behind particular decisions. For Kirchenbauer, sampling also serves as a strategy of limitation. By radically focusing on a single corpus of sampling material, she limits the possibilities of musical production. She explained this when recalling how she started working with Sacred Harp tunes:

> When I was working on my first record, I had a residency in Canada for five weeks and I thought, okay, let's have a look at this Sacred Harp stuff and let's see if I can do anything with it. I decided to work with it and if it didn't work, then I wouldn't continue. That was kind of my idea. And it really helps me to limit myself relatively rigorously. Because if I just listened to any kind of music and then saw what samples... I think I would miss a little bit a reason that

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18   Own translation. Original quote: "…ich merke relativ schnell, wenn der Rhythmus zu schnell ist oder es zu geschrien und stampfig ist, dass ich da nichts machen kann."

goes beyond the musical.[19]

On another occasion, she also underlined that she considers "a certain form of 'being limited' in producing [as] very interesting" and as "quite productive."[20] Kirchenbauer explained that she is trying to plunge as deep into the material as possible to see what can be done with it—at the time of my research this process was not yet complete. She consciously confronts the aesthetic particularities of the material, which are in this case quite challenging—thanks to its low sound quality and high levels of dissonance, to name just two aspects. It is key to her approach that she first defines, from a contextual point of view, what kind of material she wants to work with before selecting her samples according to aesthetic criteria: "I guess if those aesthetic questions came first then everything would sound quite different. There is this conceptual decision and then, of course, aesthetic questions arise."[21] In an era of limitless possibilities in music production, this approach offers a welcome alternative, and sampling provides a useful framework.

In an era of limitless possibilities in music production, sampling provides a useful framework.

There is another "procedural" reason for sampling: it allows Kirchenbauer to work on her own. In the past she was engaged in a few band projects, before deciding to continue working alone. She stresses the independence that she now enjoys regarding other musicians, technical gear, and places of production:

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> *Basically, I am really glad to be working alone and to have found forms of production that allow me to be very, very independent and that let me produce with very limited means, where I don't need kind of a studio to record.*[22]

Sampling supports this workflow. Moreover, it allows the producer to circumvent personal limitations in terms of the ability to play an instrument or to sing. Several times, Kirchenbauer stressed that she regards her own singing voice as limited. After a few experiments, she was never confident with using it in her productions. Instead, she relies on vocal samples.

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19   Own translation. Original quote: "Als ich die erste EP gemacht hab, hatte ich auch so eine Residency in Kanada für fünf Wochen und ich dachte, okay, ich gucke mal dieses Sacred-Harp-Zeug an und gucke, ob ich damit was machen kann und ich hatte mich halt entschieden, einfach nur damit zu arbeiten, wenn es irgendwie nicht klappt, dann halt nicht aber das war so ein bisschen mein Plan. Und mir hilft das auf jeden Fall, das relativ eng abzugrenzen. Weil, wenn ich einfach nur jegliche Form von Musik hören würde und dann irgendwie gucke, welche Samples... ich glaube, dann würde mir so ein bisschen der Grund fehlen, der über das Musikalische hinaus geht."
20   Own translation. Original quote: "Ich glaube, dass ich so eine gewisse Form von 'Limitiert-Sein' im Produzieren ganz interessant finde oder auch ganz produktiv finde."
21   Own translation. Original quote: "Ich glaube, wenn diese ästhetischen Fragen davorstehen würden, würde das alles ganz anders klingen. Es gibt halt diese konzeptionelle Entscheidung und dann stellen sich natürlich ästhetische Fragen."
22   Own translation. Original quote: "Aber eigentlich bin ich schon sehr froh damit, allein zu arbeiten, und Produktionsformen gefunden zu haben, wo ich sehr, sehr unabhängig bin und mit sehr wenigen Mitteln produzieren kann, wo ich nicht irgendwie ein Studio brauche, wo ich Aufnahmen machen muss."

(b) Attitude

The next step of this analysis is to focus on the producer's attitude towards the sampled material: an attitude that was ambivalent when she started to work with Sacred Harp tunes. Kirchenbauer confessed that she considered the tunes "completely strange, white religion nonsense."[23] Yet she also felt empathy with individual voices:

> *It still happens that with some individual voices that are really outstanding, that are totally off… I'm heavily interested in these people and I think, "Ok, they are dead now, but…" And I ask myself sometimes, "Who is this woman singing off-key with such confidence?" Things like that fascinate me.*[24]

Kirchenbauer recalled a mixture of fun and fascination in her initial approach to the material, which she found aesthetically appealing to work with. However, after having heard hundreds of these Sacred Harp songs over more than two years of working with the same corpus, her relationship to the material slowly shifted. As she told me, she lost some of her initial fascination for it, and thus the joy of working with it. Working with these tunes became more of a routine; the material increasingly lost its personal and human side. This shift in attitude might also, at least to some extent, explain her sampling approach in "STABILIZED, YES!" The track appears on the second COOL FOR YOU EP working with Sacred Harp tunes. While, in previous productions, the producer left larger parts of the sampled tunes intact, she has now completely and uncompromisingly shredded the material.

While, in previous productions, the producer left larger parts of the sampled tunes intact, she has now completely and uncompromisingly shredded the material.

From the previous discussion it becomes apparent that Kirchenbauer approaches the material critically. Her distance from religion and the church further supports this argument. However, she emphasized that this is always a twofold relationship:

> *You are working* on *something at the same time as you are working* with *something. Although I am somehow working* with *these samples with a critical attitude, I am nevertheless also working* with *them and my music then also sounds like them a bit. This is like, you're basically against it but at the same time also with it. So, it's a bit complex, which makes it even harder to grasp, because you can still find something that makes it exciting, interesting, or you consider it as beautiful, at the same time, you relate to it critically. And it basically opens up a position that isn't just*

23 Own translation. Original quote: "(…) total schräger, weisser Religions-Quatsch."
24 Own translation. Original quote: "Das gibts immer noch, das ich so zu einzelnen Stimmen, die so total herausragend, total schief sind… da interessiere ich mich auch total krass für die Leute, und denke 'ah die sind ja tot, aber…' Da frage ich mich dann manchmal, 'wer ist diese Frau, die irgendwie so selbstbewusst daneben singt?' Sowas fasziniert mich."

critical in the sense of, "I am working with it because I'm against it," but it is basically almost a third option between working affirmative-referentially or working critical-referentially.[25]

It is the tension between working affirmatively *and* at the same time critically with the sampling material that characterizes the sampling process in "STABILIZED, YES!" It is from this tension that the producer draws part of her artistic motivation. Where referential musical strategies are political, one is tempted to analyze them as largely either critical or affirmative. In contrast, this case study illustrates that the attitudes behind sampling processes can be multi-faceted and deserve precise examination to avoid hasty misinterpretation. Especially if, as in the present case, a predominantly critical approach is assumed in the first place.[26]

(c) Visibility

How visible is this sampling strategy? What information could potentially be received by the listener, and what remains concealed? The FOV summarizes the most relevant aspects. Accordingly, the present sampling strategy appears almost fully visible. Three faders are at their highest positions and one fader slightly below.

The sample-clips are perfectly audible (fader number 1); for the producer, the sampling material clearly refers to the Sacred Harp tradition and its colonial history (fader number 3); and Kirchenbauer proactively discusses her sampling material in public—see the interviews and promo texts cited above, relating to both of her EPs (fader number 5). The processing of the clips, with numerous short cuts, constant repetition, and pitch effects, further signals that a voice sample has been used (fader number 2). In the break (bars 33–44), the sample-clips are longer and thus reveal their sampled character. However, this fader is not at its highest position, because it remains unclear whether the producer has used voices from external sound material or recorded them herself (self-sampling).

25 Own translation. Original quote: "Dass man über oder zu was arbeitet und gleichzeitig auch mit etwas arbeitet. Also obwohl ich irgendwie kritisch in irgendeiner Form mit diesen Samples arbeite, arbeite ich trotzdem mit denen und meine Musik klingt halt nach denen auch so ein bisschen. Das ist so, dass man eigentlich dagegen ist, aber gleichzeitig auch mit. Und deshalb so ein bisschen komplex ist, was dann das auch so ein bisschen schwerer zu fassen macht, weil man findet trotzdem was darin, was man irgendwie spannend, interessant, oder auch schön findet, gleichzeitig bezieht man sich kritisch darüber und es macht eigentlich auch so eine Position auf, die nicht nur kritisch ist im Sinne von, 'ich arbeite dazu, weil ich dagegen bin', sondern es ist eigentlich fast so eine dritte Option zwischen affirmativ-referentiell arbeiten oder kritisch-referentiell arbeiten."
26 After the completion of my study, Kirchenbauer reflected on her approach to sampling Sacred Harp in an article for my publication *Sampling Politics Today* (Kirchenbauer 2020).
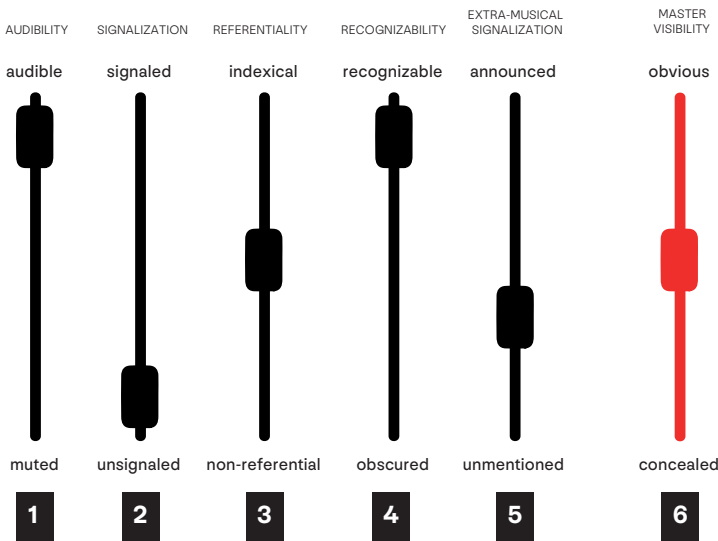
Figure 6.6: FOV: sample visibility in "STABILIZED, YES!"

The only fader that sits at a lower position is fader number 4, which indicates the degree of recognizability. Due to heavy manipulation, the sample-clips remain obscured. I doubt that anyone with specific knowledge of and experience in Sacred Harp singing would recognize the source without receiving additional information. However, since this is only an assumption which I could not verify, I positioned this fader slightly above zero.

The obscurity of the sample in terms of recognizability does not affect the overall visibility of this sampling strategy. This is mostly due to the extra-musical signalization of the sample. In conclusion, and drawing on the three general fields of sampling motives introduced earlier, I identify a communicational motive behind this sampling strategy. Hence, Kirchenbauer wanted to communicate something with her music by using sampling as a production method. This communicational motive is finally combined with a strong interest in the content of the sampling material.

Conclusion and Prospect

Sampling as a technique allows me to engage with material in a critical manner. I'm not too interested in the mere creation of aesthetics but more in how a medium functions culturally and politically, so sampling lets me examine that in a way other modes of composition don't. It allows me to offer a more conceptual approach to music-making and to discuss how music is used and received, on a broader historical and political level, but also on a more personal affective level.

This quotation by the producer Vika Kirchenbauer illustrates the significance of the production technique of sampling in all tracks released through her electronic music project COOL FOR YOU, among them "STABILIZED, YES!" I identify six aspects that make sampling essential in this case study: the processed sampling material is (a) connected with particular extra-musical subjects; (b) external; (c) aesthetically interesting; (d) pre-recorded; (e) exclusive; and (f) it allows for the limitation of the composition process. Many of these aspects might not only apply to sampling, but also to other modes of musical borrowing such as quotation. However, in combination, these aspects can be addressed through sampling only. This case study exemplifies the potential of sampling as a compositional strategy and illustrates the possibility, through sampling sound material, of connecting and intertwining a broad range of levels of meaning.

(a) Context

The central aspect in the present case study might be the sampling material's linkage with various extra-musical subjects. For Kirchenbauer, processing these tunes means dealing with the historical-political context of Sacred Harp. Sampling allows her to work conceptually on the subject of colonial power relations (active and neutral perspectives in the SSR). Moreover, the sampling material enables a discussion on the subject of community (personal and neutral perspectives). This connection with extra-musical subjects is what the producer means by "a more conceptual approach," and this is what she aims for with her art in general.

The central aspect might be the sampling material's linkage with various extra-musical subjects.

See quotation at the beginning of this chapter.

    The political potential of this sampling strategy becomes apparent: material that is politically and symbolically loaded (through its colonial context) is combined with a political intention. The result is a critique—or, in Kirchenbauer's own words, "the deconstruction"—of harmonies as a colonizing force. It is through what I call "extended chopping" that Kirchenbauer literally deconstructs her source material. Firstly, deconstruction here means total fragmentation of the source (cutting samples into pieces of 0.25 to 1 seconds in length), followed by a radical rearrangement of the sample-clips and their alienation (raising of pitch). This method is combined with a sharp sound aesthetic to evoke an impression of madness, in the producer's own words "craziness." In two emails exchanged with the mastering engineer for the *MOOD MANAGEMENT* EP, Kirchenbauer briefly commented on her conception of sound behind the track. She highlights the break in the middle of the track in particular:

> *In the last track there's also an annoying bit around 1:15 that just feels "cheap" and "un-eq'd"… again, I like that scratchiness and annoyance that goes through the whole*

sample use in that track.

My feeling is that some of the higher frequencies got shaved off and take some of the piercing quality off the melody sample track—it sounds more melodic, less punctuated crazy :)

By using the destructive potential of sampling in combination with sharp aesthetics, Kirchenbauer composes music as a political commentary. There is no need for her to involve comprehensible lyrics or, for example, a well-known protest sample, to achieve this. However, to reach a high degree of visibility and to ensure that the commentary can still be read, Kirchenbauer needs to communicate contextual information alongside her releases.

(b) Origin

The second aspect that makes sampling essential in this case reveals a tension of distance. On the one hand, the sampling material is clearly external. It derives from a religious U.S. tradition, while the producer is European and opposes religion in general and the Christian church in particular. On the other hand, it is crucial that the material is close to the producer's own position, at least to some degree. As I have argued, Kirchenbauer legitimates the use of the Sacred Harp material with reference to its origin in a white context and her own self-conception as being part of a Christian-influenced society. Hence, the sampling material simultaneously appears internal *and* external, as self *and* other. Kirchenbauer recognized this tension as a contradiction:

> *I think on a critical level I don't find it uninteresting that there are some contradictions. On the one hand, I heavily chop up the material and alter it so that the reference is not recognizable. On the other hand, it is important that there is this discursive, verbal layer in interviews and press releases, to make it visible.[27]*

However, this tension is not only an essential part of the sampling process but of the track itself as an artistic statement. As Kirchenbauer does not completely deconstruct her sample material, the tension survives the process of production. She keeps the voices audible and leaves the relative pitches intact—all sample-clips are equally transposed. In this way, she reveals her sources. The process of appropriation is unfinished, pointing to the producer's ongoing negotiation of her critical stance on the material.

The fact that the sampled material is external finally confers

By using the destructive potential of sampling in combination with sharp aesthetics, Kirchenbauer composes music as a political commentary.

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27   Own translation. Original quote: "Ich glaube so auf einer kritischen Ebene finde ich es nicht uninteressant, dass es so Widersprüche gibt. Zum einen zerhacke ich das Material so krass und verändere es, dass die Referenz nicht erkenntlich ist. Zum anderen ist es wichtig, dass es diese diskursive, verbale Ebene in Interviews und Pressetexten gibt, die das erst sichtbar macht."

another, rather utilitarian advantage: the producer can still use vocal recordings in spite of not feeling comfortable singing herself.

(c) Aesthetics

Although the contextual approach is vital for this sampling strategy, as I have shown, the material approach plays a critical role too. It is crucial that the sampling material is aesthetically appealing. Here the most significant factor is the layering of various dissonances due to the involvement of non-educated singers in the recordings. In our conversations, Kirchenbauer further emphasized the "mildly exotic" harmonic structure of Sacred Harp tunes.

(d) Material Nature

All of these aspects—connection to extra-musical subjects, the tension of distance, and aesthetic appeal—could be equally achieved by sampling one's own recordings of a contemporary Sacred Harp convention. Sacred Harp conventions take place regularly, even in Berlin, where the producer lives. Furthermore, new recordings are potentially of much better quality than historical material from an archive. Kirchenbauer justified the use of prerecorded material mainly with her personal character and the privateness of the sampled tradition:

> *I think I really like the original material. The other thing with this Sacred Harp stuff is that actually the idea is not to record it, it is not meant to be public. Everyone sings along; there is no audience. Everyone who is there sings, it is not about performing live or reproducing or recording it. You can find a few things on YouTube from bigger conventions. But the motto of these very small groups is basically that it is about participation and not about performance or recording, it's about the moment. And I think I would feel a bit strange not being part of it and then coming in and announcing with a microphone, "Hey, can I record you?" if, for the people who are doing it, it's about something else. Yes, I think it's a possibility, definitely, but I think it wouldn't suit me. Or it would go against my character, I think.*[28]

28 Own translation. Original quote: "Ich glaube, ich mag das Originalmaterial schon ganz gerne. Das andere ist bei diesem Sacred-Harp-Zeug, dass halt eigentlich die Idee nicht ist, dass es aufgenommen wird, sondern das ist eben auch nicht für Publikum, sondern alle singen mit, es gibt kein Publikum; alle, die da sind singen und es geht halt nicht darum dass es so performt wird live oder dass es reproduziert oder aufgenommen ist; also man findet schon auf YouTube so ein paar Sachen, von so grösseren Konferenzen, aber das ist eigentlich so ein bisschen ein Motto auch von so auch diesen ganzen kleinen Gruppen, das es eben um Teilnahme geht und nicht um Performance oder Aufnahme, sondern um den Moment und ich glaube, ich würde mich ein bisschen schräg fühlen, ohne Teil davon zu sein und dann rein zu kommen, mit einem Mikro und zu sagen, 'Hey, könnte ich euch aufnehmen?', wenn es eigentlich für die Leute, die das machen, um etwas anderes geht. Ja, ich glaube, also es ist sicher eine Möglichkeit, aber ich glaube, es würde mir nicht so liegen. Oder es würde glaube ich auch meinem Charakter widerstreben."

When reading a draft of this book, Kirchenbauer added another thought on this problem. She wrote:

> *To record would also contain an aspect of documentation. But I can only occupy this position with difficulty. In most contexts I just stand out too much (ambiguity of gender for example), in such a way that I would become the object of the gaze rather than vice versa, and my presence would cause a situation to change more strongly than with other people.*[29]

This quotation illustrates that sampling is used to solve problems of access. It becomes obvious that this is a decision not only for reasons of convenience—which may be valid as well—but reflecting the position of the producer and the potential sound recordist and his/her interaction with their surroundings.

(e) Exclusiveness

Although the fifth aspect was not mentioned by Kirchenbauer, I assume that it has played a role: as far as I know, there are no other artists who use this material artistically. Furthermore, the tradition of Sacred Harp is not widely known in Europe. That makes the material exclusive and therefore more attractive, and offers a niche in which the artist can work on an independent artistic statement.

(f) Limitation

Finally, the constraint of a limited corpus of material allows the producer to reduce the limitless possibilities of musical production.

■

I have illustrated a sampling strategy that reveals seismographic substance—the way we can connect to world knowledge—on various levels. Through this analysis I have, among other aspects, discussed historical relationships (the postcolonial entanglement of music); negotiations of identity (social exclusion in genderqueer communities, the tension of distance); and the realities of music production for laptop producers (combining samples and drum machine beats into complex artistic statements). As Kirchenbauer mentioned in the quotation introducing this case study, she uses the political as "a lens through which to look at the world," and at her own personality (Kirchenbauer in Hearte 2018, 56).

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[29] Own translation. Original quote: "Ich glaube, da spielt auch ein Aspekt rein, der für mich etwas schwierig ist. Das Aufnehmen hätte etwas dokumentarisches, aber ich kann diese Position nur schwer einnehmen. Aus den meisten Kontexten falle ich einfach zu sehr raus (Geschlechtsuneindeutigkeit zum Beispiel), sodass ich eher das Objekt des Blickes werde als andersrum und sich durch meine Präsenz eine Situation stärker verändert als das bei anderen Leuten der Fall wäre."

However, the last of those aspects, the realities of laptop production, was present implicitly rather than explicitly addressed. More thorough anthropological fieldwork would be needed to gain further insights into the realities of the artist's production and living environment. This could, potentially, lead to a conception of sampling as an enabling and thus "democratic" tool for the expression of opinion.[30] I can identify several indicators which support this interpretation: by using sampling, Kirchenbauer does not need to rely on expensive technical equipment and external sites of production; she is independent from other musicians; and she can overcome personal limitations in music making.

Other questions that could be addressed by further studies relate to reception: how is the track and the underlying concept received by listeners? Are there discrepancies between the intention of the producer and the public's interpretations? Or, more generally: does popular music reach a broader audience when there is an extra-musical concept behind it? A critical perspective could even focus on discursive questions that remain absent from this analysis: what is the significance of Kirchenbauer sampling a recording from the 1950s Sacred Harp revival, which is itself based on particular discourses and constructions of a tradition (Miller 2010)? To which discourses does Kirchenbauer connect, and is she even reproducing them?

■

I close this chapter with a brief discussion of the reasons why the producer decided to contribute to this study. Kirchenbauer explained that she was first of all curious about my view of her music. She told me she is usually afraid of taking too much space when talking about her ideas and concepts without being explicitly asked about them. In my case, she could assume that there was someone who was interested in her music, who had a microphone, and who asked questions. These factors enabled her to reflect on her music without being afraid of annoying her conversational partner. She told me that she considered my interviews a good opportunity to further develop her own conceptual thoughts about her music. These considerations speak of an open and honest approach to my research, which I also experienced during our conversations.

Moreover, when I first requested a conversation, she regularly checked the website of the music platform Norient and considered it an interesting project. Hence, the non-academic activities of the researcher had a direct impact on access to the case study. On the other hand, she also had doubts about becoming a mere object of

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30   I put the term democratic in quotation marks because I do not want to fuel mystifying conceptions of sampling. The application of sampling depends on the availability of technological tools. Sampling could only be described as democratic if these tools were accessible to all, which is obviously not the case.

knowledge production. That is why she refused to let me directly observe one of her production sessions: "That would be a bit 'zoo-ey,' I would definitely feel like an object of science then."[31]

Out of all of the case studies, this analysis has offered the most detailed examination of its source material. There are three main reasons for this. Firstly, the examined material contains many layers of meaning (compared with the chain sound in "Libres" for example). Each layer brings with it a different network of references, meanings, and thus possible links for further interpretation. Secondly, I could access various academic sources on the history, theory, and practice of Sacred Harp. For other tracks (e.g. "kenats" or "Perversas") this is not the case to the same extent. Thirdly, I could apply my own knowledge of both European musical traditions and the cultural context in which the producer lives (Germany). This provided a broader and more informed basis on which the analysis evolved.

These reasons illustrate both a limitation and an opportunity for the methodological approach of <u>trackology</u>. The opportunity is that this method leads to unexpected fields, topics, and subjects. In today's globally connected world we have to deal with unexpected and unfamiliar phenomena on a daily basis, and we need ways to make sense of them. This is also a limitation: it would be far beyond the scope of this book to examine each context in full detail. However, there is one possible solution to this problem. An expansion of the present study with further perspectives by other scholars, who could connect to different knowledge and academic sources and discourses, would substantially enhance the present analysis. The potential for such further perspectives is almost limitless.

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The following analysis of "kenats" now focuses on a sampling strategy that is less visible than COOL FOR YOU's "STABILIZED, YES!" But this case study will reveal an even more complex net of reasons for sampling. It will thus illustrate, in particular, how the SSR can be productively applied as a tool for analysis.

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31   Own translation. Original quote: "…weil es ein bisschen zu 'zooig' wird, also da fühle ich mich dann wirklich als Objekt der Wissenschaft."

7
"kenats" by Lara Sarkissian: a Political Signature

In this track, sampling expresses Armenianness and challenges traditional gender roles.

Lara Sarkissian is a young multimedia artist, born in 1992 and based in San Francisco, California, and the surrounding Bay Area.[1] On her website, she presents herself as a sound artist, composer, and film-maker engaged in broad cultural activities, from leading a label, network, and event series called Club Chai[2] to performing as a DJ under the pseudonym FOOZOOL. She holds a bachelor's degree in interdisciplinary studies from the University of California, Berkeley (2014). Sarkissian's parents are of Armenian descent. Before immi-grating to the U.S. in the late 1970s, they lived in Tehran, Iran. Ac-cordingly, Sarkissian was raised in an Armenian diaspora communi-ty in the Bay Area. She not only reflected on this experience in her final thesis for her studies (titled *Diaspora Identity and Mobilization through Art Technologies and New Media*) but also does so through her visual and musical productions, in which she makes extensive use of sampling.

In her early years, Sarkissian played drums. She was taught by a friend and was part of a garage rock band for a short time. The band eventually dissolved because they could not find a place to rehearse. Sarkissian also had some formal piano tuition, with which

1   Unless otherwise stated, this chapter is based on email conversations that took place between June 17, 2016 and March 14, 2018; one interview via Skype on September 9, 2016; fieldwork in Karlsruhe, Germany, between March 20 and April 5, 2018, including six longer interviews and two direct observation sessions; and one conversation in Berlin on April 6, 2018.
2   Club Chai ceased its activity during the completion of this book in early 2021.

she did not continue. As she told me, this is something that children in the Armenian community are almost forced to do. She embarked on her path as an electronic music producer and sound artist only quite recently. While studying abroad—one semester at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark, in 2013—she attended a course on sound for film. This course motivated her to begin making her own sound productions beyond film. At the time of my research, Sarkissian was trying to make a living exclusively from her cultural and musical activities. As this was still not fully possible, she was reliant on part-time jobs, mostly administrative roles in the San Francisco film industry.

Sarkissian is another example of a 21st century laptop producer working in the field of experimental electronica. Her compositions explore the possibilities between ambient and club genres, processing a great range of samples from Armenian culture, drones, environmental sounds, and reminiscences of dance-oriented club beats. She still lives with her family and her typical producing environment is her home; her own (bed)room or the family's living room. She only recently started working with a booking agent, who takes care of her bookings for North America. Sarkissian herself manages her bookings in other regions of the world, as well as the release of her tracks. She publishes her compositions under her birth name on the online platforms SoundCloud and Bandcamp. Based on the likes she has received on SoundCloud, her listenership appears to be spread globally.

I discovered Sarkissian's music through a post of her track "kenats" on the music blog *Generation Bass*, which I was following while researching tracks for this study (DJ Umb 2016).[3] Released in January 2016 on SoundCloud, "kenats" was the second track Sarkissian had ever published. In five years (as of July 2021) the track has reached almost 3,512 plays, 122 likes, and 10 reposts. In 2018, Sarkissian also uploaded the track to Bandcamp.

The track serves as an ideal case study for two main reasons. First, it is a characteristic example of Lara Sarkissian's sampling practice. Through sampling, she debates questions regarding gender, religion, social justice, and her own American Armenian identity. This sampling strategy is, by definition, political. However, compared with the previous case study, the perspective here is much more personal than active. Second, due to the track's brevity (1:55) and simple construction, it is possible to completely disassemble it in the analysis. As the case studies which follow illustrate, this is not always the case, and makes analysis much more feasible here.

Through sampling, Sarkission debates questions regarding gender, religion, social justice, and her own American Armenian identity.

While the present chapter will only focus on an analysis of "kenats," I will revisit the producer's sampling strategies in an interlude later in this book. There, I will expand the analysis in this

3   By its own description, *Generation Bass* "focuses predominantly on introducing dance flavours from all over the globe" (Generation Bass 2018).

single-track case study with a reflection on a direct observation session of another of Sarkissian's sampling processes, and discuss how such an additional perspective can further deepen the analysis.

Background: Armenian Diaspora

The sociocultural context of the Armenian diaspora plays a crucial role in the analysis of both this case study and the sampling process discussed in Chapter 11. Armenians have lived in U.S. diaspora communities since at least the end of the 19th century. They arrived in several waves, one of the most substantial of which followed the Armenian genocide committed by Young Turk troops of the Ottoman empire in 1915. Today, between 460,000 (official census number) and 1.5 million (estimates) Armenian Americans live in the U.S., compared to an estimated population of 3 million people in Armenia (Wikipedia 2019b). California is home to the largest Armenian communities in the U.S., with "the largest single concentration of Armenians (...) outside of Armenia" in Los Angeles (Alexander 2008).

When discussing diaspora communities, we often refer to the depiction of a shared identity. Scholars have long discussed and critiqued this endeavor. As the notion of identity plays a role in the analysis which follows, it is worth taking a closer look at it—though this study does not provide a thorough exploration. It is helpful to rely here on a distinction made by Hratch Tchilingirian. In an essay on the question "What is 'Armenian' in Armenian identity?" he distinguishes between Armenian identity and the notion of Armenianness. The first describes the ascription of ethnic attributes. Tchilingirian compares Armenian identity to an "'ethnic passport,' which one possesses to be identified with a group or a country." The second refers to "the cultural aspect." It describes "what one does with that ethnic passport, how far and deep one travels into the 'Armenian world'" (Tchilingirian 2018, 3).

According to Tchilingirian, the way in which Armenian diasporans express Armenianness today has changed from traditional to symbolic. Among the third or fourth post-genocide generation—Sarkissian belongs to the third—Armenian identity has become "a matter of choice" rather than a "matter of obligation," as Tchilingirian explains:

> Practicing one's Armenianness is not dependent only on participation in traditional community life, but there are myriad of other choices in today's ultra-connected world where symbolic ethnicity could be lived or experienced. (4)

Our case study of "kenats" will reveal sampling to be a strategy for living, experiencing, and expressing Armenianness.

I have so far used the term "diaspora" without further commentary. Historically, the term was applied to Jewish communities living

outside their homeland. There is evidence that it has also been used to describe Armenian dispersion for a long time (Slobin 2012, 96). However, as Mark Slobin points out, the meaning of diaspora substantially expanded towards the end of the 20th century. Now, it refers to all kinds of groups living outside their homelands. The concept of "home" has thereby provoked many critical debates. Scholars have highlighted that the homeland could be imagined or real, and that the "host country" becomes home as well. In *Music and the Armenian Diaspora*, Sylvia A. Alajaji writes of a "plurality of home(s)" experienced within diasporic communities (Alajaji 2015, 11). Tina Ramnarine, meanwhile, has examined the various relations between "home" and "diaspora" and suggested the inclusion of home within the diasporic space itself (Ramnarine 2007, 21). Lara Sarkissian's understanding of the diaspora should be located somewhere between these two concepts. She uses the term vividly and depicts herself as "a diasporan" by simultaneously locating her home in the California Bay Area.

The genocide is one of the most significant reasons why the notion of the diaspora is still highly relevant for young American Armenians. Flora Keshgegian (2006, 101) has concluded that the Armenian diasporan identity is at least partially constituted "in relation to a past trauma." She continues by analyzing the characteristic aspects and dynamics of a trauma, identifying them as "present in the lives of genocide survivors and diasporans" (103). This presence is further intensified by the ongoing refusal of the governments of Turkey, the U.S., and many other countries to call the actions of the Ottoman troops in 1915 genocide.[4] "Pressing them to do so has been the Armenian diaspora's rallying cause for decades," writes Alajaji (2015, 5); a view shared by Keshgegian (2006, 108).

My conversations with Lara Sarkissian, who is of the third post-genocide generation, largely confirmed these analyses. The genocide, and particularly its denial, was repeatedly a topic of our interviews and informal conversations. She mentioned the then recently published documentary The *Architects of Denial* (2017), and we discussed the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, a disputed territory in Azerbaijan with a majority ethnic Armenian population, which is claimed as Armenian land (Keshgegian 2006, 103–8). Relating to Sarkissian's sampling strategies, this topic will become particularly relevant in the interlude later. For now, I will focus on an analysis of the track "kenats."

Our case study of "kenats" will reveal sampling to be a strategy for living, experiencing, and expressing Armenianness.

4   On April 24, 2021, Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day, the president of the United States, Joe Biden, officially referred to the events as genocide.

Sample Source

In "kenats," Lara Sarkissian samples external, musical source material, consisting of a keyboard melody taken from a video accessed on YouTube (Warrakhjan 2011). The video is labeled "Armenian Keyboard pa2 X6 Hrach," and was uploaded by the user howannes warrakhjan on February 20, 2011. As of February 2021, the video has 85,743 views, 35 comments, 229 likes, and 14 dislikes.[5] It shows two fixed images of a middle-aged male keyboardist playing simultaneously on two keyboards: a KORG Pa2X PRO with his left hand and a Roland Fantom-X6 with his right. Both images contain date and time stamps, meaning we can assume that the pictures—or the original video—were recorded on February 20, 2011 (the day of the upload), at around 2:42 p.m., with a camcorder.
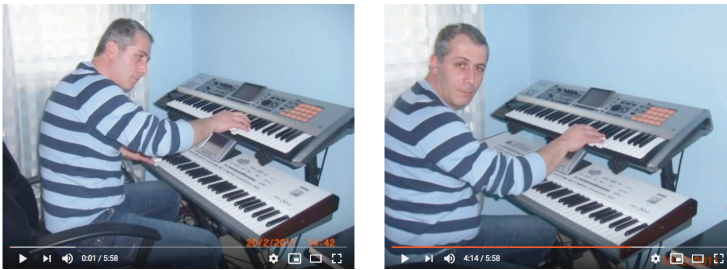
Figure 7.1: YouTube screenshots of the sample source of "kenats" (Warrakhjan 2011)

The second image, in which the keyboardist looks directly into the camera, appears in the second part of the video. The video's audio track starts with a bourdon note, processed with some reverb, shortly joined by another layer of the same note for a fuller sound. This note underpins the video for its duration. It was likely played on the KORG Pa2X PRO, as suggested by other videos from the same uploader, in which the keyboardist's playing technique becomes clearer, and by the characteristics of the keyboard itself, advertised by the manufacturer KORG as having functions (such as auto accompaniment) that support solo entertainers:

> We've listened. The Pa2xpro easily fulfils virtually any wish keyboardists, entertainers, solo entertainers, and hobby musicians could have. The intuitive handling, never-ending performance, an interactivity and sound quality that cannot be found elsewhere, and countless useful functions speak for themselves—in the language of "music." (...) The result is the most complete, musical—well, the best keyboard with auto accompaniment that has ever been built

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[5] In the course of this project, the views increased from 60,000 (October 2016) to 79,000 (June 2019), to almost 86,000 (July 2021). The comments increased from 31 (March 2018) to 37 (June 2019) and then decreased to 35 (July 2021).

After a few beats the musician plays an agile melody with an improvisational character, most likely with his right hand—since the melody is played in a higher pitch range—on the Roland Fantom-X6. This intro ends at around 0:40, at which point the keyboardist triggers some percussion with an accompanying sound tapestry, again most likely on the KORG Pa2X PRO. The improvisation in the right hand lasts for about four minutes before both rhythm and accompanying pattern change and, after a short break, the improvisation starts once again. The music, and the recording itself, stop quite abruptly at 5:58.

Comparing the video's visual information with other uploads from the same musician, it seems likely that the video was recorded in the musician's apartment. Factors suggesting this include the visibly confined space as well as the keyboardist's casual clothing, which could indicate a private context. In contrast, another video (Warrakhjan 2015) shows the same keyboardist in a rehearsal context at a community hall. Considering the festively decorated venue, I suggest that this video shows ongoing preparations for a party—potentially a wedding—and that the musician acts as an entertainer for private parties.

The title of the video (Armenian Keyboard) and the name of the uploader (Howannes Warrakhjan) indicate the keyboardist's probable Armenian origins. We cannot know whether the musician lives in Armenia or in a diaspora community elsewhere in the world. The video title further includes the keyboardist's Armenian given name (Hrach), suggesting that the uploader and the keyboardist are not the same person. Finally, the video title (pa2 X6) refers to the keyboard models featured. This could indicate that the main aim of these videos is the presentation and demonstration of various keyboard models. This observation is supported by the music's improvisational character, the abrupt ending, the change of rhythm and accompanying patterns, and by similar melodic phrases appearing in other videos, played on different keyboards.[7]

6 Own translation. Original quote: "Wir haben zugehört. Das Pa2xpro erfüllt Keyboardern, Entertainern, Alleinunterhaltern und Hobbymusikern spielend jeden auch noch so ausgefallenen Wunsch. Die intuitive Bedienung, Leistung bis zum Abwinken, eine Interaktivität und Klangqualität, die man sonst nirgends findet und unzählige praktische Funktionen sprechen eine eindeutige Sprache – die Sprache ist 'Musik'. (...) Das Ergebnis ist das kompletteste, musikalischste, ja beste Begleitautomatik-Keyboard, welches KORG jemals gebaut hat: das neue KORG Pa2Xpro."

7 I cannot verify whether the sampled video's image and audio stem from the same situation. On the other hand, I cannot find any indication that this is not the case.

Sample Processing

In "kenats," Lara Sarkissian uses the introduction of the video in full, from around 0:03 to 0:44. She found the sample while browsing YouTube, most probably by typing the keywords "Armenian" and "Keyboard" into the search bar. In the track's Live folder, which she later shared with me, she had saved three audio files with similar titles, all beginning with "Armenian Keyboard." These files' date displays show that all of them were converted from YouTube on the same date—January 18, 2016, between 9:56 and 10:32 a.m. The file that she processed in the new composition has the most recent date. The track is structured into an intro, followed by the main part (sixteen bars), then by an outro. The sample is presented in full in the intro. Subsequently, Sarkissian processed four different sample-clips of the original source.

The first sample-clip (S1 in the figures below) consists of only a double note in the keyboard melody, taken from the end of the full-length sample. Tracing the sample-clip in the Live project file and trying to rebuild it, I found that Sarkissian had cut a tiny clip (of less than half a second) out of her original selection to make the sample-clip fit into the composition. I indicate this erased micro-clip with dotted lines in Figure 7.3. Sarkissian looped sample-clip 1 as a rhythmic pattern, with a total of sixteen repetitions, if one considers the end of the full-length sample in the first bar as its first appearance. Sample-clips number 3 and 4 cut out two further parts of the full-length sample—both with a length of around 4.5 seconds, and both of which are repeated once in the new composition. Sample-clip number 4 is around 10.5 seconds long and functions as the track's outro.
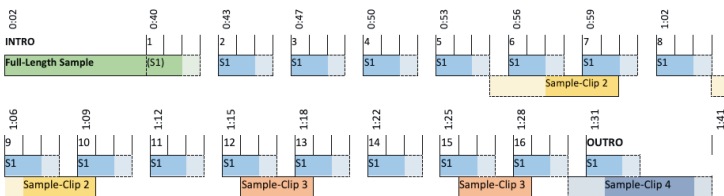
Figure 7.2: Sample arrangement in "kenats"
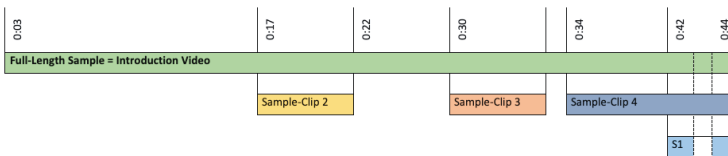
Figure 7.3: Sample chopping in "kenats"

Figure 7.2 illustrates the arrangement of all sample-clips in the composition, while Figure 7.3 demonstrates the chopping of the sample into smaller clips. The second figure especially highlights that, after the full-length presentation of the sample in the introduction, sample-clips 2–4 form a fragmented repetition of the entire sample. Furthermore, the dotted lines in the first figure indicate when the audio clips in Live extend beyond what is heard or recognized in the final mix.

This track is not quantized. Hence, these figures only approximately represent the positions of the elements in relation to the suggested rhythmic grid. Such a mode of display is still logical since Sarkissian imagined a fixed meter when producing the track. Rather than consistently following this meter in the composition, though, she tried to develop her own groove[8] functioning outside of a fixed meter. This compositional strategy is shown by the various tempos that can be identified in the track. It starts with the tempo of the sample itself (around 80 beats per minute).[9] In the section between 0:30 and 0:40, short percussive stresses (at around 63 bpm) announce the start of the main beat, which comes from a dhol drum sample (at around 74 bpm). In the Live file, the global bpm value is set to 133.33, and does not seem to be significant for the composition.

The constant mixing of tempos is one of Sarkissian's key compositional techniques, as she explained in an interview with the music blog *Tiny Mix Tapes*, relating her compositional approach to visual imagination: "I usually work with having a visual scene in my mind and building with the action, feelings, and plot from that. A clash of tempos and textures just like a visual would feel" (Sarkissian in Iadarola 2016).

The constant mixing of tempos is one of Sarkissian's key techniques.

This visual approach to composition becomes obvious when we consider the arrangement of the sample-clips in Live. Sarkissian used Live's arrangement view, in which all samples are displayed chronologically as they appear in the track. There, she copied, cut, and pasted the clips as follows:
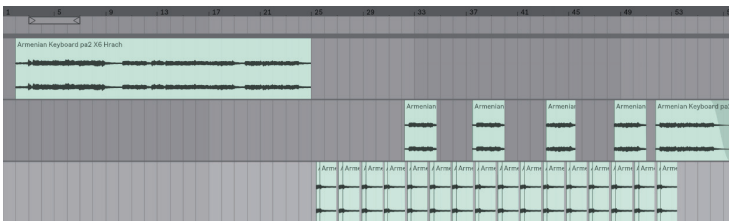
Figure 7.4: Sample arrangement in "kenats" (screenshot from Live)

8   I follow a definition of "groove" by Mark Butler (2006, 326): in its second meaning, he defines groove as "the way in which the rhythmic essence of a piece of music flows or unfolds."

9   It is not possible to firmly establish the sample's tempo because it is an improvisation that does not follow a stable pulse. In contrast, the percussion accompaniment from the keyboard, starting at around 0:46 in the source video, is clearly at 120 bpm.

Sarkissian arranged the sample-clips one after the other, fitting them into the felt rhythm—which explains why she had to cut out a tiny bit of sample-clip 1. Sample-clips 2 and 4 seamlessly follow the preceding instances of sample-clip 1, but neither is audible before the start of the next repetition of sample-clip 1. There are two possible explanations here: either Sarkissian placed these clips as they were, or she placed a shorter clip at the position from which it should be heard, and then subsequently enlarged the excerpt to bridge the gap between the two repetitions of sample-clip 1. In any case, the appearance of the Live project on the screen plays an important role in Sarkissian's production process. (This is especially clear in another of her sampling tactics that I will describe in the interlude chapter later.) In our conversations, she repeatedly emphasized this visual approach. Sometimes, she even chooses a particular audio clip without having listened to it, based on looking at its waveform: "Sometimes, visually things make sense to me before the sound does. I'm like 'Oh, this clip looks like it would fit in with these other clips. Let's see how it sounds!'"

Sometimes, Sarkissian even chooses a particular audio clip without having listened to it, based on looking at its waveform.

In summary, the editing process focused on cutting and arranging the sample. Beyond this, Sarkissian faded out sample-clip 5 and pulled the volume of all clips up to 10.0 decibels, without using any further effects. It is clear that the sample is the undisputed central element of the track. "The sample gave me the outline," she stated. Sarkissian produced the track in a short period of time: only one week passed between downloading the sample (January 18, 2016) and uploading the final track on SoundCloud.[10]

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Sample Visibility and Reasons for Sampling

(a) Reasons for Sampling

I have identified aspects from all four approaches of the SSR in "kenats." In the category of contextual sampling, I consider—in order of significance—the personal, active, and narrative perspectives to be crucial.

Let me begin with the personal perspective. In all of her tracks, Lara Sarkissian samples fragments of Armenian culture such as poetry, clips from documentaries, and sounds from YouTube. She gained the corresponding knowledge not only by growing up in a family of Armenian descent, but also by engaging in various activities

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10 Sarkissian probably uploaded the track one week later, on January 25, 2016. While the Live file itself displays January 18, 2016 as its creation date, all the files in Live's "Samples" folder display January 25. Therefore, it is possible that she exported the file on that day. SoundCloud records January 2016 as the date of upload, without mentioning the exact day.

within the Armenian community. She has volunteered in the worldwide Armenian cultural organization Hamazkayin, is close to one of the four Armenian churches in the Bay Area—the Armenian Apostolic Church—and attended an Armenian elementary school for ten years. There, she learned about Armenian history, music, and literature. Subjects such as history, arts, and religion were taught in Armenian, while others were in English. She still speaks Armenian at home, although, as she told me, this has been getting more and more mixed with English in recent years. This shows that Sarkissian is deeply rooted in the Armenian community. She uses her music as a vehicle to express her Armenianness.

Sarkissian is deeply rooted in the Armenian community. She uses her music as a vehicle to express her Armenianness.
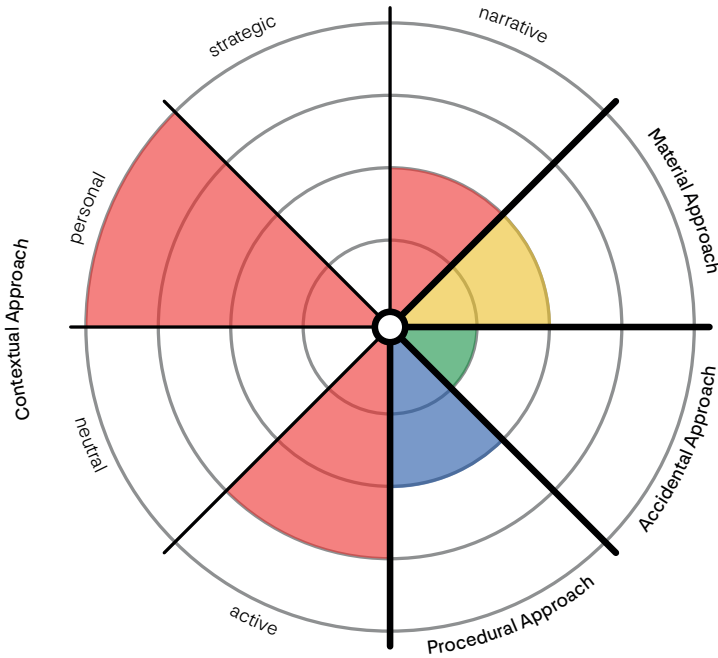
Figure 7.5: SSR: reasons for sampling in "kenats"

In comparison with other tracks by the same producer, the keyboard sound in "kenats" is a distinctive feature here. (Sarkissian samples keyboard sounds in other tracks as well, but never so obviously.) The question arises as to whether this keyboard sound has a particular meaning for the producer. Sarkissian explained to me that, indeed, the idea was to work with a particular sound:

> It's a very Middle Eastern thing. I'm familiar with it through Armenian events. Community events, festivals, and bazaars that we have. At weddings, you always have to hire... even if it's a live band, that keyboard guy is there. Not the same guy, but you know. They have their drums programmed, these Armenian drum sounds, no melodies and all that. (...) I knew all these dads and uncles who just go online, post these videos—because my brother used to watch these. He's very good at playing keyboard by ear,

and he used to play things like this for fun.

Sarkissian is familiar with these sounds. They remind her of family and community parties. This close connection between her own biography and the track became particularly obvious when she was describing how she came up with its title. The keyboard sound triggered further, very concrete, and perhaps also nostalgic memories:

> *As I was making "kenats" though, I had this image that started getting in my mind. I hadn't even named it yet, but that intro keyboard sound… It's kind of dragged out and slow, then it starts going faster, and I had an image in my mind of my uncle. Like my uncle in Armenia making a toast. "Kenats" means toast. I just pictured this scene that I had: like the family gather around a table, and he's giving this very important, funny toast. It's very epic, and then, after that, it breaks. It's like a dinner scene, and laughing, and the camera is moving around the table. It's funny that the first person I thought of was my uncle. He's such a huge character. Funny, smart, a very big character.*

The family table is also referenced in the track's <u>cover photo</u> uploaded on SoundCloud. The photo shows a typical Armenian dinner table. Sarkissian recalls how she accessed the picture: "I remember, I did a Google search and I think I just typed in like 'Armenian dinner table' or 'food' and I was trying to find dinner table pics."

Figure 7.6: Cover photo "kenats" (Sarkissian 2016)

This brings us to the narrative sampling perspective. The sample is used here to tell a particular story, and to create the atmosphere of such an Armenian dinner table. This approach to musical composition is shaped by the producer's experience shooting films, as she explained in an interview online:

> *I used to film and shoot a lot and make my own short films – that's why the music I produce has a narrative and a cinematic feel. It's really visual for me, so I think about colours and stories and conversations in my editing process. I think*

about the physical environment you're stepping into. About distance and, if you're a character in this scene – what's flowing around you? What do you hear outside of the space you're in? Where is a voice coming from? (Nicolov 2018)

The active perspective describes another larger group of contextual sampling reasons behind "kenats." First, there is a general aspect. One of Lara Sarkissian's principal artistic aims is the "hybridization of non-Western sounds with contemporary Western culture," as we can read in the self-description on her website (Sarkissian 2018). By "contemporary Western culture" she mostly means electronic popular music and club culture. As we have seen in relation to the personal perspective, Sarkissian uses sampling to "explore her own identity" (Born and Hesmondhalgh 2000, 131), or to share her narrative, as she would put it. The description of Club Chai—the label and network co-founded by Sarkissian—makes clear that this is a central artistic motivation for her at the same time as it is a political one:

> *Club Chai is a label, event series, radio show and curatorial project founded by 8ULENTINA and FOOZOOL in Oakland, California. Club Chai centers diasporic narratives, women, and trans artists, DJs and producers and hybridizes non-Western sounds with club music. (Club Chai 2018)*

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The intention to use music as a platform to share minoritarian positions is evident in "kenats." The sampling of a keyboard sound from a male Armenian solo entertainer relates to a critical perspective on gender roles, as Sarkissian explained:

> *In general, it is men who play this instrument in Armenian music and I thought it would be interesting to take what is known to be a very masculine sound and make an edit with it as a woman, yet still have it to be something that's aggressive.*

> *It's big in Armenian culture. It's like, especially someone like the dad to be playing the keyboards. It's a very masculine thing to be playing the keys, you don't see women doing it. So, I think it's also cool, as a woman, taking these sounds and giving my own spin to it.*

For Sarkissian, these keyboard sounds are distinctively masculine. Browsing similar videos on YouTube, one does indeed see only men playing. Moreover, in the quotation above, Sarkissian describes giving her "own spin" to the sample, and making it "something that's aggressive." This refers to her editing process. I have described above her technique of chopping the sample as a first element of the editing process. Another element involves layering with other samples in the track, such as the sound of an explosion, ambient noises,

or breaking glass. Both elements contribute to a rough sound aesthetic, described by the producer as "aggressive," or elsewhere as "experimental and industrial":

> *In general, I love using samples from these keyboards and it's something that's often used in Armenian music (club, pop, traditional, etc), but I wanted to give it an experimental and industrial edit. This sound, we're familiar with hearing at family gatherings, parties, weddings, etc, but use it in a non-traditional way.*

The notion of the "traditional" expressed here should not be equated with the rich folk music repertoire that has been passed down for generations in Armenia and that was collected by the Armenian priest and musicologist Komitas (1869–1935). Sarkissian's use of "traditional" points to music played in what she regards as "traditional" contexts, such as weddings and family parties. Hence popular music, such as these keyboard sounds, can also be played in traditional contexts.[11] Transferring these sounds from one particular context (for example a wedding in Armenia) to another (experimental electronica in the U.S.)—which is explicitly both stylistically and geographically distant—means transforming a sound from the traditional into the non-traditional. It means using these sounds in a way for which they were not originally intended.

On another level, Sarkissian's use of the term "tradition" might reflect her understanding of Armenian culture in general. For her, Armenian culture means tradition. Everything that she considers "Armenian" belongs to Armenian culture. Hence, these popular wedding sounds, while not considered traditional by others, are part of this culture and thus traditional. Through sampling, finally, Sarkissian not only labels these sounds as Armenian, but also archives them. This is a main driving force behind her sampling practice, and contributes to the active perspective as well. The following quotations illustrate this urge to archive:

Through sampling, Sarkissian not only labels these sounds as Armenian, but also archives them.

> *I often find myself getting lost in Armenian music YouTube videos and since I'm geographically far, I use it as a way of archiving and accessing sounds I've grown up on, from Armenian school or from family.*

> *I'm making new archives. I'm referencing or sampling really traditional or old things in our main culture, or even in religion. I'm trying to create contemporary archives and discussions around it.*

In the second quotation, Sarkissian refers back to the traditional, this time understood in a conventional sense. In summary,

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11   These keyboard sounds could be partially considered a particular form of the Armenian popular music genre rabiz (Garbis 2006; Leupold 2018). In the knowledge production that I have access to, this is a highly understudied field. As mentioned in the transition to this chapter, a further, well-informed perspective is required at this point to enhance the analysis.

with the transformation from the traditional to the non-traditional, Sarkissian points to the artistic aim of hybridization discussed earlier, while at the same time performing a transformation of gender roles: the male keyboardist is edited, chopped, and finally manipulated by a woman. "kenats" challenges traditional gender roles in a particular Armenian musical context, thus becoming a political commentary. The sampled keyboard sound is essential to this critique. Sampling the playing of one of these male solo entertainers allows Sarkissian to materially work with these sounds. Because she is a woman, the whole process is loaded with new significance. Sarkissian appropriates these sounds, and, figuratively, it is her, as a woman, who plays the keyboard.

However, I do not consider the active perspective to be the primary sampling perspective behind this track, so have not completely filled out the respective section in the SSR. Sarkissian never mentioned this aspect as a first answer when we discussed the track. Moreover, I cannot find any indications in her presentation of the track online pointing toward the transformation of gender roles. This does not mean that this aspect is not important. It rather illustrates that there is no intention to communicate it to a broader audience. The message is there to be read if someone has all the necessary knowledge.

In conclusion, politics are present, but are not the primary focus. This observation corresponds with Sarkissian's general relationship to political activism. In 2018, when the interview took place, she considered her activities with Club Chai her main tool of political engagement:

Politics are present, but are not the primary focus.

> I would say everything is political and I mean the fact that I went to an Armenian school in America is a political thing. (...) And then protests, a lot of protests that we would do yearly during genocide commemoration time. But anyways, I would say now my political involvement is very much in Club Chai and what we're doing with that: being able to create space for a lot of folks who don't have access to music or don't meet other people within it, who have the same identities and backgrounds or whatnot. I'd say that's the most political thing right now.

After this elaborate discussion of the contextual approach, I want to address the other approaches displayed in the SSR. The reasons for sampling this particular sound that might fall under the material approach are much more challenging to articulate. Sarkissian mentioned that she was "obsessed with that sound" when hearing it on YouTube. Obviously, this is a very vague indication and could relate to extra-musical associations as well.

However, I assume that there are considerable musical or, we could say, aesthetic reasons as to why she finally chose the sample. On some occasions, she referred to the changing tempo of

the introduction as a concrete element that she liked: "It's kind of dragged out and slow, then it starts going faster." Elsewhere, she briefly mentioned that, at that time of production, she had a new sample pack with a dhol drum that she wanted to use, and that she considered these keyboard sounds to match it perfectly. Here, too, the tempo of the sample was essential: "I was like 'it would be really cool to have this really fast track now that I have the dhol drum pack.' So, I wanted to pair with that." Another aspect is the absence of percussion in the introduction of the source video:

> *It's so hard to find this. Whenever I find keyboard samples, I always look for parts that don't have the drum track in it. Because I don't want to put that in. It sounds crunchingly bad. (…) I think that last one that I'd picked, there's more options in the beginning and in the outro.*

Of the two other YouTube downloads saved in the Live project folder as potential alternatives, the first also starts without drums, but percussion comes in after 30 seconds, while the second file features percussion throughout. In the third file, Sarkissian found a long introduction—around 40 seconds—without any percussion, and thus had "more options" to work with. Moreover, the sound quality of the third file is much better than the others.

In conclusion, the material reasons why Sarkissian chose this and no other Armenian keyboard sample are most probably a combination of the following, alongside further, untraceable factors: aesthetic appeal; the absence of percussion; sound quality; special musical characteristics such as tempo; and the sample matching with a recently acquired sample pack.

Regarding the procedural approach, the aspect of access played a role. Gaining access to instruments is one of the main motives behind Sarkissian's general approach to sampling:

> *I guess, the reason why I sample is because I wanna use these traditional instruments that are used a lot in Armenian music that I don't have around me. So, it's instruments like the kanoun, kamancha, duduk that I as a diasporan— I'm living in San Francisco—I'm not close to anyone that plays these instruments, so I'm able to find it on YouTube, I'm able to find it through my mum's CDs and whatnot.*

Living in the diaspora makes it difficult for Sarkissian to access traditional Armenian instruments. The additional desire for instrumentalists who could play them further indicates that the producer herself cannot play them. But sampling allows Sarkissian to use these instruments and to incorporate them into her own sound. Obviously, a keyboard is not a traditional instrument in the sense stated above. Accordingly, in the case of "kenats," it is not about access to the particular instrument, but about access to a particular style of playing. Still, I assume that in the large Armenian community in the

It is not about access to an instrument, but about access to a particular style of playing.

Bay Area, there might be a few instrumentalists who could play the keyboard in the desired style. Nevertheless, the aspect of access might still be relevant, as one must have a good relationship with a musician to ask them for recordings that will be used as samples. Geographical proximity is not enough. Sarkissian finally mentioned that a friend of hers recently got one of the keyboard models used by solo entertainers, and that she wants to start making her own sounds with it in the future.

A final aspect captured by the SSR will only be mentioned briefly: the accidental approach. Chance comes into this sampling process via the source platform of the sample. Sarkissian's choice of sample was not least influenced by YouTube's recommendation algorithms. One can find almost endless footage when searching for the terms "Armenian Keyboard" on the platform. Which footage is displayed at the top of the list—and is thus more likely to be found—depends on the relevancy algorithms of the video platform. These algorithms consider factors such as a video's overall popularity, or the average time spent viewing it.

Sarkissian's choice of sample was not least influenced by YouTube's recommendation algorithms.

Consequently, for this sampling process, the question of which videos other people with the same search query have watched before is most relevant. These other people have essentially determined what Lara Sarkissian would go on to sample in "kenats." In a time when sampling material is more and more accessed through platforms such as YouTube, it would be interesting for further studies to examine whether or not these algorithms are affecting contemporary music, and if so, to what extent.[12]

(b) Attitude

The second stage of this analysis now focuses on the producer's attitude towards the sampled material. As mentioned before, Sarkissian spoke about an "obsession" that she felt when she first heard the keyboard sound. She told me that she immediately "loved" it. At the same time, she admitted that "people of my age would think it's unusual to use that sound in modern electronic music." I assume that these sounds provoke ambivalent reactions in Armenian listeners. Potential reactions could range from considering such a recontextualization as unusual (as Sarkissian stated previously) to an elitist view of it as "low culture" music, such as David Leupold (2008) describes in relation to the Armenian popular music genre rabiz, in which similar sounds and melodies are used.[11] Sarkissian's report that her brother plays similar sounds "for fun," always interrupting himself shortly into his performance, further indicates that such sounds might not be taken seriously by certain listeners.

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[12] Research on algorithms and music has so far solely focused on the algorithmic generation of music.

Although Sarkissian stresses her own fascination with these sounds, it remains open to what degree she might share a similar view. Sampling in this case thus contains a tension of musical taste: even if the producer personally likes these sounds, she is aware of the critical distance that others feel towards them. She thus samples them because of or despite this distance—I imagine the latter being the case for the present analysis. Taking this thought a step further, sampling these sounds can be interpreted as a statement of musical taste: the producer considers these sounds aesthetically pleasing, or simply valuable.

Similar to the previous case study of COOL FOR YOU, a tension of distance is also inherent in this sampling strategy. On the one hand, Sarkissian considers the keyboard sound to be something from her own culture, the Armenian culture. This is how she legitimizes the use of her samples in general: "I don't feel as much as an outsider when I am sampling it, using it, or listening to it." On the other hand, the musical style in question is quite distant from her. These sounds are usually played by men from another generation, and probably also from another social class (Leupold 2008). Moreover, she does not listen to this music regularly, but only occasionally at family parties. A study of reception could finally add another layer to this debate, if we assume that these sounds are potentially perceived as exotic by Western listeners without any Armenian (or Middle Eastern) background.

In conclusion, the relationship between the producer and the sampled material in this example is shaped not only by a tension of musical taste (the producer loves the sound, others do not) but also a tension of distance (the sound is both one's own and external).

(c) Visibility

The final stage in this section is the application of the FOV. First of all, the two faders positioned at the highest level indicate that the sample is both completely audible and fully recognizable. The sample is however not textually signaled (fader 2), meaning there is no clear indication in the track that the keyboard melody has been sampled. Without knowing the production process behind "kenats," one could assume that Sarkissian had played and recorded the sample herself and subsequently cut and layered it. (In fact, one is more likely to hear other sounds in the track, such as the ambient noises, as samples.) I consider this form of "transparent mediation" (Brøvig-Hanssen 2010, 159) to be essential: by presenting the sample in the first instance without any cuts and manipulations and in full length, Sarkissian creates the suggestion of having played the keyboard on her own. This is necessary for her to later accomplish the appropriation of the masculine keyboard sound.

AUDIBILITY	SIGNALIZATION	REFERENTIALITY	RECOGNIZABILITY	EXTRA-MUSICAL SIGNALIZATION	MASTER VISIBILITY
audible	signaled	indexical	recognizable	announced	obvious
muted	unsignaled	non-referential	obscured	unmentioned	concealed
1	2	3	4	5	6
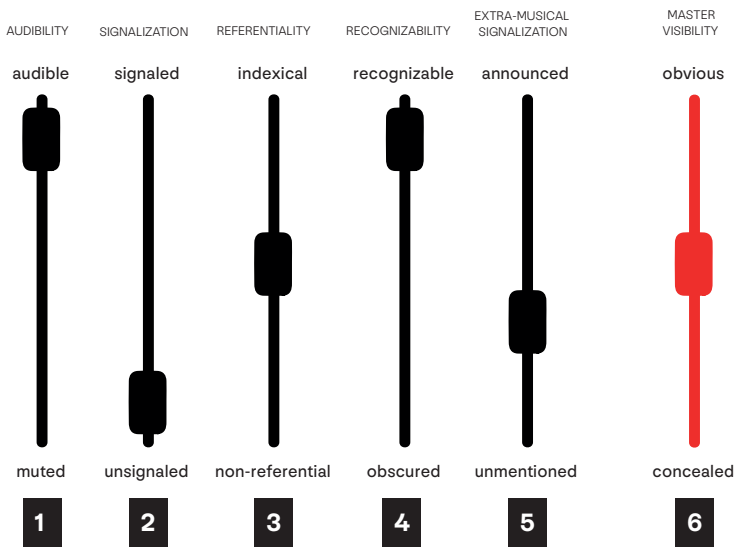
Figure 7.7: FOV: sample visibility in "kenats"

I have positioned fader 3, indicating referentiality, at the middle of the scale. From the producer's perspective, the sample does not refer to a particular context, such as a musician or a melody (hard references), but it does refer to a musical style in general: the sound of Armenian solo entertainers (soft reference).

By contrast, the sample is contextually signaled on several occasions: the track's title and cover photo both point to the scenario of the family party. Nevertheless, this signalization is far away from a clear indication or a direct quotation of the sample and/or its source. Sarkissian does not acknowledge the exact source in the descriptions below the track on SoundCloud (as she has for other tracks). Even listeners who are familiar with the traditions referred to might find it challenging to recognize the connections between title, cover photo, and sample. And the discussion of gender roles in Armenian musical cultures is not signaled at all. Still, all these clues could, in combination with information on the producer's descent and her sampling concerns (Armenian sounds), at least partly signal the sample. Accordingly, I have positioned the last controller in the lower third of the scale.

In conclusion, I consider the overall visibility of the keyboard sample in "kenats" to be between the two ends of the scale. Although the sample is audible and recognizable, the context of the sample remains concealed to a certain degree. The general sampling motives behind "kenats" touch on all three general fields introduced before: this sampling process was shaped by inspiration (the sound inspired the producer and triggered associations), content (she was fascinated by the playing style and musical culture of Armenian solo entertainers), and, to a lesser extent, communication (various political messages). Communication might be a general sampling motive, but the act of communication is not carried through, as this analysis of visibility has illustrated.

Conclusion and Prospect

Ever since I started producing, I've made a lot of one-offs which I'd quickly upload to my SoundCloud because I'm impulsive. (Sarkissian in Nicolov 2018)

Clearly, the track "kenats" is just such a "one-off." The track is only 1:55 long and was produced in a comparably short period of time without any advanced editing steps. What can we draw from an analysis of such an "impulsive" production, and from a close reading of reasons for sampling in particular? Quite a lot, as I have shown. The analysis of the sampling practice applied to the keyboard sound revealed a rich and complex combination of motives, motivations, and intentions. Sarkissian's sampling strategy is shaped by all approaches of the SSR, particularly the contextual. Within the latter approach, three perspectives appeared relevant. (1) Through the personal perspective, she explores her own identity and expresses Armenianness. (2) The active perspective is represented by a range of more or less buried political attitudes and messages. (3) Sarkissian used the sample to craft a story set around the family table during an Armenian dinner (narrative perspective). Other factors that played a role are particular aesthetic features (material approach), the access to a particular style of playing (procedural approach), and aspects of chance related to YouTube's search algorithms (accidental approach).

Significantly shaped by the personal perspective, Sarkissian's track reveals a sampling strategy that is not political in the first instance. The sampling of the keyboard sound in "kenats" primarily illustrates the producer's personal relationship to the processed material. This relationship is not direct; the references made are soft rather than hard. What is referred to here is not the sampled YouTube video in particular, but the keyboard sound of Armenian solo entertainers in general. In uncovering Sarkissian's reasons for sampling, it nevertheless becomes clear that the track can be seen as a critical and thus political commentary on gender roles in a particular Armenian musical culture. The track bears the signature of a politically aware and engaged artist, although it was not the producer's aim to proactively communicate a political message.

The track bears the signature of a politically aware and engaged artist, although it was not the producer's aim to proactively communicate a political message.

In concluding this chapter, I want to recapitulate three aspects: the first highlights why sampling as a method is essential in this case; the second sheds light on how the lived experience of the producer is buried in the track (or rather, what kind of seismographic substance we can access through the track); and the third addresses the implications of the producer's attitude towards the sampled material.

(a) The Significance of Sampling

This case study has shown how Lara Sarkissian relied on the particular characteristics of sampling in making the track "kenats." In short, she used sampling as a strategy for appropriating a gendered sound. By chopping it up and layering it with further experimental sounds and noises, she made the sampling material her own. She added her own touch to it, and in so doing literally played the "male" keyboard as a woman. The striking presentation of the sample at the beginning of the track, in full-length and without further manipulation, completes the act of appropriation. By leaving the sample at its most audible and recognizable here, Sarkissian created the impression that she herself was the keyboardist. She played with the characteristics of sampling as a production technique, blurring the line between sampling as a tool of reference and sampling as a tool of simulation—to name two of the fundamental sampling characteristics that have been described by, for example, Pelleter and Lepa (2007).

Sarkissian used sampling as a strategy for appropriating a gendered sound.

Moreover, "kenats" challenges theoretical approaches to sampling, such as the conception of it as a syntagmatic practice put forward by Serge Lacasse (2007). Since a particular style of playing is referred to, a transformation of a style is involved (paradigmatic), as opposed to the mere focus on subject or content (syntagmatic). Following Lacasse, this example can be called a hypertextual practice, as the new track is built on the hypotext (the sample) as a foundation.

The analysis of this track has finally illustrated the central question on the subject of sampling: where the producer positions themselves in relation to the sample. Put simply, we must always ask what kind of power relations are at play. In this case study, sampling has allowed the producer to invert conventional power structures of gender.

Sampling has allowed the producer to invert conventional power structures of gender.

(b) A Diasporan Perspective

A close reading of this track and the sampling process behind it reveals the lived experience of the producer. "kenats" reflects in particular on the tension between social groups in which Sarkissian circulates, notably between the Armenian community and people outside it. This hybrid condition is, as I have shown, a central driver of Sarkissian's artistic work. Sampling allows her to express both her Armenianness and her Americanness by celebrating a clash between non-Western (the keyboard melody) and contemporary

Western (experimental electronica) elements.[13] It is not that home has become part of the multilocal space of the diaspora, as suggested by Ramnarine (2007), but rather the diaspora has become one part of what the producer calls home. The condition of the diaspora is further reflected in the sampling of traditional instruments. Living at a geographical remove from particular musical cultures hinders the producer's access to these instruments. In "kenats," sampling allows for the use of instruments such as the dhol drum, and the implementation of particular playing techniques (on the keyboard).

However, this does not yet tell us anything about the tension between the Armenian community and groups outside it. This tension becomes clear when we consider Sarkissian's audience, which differs from the Armenian community:

> *My main audience isn't specifically Armenian, and I don't know if it's because they're not familiar with my work or approach. I think experimenting with Armenian music in this way in electronic music is still new and just now becoming familiar to people.[14]*

On one side there is the Armenian community (or diaspora), which provides the backbone of Sarkissian's sampling material and her knowledge of it. Members of these communities do not listen to Sarkissian's tracks—or at least not in large numbers. On the other side is her audience, which for the most part comes from outside of this community. This separation might serve as an explanation as to why Sarkissian does not promote the political message behind "kenats" more explicitly. Most people who hear this track are not aware of the significance of its sounds. If Sarkissian had composed the same track in another context (e.g. in Armenia or in another diaspora community), she might have chosen another sampling strategy, as people might have been more receptive to her critique of traditional gender roles.

Regardless, this thought experiment shows that a producer's surroundings influence their choice of sampling strategies. Hence, this sampling strategy could be read as a characteristic artistic expression of a producer living in a diaspora community. "kenats" clearly speaks from a diasporan perspective.

The diaspora has become one part of what the producer calls home.

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13 The establishment of a distinction between "Western" and "non-Western" must be understood as a form of "strategic essentialism," a concept coined by postcolonial scholar Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 2013, 96–98). The distinction reflects the producer's lived surrounding(s), where these terms have their significance, and the differences between the two worlds are real and experienced.

14 After reading a draft of this chapter, Sarkissian mentioned that the share of Armenian listeners of her music has grown substantially since the release of her debut EP *DISRUPTION* in December 2018. She believes that this is because the EP was released under her real name, Lara Sarkissian, where previously she was more active under her alias FOOZOOL (although she always released her tracks on SoundCloud as Lara Sarkissian): "Obviously, Lara Sarkissian was recognized as a signifier of an Armenian artist. (…) It was such a sudden shift (day/night)."

(c) Creating a Personal Canon of Culture

"kenats" can finally be read as a versatile play with contexts and musical tastes. The source context—popular music played at Armenian weddings and other family parties—is at a significant distance from experimental electronica, the context of transformation. Sarkissian describes this process as a transformation from the "traditional" to the "non-traditional." In this case, there is no intersection between the two spheres. Furthermore, many Armenian listeners might have a critical stance towards the keyboard sounds sampled.

When Sarkissian samples the sound of an Armenian solo entertainer, she is stating that these musicians are part of Armenian culture. Taken alongside sampling material found in her other tracks, the keyboard sample sits next to major names of classical Armenian culture, such as poets Paruyr Sevak and Silva Kaputikyan, and the singer Ofelya Hambardzumyan. Sarkissian does not place the keyboard sounds on the same level: in contrast to her usual practice, she does not openly state her sampling sources for "kenats." Nevertheless, I would argue that Sarkissian uses sampling as a tool for the creation of a personal canon of Armenian culture. This corresponds to the general motive of using sampling as a tool for archiving.

Sarkissian uses sampling as a tool for the creation of a personal canon of Armenian culture.

One question remains: how can we know if the processing of these keyboard sounds is a serious appropriation, and not intended to be ironic? On this point, we can do little more than believe the producer—and I see no reason not to do so. I would even argue that this question is less important than it may seem. Keeping in mind the previous discussion of Sarkissian's audience, I would argue that Sarkissian knew that people would not be able to decode the track's layers of meaning. In such a situation, irony would lose much of its communicative power. In fact, it would be an endeavor that risks considerable misunderstanding.

It must fall to further studies to take over at this point and focus on the perspectives of reception. It would be interesting to examine how these sounds are perceived by an audience that is unfamiliar with the sampled sound material and its layers of meaning. Are these sounds mainly perceived as "Middle Eastern" and thus exoticized? Is the political message behind "kenats" heard? From a critical perspective we might even ask: to what extent do such tracks fit the needs of certain segments of (Western) music markets? And how does that (re)influence the production process of producers such as Sarkissian?

■

I want to close this study with a short methodical reflection on the interests and motives behind Sarkissian's participation in it. I discussed this question with the producer. In her answer, she emphasized a

desire for representation. She felt that she wanted to make visible a particular minoritarian position, that of a (female) Armenian artist:

> *Part of it comes from a representation thing as well. No one asks an Armenian person in this field. (...) I don't hear, or I don't see, other Armenians ever being questioned for these things, or even having a place within this field or this type of music or anything. (...) It's sharing your narrative. That's what it is.*

This answer corresponds to her previously cited aim to create spaces for minorities through the Club Chai network. In conclusion, Sarkissian was especially interested in talking to me about how she produces music because she wanted to take this opportunity to share her own perspective. I consider this interest to have had little influence on my own analysis. Primarily because it was me who selected the track "kenats" as a case study and not Sarkissian. She pointed to the political content of "kenats" only after I had asked her about the track.

However, there is more to this desire to be heard. In an online interview, the producer expanded on this motive while discussing the sampling of traditional Armenian instruments:

> *Although these instruments have been shared among many cultures, Armenian work and narratives aren't referenced or credited much in conversations about these instruments, especially in the mainstream. That's a result of periods of systematic genocide from empires in the Middle East – like the Ottoman Empire – and being removed from conversations over time. These events in history and the backstories have shaped how Armenian music sounds, its approaches and the intentions behind instrument use. It's so important that we have more Armenian voices and artists in conversation about these sounds. (Sarkissian in Nicolov 2018)*

With regard to the present case study, I do not consider this argument primary, because I was not examining the sampling of a traditional instrument. However, it highlights two things: first, the presence of the collective trauma of the genocide and its denial in Armenian communities and how this affects popular music practice. Second, Sarkissian's awareness and sensitivity regarding questions of representation and social justice. This awareness is behind the political signature that we can decode in this track, and has thus significantly shaped its production.

I will return to this aspect in Chapter 11.

Questions of representation, awareness, and social justice will continue to be significant in the next case study. There, I will examine a sampling strategy that is, again, partially visible and partially hidden. The case study on the track "Libres" by Moro will reveal a strategy that politicizes environmental sound material that is not connected to a particular context, and thus "non-contextual."

8

"Libres" by Moro: Politicizing Sound

By means of sampling, the producer connects the historical slave trade with the global "refugee crisis" of 2015.

Moro is the artist name of Mauro Guz Bejar, a musician from Buenos Aires, Argentina.[1] Born in 1993, Guz Bejar enjoyed a broad musical education. He started playing guitar at eleven years old and later studied jazz guitar at a conservatory. He played in several rock and jazz bands, and—having a membership at a local theater—regularly attended classical music concerts. He took his first steps into electronic music production during high school, when he started using the DAW Sonar. He produced his first EP at that time, but never released it because he considered it inadequate. Later, he changed his producing environment to Apple's Logic Pro, before moving to Ableton's Live and back to Logic Pro again. He explained his return to Logic Pro with reference to sound quality. Although he considered Live "easier and faster," he was not satisfied with the sound of his Live productions. Hence, Guz Bejar is the only producer featured in these case studies who does not work with Live. This illustrates the prominence of Ableton Live in the field of electronic music production since the early 2010s.

In 2016, during my research, Guz Bejar moved from Argentina to Berlin, Germany. He hoped that this relocation would advance his career as a professional musician. He explained that he had moved to Berlin because

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1   Unless otherwise stated, this chapter is based on email conversations that took place between October 10, 2016 and January 28, 2017; an exchange of emails in February 2019; one interview via Skype on January 25, 2017; and one interview in Berlin on January 28, 2018.

I wanted to tour with playing music and I wanted to see live shows too. Living in Argentina is really hard. All flights are super expensive and the live shows that come to Argentina are super big. So, there's some stuff that you wouldn't be able to see. But it's mainly because I wanted to try and work from this; get gigs and play in Europe.

Guz Bejar's move to Europe was a godsend for my research, as it allowed me to meet him in person during a research trip to Berlin in January 2018. At that point, he was still trying to make a stable income from his musical activities. He mainly earned his income from performing as a DJ and occasionally working as a sound engineer at concerts. I met Guz Bejar at his shared apartment in the Berlin neighborhood of Neukölln, where I conducted the interview in front of his workstation in his bedroom. It is not just this producing environment that characterizes Guz Bejar as a laptop producer: he also handles the production of his music alone, and organizes his own performances. At the time of this study he has released two EPs, *San Benito* (2016, NON Worldwide) and *Irrelevant* (2018, Janus), on two well-known labels in the domain of experimental electronica. These labels handle the digital distribution of the productions through all prevalent online platforms. Even more so than in the two previous case studies, the music that Guz Bejar releases under his Moro pseudonym is shaped by the distinctive aesthetics of experimental electronica. His sounds are rough and fragmented, combining numerous different noises, samples, and effects. Moreover, as I will show in this case study, his tracks play with the conventions of electronic club music in particular.

> **Moro's tracks play with the conventions of electronic club music.**

It was Lara Sarkissian, the subject of the previous case study, who directed my attention to Guz Bejar's tracks. She mentioned his name during one of our first conversations and I checked out his productions afterwards. At that time, Guz Bejar had only released his debut EP, *San Benito* (January 22, 2016). I was interested in his work because I could recognize the processing of a great number of samples. Through the press texts for *San Benito*, I could further read about the political ideas and themes addressed in these tracks. At the time of my research, the label NON Worldwide was receiving considerable coverage from music writers. In the domain of experimental electronica, they drew attention with their highly political, boundary-pushing agenda, including announcing the borderless nation of NON, said to represent "the African diaspora" (Lozano 2017).[2] All of these aspects qualified Guz Bejar's tracks for the present study.

The track "Libres" was chosen after an initial exchange of emails. I had asked the producer why he relies on sampling as a production method, and he mentioned the track as an example:

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2   I followed other NON Worldwide-affiliated artists during the research stage, but none resulted in a case study.

I can simply like the sound, or because I feel that sound means something in that context. Or I can actually try and take that sound and completely change it to make it mean something else, like I did on the track "Libres" where I sample chain sounds, and by changing their dynamics, I make them have a clave rhythm, historically used as a resistance expression.

As opposed to the other case studies, this track processes a recorded "environmental" sound (the chain sound Guz Bejar mentions), rather than a larger excerpt of media material (Eomac, M.E.S.H.) or music (Lara Sarkissian, COOL FOR YOU). As this is a widespread sampling strategy, it is important to include it in this study. The following analysis will aim to examine the relation between meaning and production, and to identify how the producer politicizes a sound that I will characterize as non-contextual and as acousmatic in character.

I cannot rely on any statistics that might indicate the reach of "Libres." The initial upload on SoundCloud has been deleted. The EP remains accessible through Bandcamp, where the statistics are visible for the uploader only. However, I assume a limited reach of the track in general, comparable to that of the other tracks studied.

Background: Ethnicity in Argentina

To contextualize the sampling strategy behind "Libres," it is helpful to introduce a few ongoing debates around the ethnic composition of Argentinian society. Today, most sources rely on a claim from the *CIA World Factbook* that 97 percent of Argentinian citizens are ethnically "white" (Schwartz 2008; Gates 2014). Today, as well as in the past, the dominant national narrative in Argentina emphasizes that Argentinian society exclusively descends from white immigration from Europe. Other ethnicities, such as indigenous people or Afro-Argentines, have been either broadly ignored or absorbed into an all-white conception of society.

Alejandro Grimson (2007) writes of "ethnic invisibility" in Argentina. He argues that Argentina has maintained a "myth of homogeneity," and has accordingly forced "cultural and ethnic homogenization." According to Grimson, these strategies of "de-ethnicization" were interrupted only by a short period of neoliberal politics in the 1990s. At that time, ethnicity was used to distinguish between white Argentinian citizens and foreigners. Grimson states that, after the country's economic crisis in the early 2000s, the national narrative turned again towards the "unmarking" of ethnicity and the "re-absorption" of immigrant groups. However, racism was always present in Argentina. Grimson illustrates that Blackness was and still is "associated with being of lower-class status." This means that in Argentina, black skin color is not a necessary

Other ethnicities, such as indigenous people or Afro-Argentines, have been either broadly ignored or absorbed into an all-white conception of society.

condition of being considered Black: "In common language to be 'poor' is to be 'Black'."

The case of the Afro-Argentine ethnic group is of particular relevance to this analysis. In the national census of 2010, only 0.37% of Argentinian citizens identified as "Afro-Argentine" (Wikipedia 2019a). The figure was not always so low; African slaves played an important role in Argentina just as in other American countries. As Alejandro Frigerio has shown, the Black population in Buenos Aires accounted for around 30 percent of the city's total population between 1778 and 1838 (Frigerio 2000, 4)—the number was even higher in the countryside in the late 1700s, reaching around 50 percent (Gates 2014). The reasons for the dramatic decline of these numbers are various, and illustrate the country's complex tactics of "de-ethnicization."

For a long time, scholars and politicians identified assimilation through marriage, diseases, and involvement in wars as the main causes. Today, the narrative of a diminishing Black population is contested, and revealed as part of a broader discursive strategy of minimizing "the role played by the Black community in Argentina" (Frigerio 2000, 3; Gates 2014). These authors explain the decline in numbers through the country's repressive politics against Blacks—such as the forced recruitment of Africans into the army and the lack of efforts to register Afro-Argentines for the national census—and the simultaneous focus on "'whitening' Argentina's population through European immigration" (Gates 2014).

These factors have led to the marginalization of Black communities in today's Argentinian society. The significance of the Afro-Argentine population for the country's history is largely ignored, too. Henry Gates, Jr. writes in a blog entry that, in fact, Black Argentinians left considerable marks, not least in the nation's most important cultural export: as Robert Thompson (2005, 7) has compellingly argued, "African and Afro-Argentine influences are continuous in the rise, development, and achievement of the tango." According to Thompson, the Black Argentinian-Uruguayan dancing groups known as candombe are one of the main roots of tango. Another is the Afro-Cuban habanera rhythm (7–9).

Sample Source

This analysis will focus its attention on the track's chain sound sample. The sample in question consists of external sound material. Guz Bejar shared the original sound file with me—a four-second long uncompressed audio clip—but was not able to further retrace its origin. He remembered that he was searching, using the term "chain sound(s)," in an online database containing a large number of free sounds. The only evidence I have at this point is the title of the file ("Chain.wav"), the producer's memory, and the audio track itself. The character of the recorded sound—a regularly repeating

noise, gradually decreasing in tempo—leads me to assume that the sound was mechanically produced, most probably by unwinding a coiled metal chain. When searching for similar chain sounds in the database freesounds.org, I came across the sound of a large loading bay door which resembles Guz Bejar's sampling source (mmaruska 2014). The sound file is almost undoubtedly a field recording, as a background noise is briefly audible in the last part of the recording, before being cropped by the recording's end.[3]

Sample Processing

Unlike the other case studies, I was not able to access the digital project file for "Libres." While we were sitting in front of his computer, Guz Bejar realized that he had lost the files when replacing his hard drive. Nevertheless, he could still access the samples processed in the track as he had saved them in a sample library in his DAW. As such, he was able to instantly rebuild parts of the track. As we have seen in the previous analyses, many processes of music production are concealed in the final version of a track. Without the digital project file, our means of analysis are limited. It is thus rarely possible in what follows to go beyond what can be verified through the mastered version of the track.

"Libres" is a collage of a large number of samples. This compositional style is characteristic of Guz Bejar's productions. Alongside the chain sound, the track combines further samples such as water sounds (prominent examples, at 0:00, 0:11, and 0:20, sound like something or someone being thrown into water; another can be heard in the first breakdown section, between 1:31 and 1:50); alarm sounds (the first appears at 0:02, and a second as a four-note melody in the background from 0:16); and further chain sounds (audible in the interlude from 0:34 to 0:51). The chain sound in question appears at crucial moments in the track, as the transcript below illustrates. The first row below the indication of the different sections of the track shows the appearance of the chain sample (highlighted in green) while the second row represents the kick drum (grey).

"Libres" is a collage of a large number of samples.

→ Figure 8.1

Most of the sampled sounds are presented for the first time in the introduction without being rhythmically structured. The chain sample is played seven times in full in the track (indicated by the sign ✕ at 0:03, 0:08, 0:13, 1:49, 1:57, 2:08, and 2:17).[4] After 0:27, the sample fades in as a clave rhythm, and is subsequently looped. The sample thus dominates the track prior to the full breakdown at 0:37. By "breakdown section" I refer to parts of the track where the kick drum is partially removed, leaving a "significantly thinner [sonic] texture." The practice of bringing back the beat after such a section,

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3   I have uploaded the original sample file to SoundCloud. It is accessible via my article on the track "Libres" on Norient (Liechti 2017g).
4   The instances at 1:57, 2:08, and 2:17 are barely audible (information source: producer).

called "dropping the beat," is common in EDM, as Mark Butler (2006, 325–26) explains.

As we have seen, the sample is introduced towards the end of the track's first section, being only barely audible in the background before that. In contrast, the breakdown section that follows is dominated by the chain sample. In the track's subsequent second part, the sample remains in the background, again barely audible, before returning as a fully audible sound for the last time in the second breakdown section.

Figure 8.1: Transcript focusing on processing of the chain sample in "Libres"

In summary, the sample underpins the track to a great extent, and dominates both the end of the introduction and the two breakdown sections. Guz Bejar commented on the underlying presence of the sample: "I might mute [the sample] for a few seconds or it might go unnoticed because there are other, louder sounds, but when they stop you can hear it."

A constituting element of "Libres" is its contrasting rhythms. The sample itself is mostly triggered in a 3–2 rumba clave pattern.[5] David Peñalosa describes four meanings of the term "clave": (1) as a Spanish word, "clave" means "code" or "key." (2) It refers to particular five-stroke rhythmic patterns. According to Peñalosa, this "key pattern" underlies an overwhelming portion of Afro-Cuban music. He identifies its origins in sub-Saharan music traditions. (3) "Clave" more generally describes "the organizing principle of most Afro-Cuban rhythms." Moreover, (4) its plural form, "claves," refers to the wooden instrument, two sticks which are used to play clave patterns (Peñalosa 2012, 254). In this analysis, I will mostly rely on the second meaning. The function of a key pattern in the music is to

> guide all members of the ensemble by conveying the structural code of the rhythm in a condensed and concentrated form. Key patterns are typically clapped or played on idiophones, for example a bell, a piece of bamboo or wooden claves. (55; italics original)

In these crucial parts of the track, the listener's attention is drawn to the sample due to the lack of kick drum.

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5 Clave rhythms are distinguished in types of "3–2" or "2–3," indicating whether the first half of the bar contains three strokes or two (Peñalosa 2012).

As Peñalosa writes, "the actual clave pattern does not need to be played in order for the music to be 'in clave'" (88). In "Libres," the clave pattern functions as an underlying principle. To illustrate this, I have compiled the most prominent rhythmic patterns of each section. This overview shows that each part of the track has its own rhythmic patterns. The track is organized in a 4/4 time signature, but without any quantization of the beats, which Guz Bejar records directly using a MIDI keyboard. This producing method shapes the nature of the track as much as it hinders an exact transcription of the rhythms. Hence, the transcripts below should be read as an approximation only.

The kick drum patterns, in particular, change rhythm constantly. There is no beat that is accentuated regularly. This continuous change of accentuations, the overlapping of contrasting rhythms (most of all in sections (a) and (b)), and the variety of sounds culminate in a highly complex sound aesthetic.

Intro	Alarm *(notation)*		Chain Sample (Rumba Clave) *(notation)*
(a)	Kick *(notation)*		Alarm *(notation)*
(b)	Alarm *(notation)*		
	Kick *(notation)*		
	(notation)		
(c)	Kick *(notation)*	Hi-Hat *(notation)*	Chain Sample (Rumba Clave) *(notation)*
Breakdown Sections	Chain Sample (Rumba Clave) *(notation)*		
(d)	Kick *(notation)*		Hi-Hat *(notation)*
(e)	Kick *(notation)*		Hi-Hat *(notation)*

Table 8.1: Rhythmic patterns in "Libres"[6]

The clave rhythm unifies most of these patterns, consolidating its function as the track's key underlying pattern. It not only appears in the intro, both breakdown sections, and section (c), but rhythmic elements in other patterns are also related to the clave pattern, strengthening the perception of the clave as the core rhythm. To illustrate this, the next table compares the strokes of the first bar of each pattern with the rumba clave pattern (first row). The highlighted strokes coincide with the clave strokes and are thus "with-clave."

6   The transcription was verified and revised by David Leuthold. The sample referred to here as alarm is the distinct four note melody in the background of the track. The sample underlying this melody is of an alarm from a ship. It should not be confused with another sound appearing in the track, which also resembles the howling of an alarm.

The strokes that do not align with clave strokes are "counter-clave" (Peñalosa 2012, 92). This overview illustrates that all patterns are heavily based on with-clave strokes, except for the hi-hat in section (d), which is completely counter-clave.

	1	e	+	a	2	e	+	a	3	e	+	a	4	e	+	a
Rumba Clave	×			×				×			×		×			
Alarm (Intro)	×							×								
Kick (a)	×			×				×	×					×	×	×
Alarm (b)		×		×				×			×	×	×			×
Kick (b)		×		×							×		×			
Kick (c)	×	×			×	×			×	×			×	×		
Hi-Hat (c)		×		×			×	×			×	×		×		×
Kick (d)	×		×	×	×	×		×	×		×	×	×	×		
Hi-Hat (d)							×							×		×
Kick (e)	×		×	×	×		×		×	×	×					
Hi-Hat (e)		×			×			×								×

Table 8.2: With-clave and counter-clave in "Libres"

The rhythmic structure of "Libres" can be summarized as a development. It starts with polyrhythmic overlay and results in a homogeneous structure. This is shown by the clave pattern, which gets more and more accentuated towards the end of the track. In the first parts, (a) and (b), the prominent and foundational kick drum contains only two with-clave strokes. This is still the case in part (c), though the hi-hat adds the other three with-clave strokes. In part (d), the kick drum finally contains the entire clave pattern, while in part (e), the kick drum in combination with the hi-hat contains four with-clave strokes.

Finally, it is interesting to examine how the producer applied the chain sample to the clave rhythm. To compose his sample collages, Guz Bejar generally connects his source material to the keys of a MIDI keyboard. He then triggers the samples with different pitches and records them directly in his DAW. He followed the same procedure for "Libres." To avoid having the sample start from the beginning each time he triggered a stroke of the clave pattern on the keyboard, the producer made use of an unconventional trick: he applied a tremolo effect to the sample. This effect changes the dynamics of the input signal, modulating its volume up and down. Normally, this is done in rapid succession to create a trembling effect. When processing the chain sample, Guz Bejar adjusted the parameters of the effect to have the resulting interruptions of the audio signal execute a clave rhythm. This way, a full clave rhythm was recorded each time the sample was triggered via keyboard, through rhythmic interruption of the full sample-clip.

Apart from this rhythmic reorganization of the source material, the sample was barely manipulated by the producer. Although he may have adjusted minor parameters, the general contours were maintained, as proven through a comparison of the source file and the mastered track.

Sample Visibility and Reasons for Sampling

(a) Reasons for Sampling

The reasons for sampling behind the processing of the chain sample in "Libres" must be situated mainly within the contextual approach of the SSR. Within that, the active, narrative, and personal perspectives are engaged (in order of relevance). The material and procedural approaches are of, at most, minor significance. Finally, there is no significant element of accident to this strategy (accidental approach). On the contrary, the producer consciously searched for the targeted sample material.
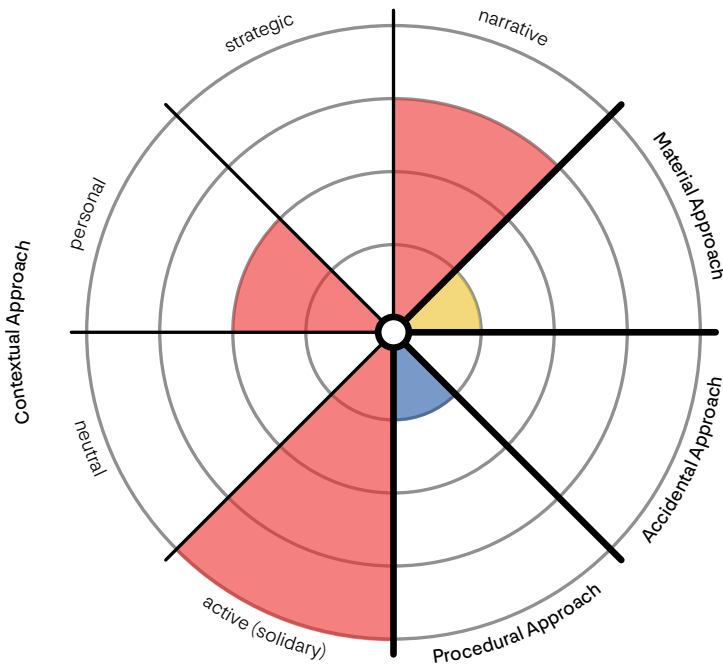
Figure 8.2: SSR: reasons for sampling in "Libres"

The track "Libres," along with the entire *San Benito* EP, has a political and conceptual basis. In the liner notes for the EP, accessible via Bandcamp (NON Worldwide 2016), the producer discusses the ethnic composition of Argentinian society and the history of the Afro-Argentines, and refers to the debates discussed above regarding the strategic concealment of ethnic groups in Argentina.

Guz Bejar writes that Argentina's population primarily consists of European immigrants, explaining that the native inhabitants of the country were "violently murdered and taken away from their territories." He continues by recapitulating the history of the Afro-Argentines who are, according to him, "usually hidden in history books." He concludes that Black communities in Argentina became

> *The track "Libres," along with the entire San Benito EP, has a political and conceptual basis.*

more and more mixed with white European descendants and therefore "African heritage (…) started to be on purpose ignored by the government." I will quote the following paragraphs in full, in which Guz Bejar refers to tango and emphasizes its Afro-Argentinian roots.

> My country's musical culture is probably best known because of tango, both music and dance. Tango started to get popular in the 19th century, by that time really few African population was left. Tango was born from candombe, milonga, rumba (all Afro-South American rhythms) and the mix with the white/mixed population. Of course, the African part is completely erased/hidden and the development of the genre went on the European side, therefore less rhythm and more romantic/harmonic type. In the 2000s, some groups started doing what was then called electronic tango, which is no more than house rhythm with tango aesthetic. Argentina's white European wanna be culture more interested in aesthetic forgot the most important thing about tango and what made it stand out in the first place, which is its rhythm.
>
> I was born here, in this land and close to this river (Río de la Plata, place where all the slave ships entered and went from Argentina to Uruguay). Land and water make us who we are, I feel one of my duties is to go back to the African part of tango, to reclaim the rhythm and to make it important and visible again.
>
> As part of this duty I'm making this genre I decided to call Ramba (which is the mixture of Argentinian/Uruguayan/Cuban and all the rhythms that share the same DNA and most important CLAVE, or as we call it, Madera). (NON Worldwide 2016)

I want to highlight three points that can be drawn from this quotation: (1) Guz Bejar emphasizes the significance of Black culture for the tradition of tango. He refers to the candombe dancing groups and stresses the importance of particular rhythms. He therefore implicitly references the tango rhythm, known as habanera. Following Peñalosa (2012, 41), this Afro-Cuban pattern is the "basic rhythmic cell in dp [duple-pulse] clave music." Moreover, Guz Bejar directly connects rhythm to the arriving slave ships and thus to their African origin.

Guz Bejar directly connects rhythm to the arriving slave ships and thus to their African origin.

(2) The producer relates these historical remarks to his own biography. By stating that he was born in Argentina, and by speaking in the first-person plural ("land and water make us who *we* are"), he shows his self-identification as Argentine. (3) Guz Bejar also formulates an activist aim that he pursues in his music. The self-created genre "ramba" is introduced as an attempt to reclaim "the African part of tango"—the rhythm—and to make this rhythm "important

and visible again." He calls this task his "duty" as an Argentinian. As the most central of these rhythms he names the Cuban clave pattern. In the producer's context, it is apparently called "madera."

In "Libres," Guz Bejar implemented these conceptual considerations through musical means, especially through the production method of sampling. He explained his thoughts behind the track in our conversations:

> *"Libres" means "free." Free from something. The whole EP is about slavery, slavery ship roads. At that time, I was also thinking about refugees now which might also use those kinds of ocean boats to move from continent to continent. So, I was thinking about the idea of them trying to be free from something and then coming to another place, but they might not get that freedom they are looking for. I start that track with falling chain sounds, as if they were taking off their chains.*

In the track, the producer aimed to connect the historical transatlantic slave trade with the global "refugee crisis" of the early 21st century.[7] Guz Bejar produced these tracks in the year prior to their release in January 2016, a period in which the numbers of immigrants entering Europe, for example, considerably increased. This track thus directly reflects the political events of 2015.

Regarding the integration of these considerations into the music itself, two elements play a crucial role: the sampled sounds and the rhythms. First, the symbol of the chain has served as a strong and effective metaphor for bondage. The liberation from chains further symbolizes attempts at reaching freedom through escape to Europe or, equally, escape from historical slavery and the ongoing strategic concealment of Black communities in Argentinian society. The symbol of water is also significant, as detectable in the track's sampled water sounds, and in the artwork of the EP, which shows the producer's hometown, Buenos Aires, threatened by massive waves coming in from the Río de la Plata.

The second element used by Guz Bejar to convey his conceptual concerns is rhythm. He considers the clave rhythm inherent to the DNA of Afro-South American music. This corresponds to what we have learned of the clave as a key pattern in Afro-Cuban music (Peñalosa 2012). By composing a track substantially reliant on the clave rhythm, Guz Bejar pursues his goal of making "the African part" of Argentinian culture "important and visible again."

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7   I put the term in quotation marks because I consider the use of the word "crisis" problematic in this context. A "crisis" describes "a time of intense difficulty or danger" (Oxford Dictionary). Speaking of the movement of refugees as a crisis presupposes an evaluation of the situation which can, in turn, be politically exploited. I would prefer to speak of these events in a more neutral way, as "global refugee movements" or the "flow of refugees." I have nevertheless chosen the term "crisis" here due to its widespread usage.

Figure 8.3: Cover artwork of *San Benito* designed by Chino Amobi (NON Worldwide 2016)

Through the production method of sampling, the producer is able to combine both elements: the symbol of the chain and the Afro-South American rhythmic pattern. These observations make it clear that there is a highly political motive behind this sampling strategy. The producer's aim is to raise awareness of Argentinian society's ties to the history of the transatlantic slave trade, and uncover the cultural significance of a minoritized group of Argentinian society, namely its Black population. These motives are covered by the active perspective in the SSR. More specifically, this sampling strategy can be described using the solidary sub-category, as introduced above. Reasons for sampling that fall into this category tend to show solidarity with minorities; they sensitize, and aim to give voice to specific minoritarian groups of people.

Although this sampling strategy is about raising awareness of other, underprivileged people, the producer's own position remains key, as demonstrated in the EP liner notes quoted above. Guz Bejar sees the reclaiming of Afro-South American rhythms as his "duty" as an Argentinian. The track and the EP thus reflect his personal heritage too. These tracks are about his feeling of belonging to Argentinian society. The sampled water sounds directly refer to the Río de la Plata, where he grew up and where slavery ships used to dock.

Another aspect to the clave rhythm further strengthens

The producer's aim is to raise awareness of Argentinian society's ties to the history of the transatlantic slave trade, and uncover the cultural significance of a minoritized group of Argentinian society.

the track's political aspirations. In our conversations, Guz Bejar re-
ferred to the clave rhythm as having been "historically used as a re-
sistance expression." I tried to verify this after our interview, with lit-
tle success. Beyond the tremendous significance of the pattern for
a great range of African and Afro-American music genres, I did not
find any hint of a specific political meaning to it. I thus assume that
this association is personal to the producer. Guz Bejar later men-
tioned a further association: the clave pattern "is like the rhythm
that people used here and in Uruguay when they were protesting,
which is the *[clicks his fingers in the clave rhythm]*. It was used in a
political way, you could say."

It is not that the clave pattern signifies protest *per se*. Rather, the
rhythm is part of the soundscape of protests. Guz Bejar showed me
a couple of YouTube videos to underline his argument—see for ex-
ample loslugosi (2009) and Cacerolazo (2018). He explained that the
rhythm is at the core of the soundscapes recorded in those videos.
Rather than being explicitly played, the presence of the rhythm is
implicit. This corresponds to the character of clave-based music, in
which the clave pattern must not be played for it to be an underlying
element (Peñalosa 2012, 88). The producer further clarified how he
understands the clave pattern's connection to the political sphere:

> *At least in Argentina, in Uruguay, when there are protests*
> *usually there are drums and usually they are playing these*
> *two rhythms. So, it kind of became a symbol of it. (…) It's*
> *not that people are… when they clap, they're like "Oh yeah,*
> *we're protesting!" I feel it's like a… a unity thing.*

According to Guz Bejar, this rhythm has the strength to unite
people, for example in protest. The motif of protest also appeared
on the producer's second EP, *Irrelevant* (2018), produced
after his move to Europe. On this EP, he sampled the me-
tallic sound of people hitting pans in the street: a popular
form of protest in many South American countries called
"cacerolazo" (Cacerolazo 2018). These sounds, and the
clave pattern, occur not only in street protests, but also
during carnival and in soccer stadiums. For Guz Bejar,
researching these sounds and rhythms on YouTube and
processing them in his productions is thus a means of
accessing memories. It reminds him of where he comes from and
gives him an opportunity to think about home. Similar to the way
that Lara Sarkissian expresses her Armenianness and American-
ness through sampling, Guz Bejar expresses his Argentinianness.

In order to analyze reasons behind sampling strategies, it is
important to uncover the producer's thoughts and considerations.
What is crucial in this case is that Guz Bejar himself connects this
rhythm with his own lived experience of the world, particularly
memories of protests. Accordingly, I consider the personal per-
spective to be part of Guz Bejar's sampling strategy too.

Researching these sounds and rhythms on YouTube and processing them in productions is a means of accessing memories.

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I have so far discussed reasons for sampling relating to the political considerations and aims behind the track and the EP on which it appears. They primarily illuminate the sample's relationship to the clave rhythm. However, these intentions only partially explain why Guz Bejar selected the sound of an unwinding metal chain in particular. To understand more, we need to bring the narrative perspective of the SSR into the discussion. The producer chose the chain sample in order to evoke a particular atmosphere, but also a particular setting: "When I started that track, the only thing I knew was I had an image of chains… I was picturing the two speakers and I knew that I want people to be able to look at falling chains."

For this, Guz Bejar needed the sound of an unwinding chain—rather than one which is simply moving, for example. As already discussed, the producer sees these falling chains as symbolic of slaves trying to liberate themselves from bondage. The use of samples in "Libres" allowed Guz Bejar to tell a story about ships and bondage—a story about the transatlantic slave trade: "There are chain sounds all over and not only those, there are others as well. Especially in the first five seconds it looks as if someone is getting out of a ship or something."

Bringing together all of these strands, I would suggest that the track should be understood as representing a transition. The first part of the track, with its overlaid rhythms and complex sound aesthetic, represents the world of today, with its flow of refugees, its ongoing slavery, and its strategic concealment of minorities. However, as we can hear, the chains are falling: people are freeing themselves from bondage and moving towards another world. The second part of the track paints a utopian picture of a world that has finally released itself from eurocentrism. This is represented by the clave rhythm, which gets more and more accentuated towards the end of the track. Here, I follow Guz Bejar's own understanding of the clave as an alternative rhythmic key to the four-on-the-floor beat of much ("Western") contemporary club music:

The second part of the track paints a utopian picture of a world that has finally released itself from eurocentrism.

> *I mean especially club music, since all the popularity of techno and house music and EDM, where most of the rhythm is like monarchized—I don't know if that adjective exists—but it's mostly ruled by these four kicks, you know *dum dum dum dum*. And I see that basically as a measure, because you're getting someone saying, "One two three four, one two three four." So, I'm still trying to make people not guide themselves by that. You still have to negotiate with dance rules. Especially with Western dance rules where people might not be so much open to dancing to difficult stuff, they are quite used to someone's saying,*

"One two three four." It's that.[8]

I do not want to claim this subjective reading of "Libres" as the only correct one or as the one intended by the producer. I rather want to show what perspectives on a popular music track can be revealed through analyzing sampling strategies. Sampling here is the crucial method that allowed Guz Bejar to compose a message in this particular way. The external chain sound, with its metaphorical meaning, was as necessary to this as the particular rhythm used. In combination with the sample, the clave pattern added further essential levels of meaning to the composition.

The SSR diagram reveals two more categories to be relevant: the material and the procedural approaches. Regarding the former, it is again difficult to trace concrete reasons. Everything the producer mentioned in our conversations was linked with some sort of (extra-musical) meaning and thus fell under the contextual approach. The producer never indicated that he chose this particular chain sample according to an aesthetic or material parameter. However, I would not completely exclude this category from the diagram. Indeed, I would suggest retaining it for every sampling process, unless there is strong evidence for not doing so. If the particular chain sample was not aesthetically pleasing t o the producer, he would most certainly have looked for another one, or else would have consciously selected it despite or because of its aesthetics. I have thus retained this category to indicate potential gaps in the analysis that cannot be retraced, even through in-depth research.

Finally, the procedural approach is not of great significance to this sampling strategy. I thus won't discuss it further at this point, though I will return to two minor procedural reasons in the concluding chapter of this book.

→ Figure 8.2

(b) Attitude

A look at the producer's attitude towards the sampled material makes particularly clear the differences between this sampling strategy and others presented in this book. As opposed to the sampling material from the other case studies, Guz Bejar processes what I call "non-contextual" sound material. In the other case studies, the samples carry contextual layers of meaning which influence or determine the sampling strategy in question: they are produced by an entertaining musician (Lara Sarkissian); they derive from a religious tradition issuing from a colonial context (COOL FOR YOU); they discuss the social taboo of bestiality (Eomac); or

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8   Discussing rough drafts of this book, David Leuthold made another observation that, while not directly related to the sample, further illustrates this point: through Guz Bejar's conscious decision not to quantize his rhythms, he metaphorically liberates the rhythm. This corresponds, on the one hand, to his aim of providing alternatives to heavily quantized four-on-the-floor patterns, and on the other, to the track's title ("Libres") and the associated socio-historical narrative.

they document an armed conflict (M.E.S.H.). In contrast, the chain sample in "Libres" comes with almost no contextual information. In the first instance, it is simply the sound of a chain.

Of course, contextual information could potentially be transmitted via the sound database from which the producer downloaded the sample. As I do not know the original source, I am not able to trace this information. However, since the producer did not refer to such information, I assume that he effectively approached the sound as "non-contextual." This also means that there is no detectable attitude of the producer towards the sampled material.

Nevertheless, it is possible for even non-contextual sounds to be strongly connected with personal associations and memories. In these cases, the sounds are loaded with new contextual meaning at the moment of their encounter with the producer. See the example of Katie Gately in Chapter 5.

(c) Visibility

In terms of visibility, the sampling strategy behind the processing of the chain sample in "Libres" is neither blatantly obvious nor completely concealed. Accordingly, the master fader on the FOV is positioned in the middle of its range.
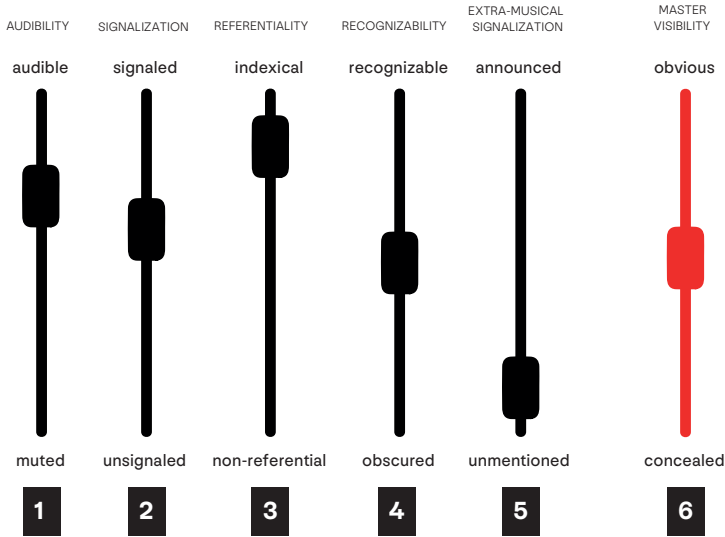
Figure 8.4: FOV: sample visibility in "Libres"

Fader number 1, showing the degree of audibility, is set close to its highest position. It is possible to hear the chain sample both in its non-manipulated form (for example in the introduction of the track, at 0:03, 0:08, and 0:13) and in its looped and rhythmized version (at the end of the interlude and in both breakdown sections). However, the non-manipulated sample is usually played along with various other sounds. This challenges its audibility, as does the processing of the second version of the sample to express the clave rhythm. This is why I have not positioned the first fader at its highest point.

It is likely that the track's processed sounds—including the chain sounds—will be perceived as samples, so the second fader is also positioned in the upper part of its range. The presence of samples is signaled by the producer's sample-collage compositional style.

The processing and combination of a great number of samples, particularly extra-musical sound material such as sounds of water, chains, and alarms, leads to a sound aesthetic that signals the presence of samples.

Fader number 3 indicates that the processed sound is highly referential. As illustrated before, the producer considers the chain sound a metaphor for the history of slavery. This layer of meaning is crucial to understanding the use of the chain sample in the track. The final two faders are positioned in the middle (number 4, showing recognizability) and in a low position (number 5, showing extra-musical signalization) respectively. Through its rhythmization, the original chain sound is only barely recognizable, and even when it is presented in full, the sound is (as already mentioned) mostly covered by other sounds. Finally, there is no extra-musical signalization of the processing of the chain sample. Although the producer publicly announced the concept behind the track and the EP, he did not discuss the chain sample in particular.

The visibility of this sampling process is thus neither obvious nor concealed. Following the three <u>general fields of sampling motives</u> introduced before, the present sampling process mainly relies on the field of inspiration—the source material is processed because it inspired the producer. However, if we consider this sampling strategy to be part of a greater compositional strategy, and thus examine sampling intentions on that scale, we would need to include the field of communication too.

Conclusion and Prospect

This case study has presented an artistic strategy that uses sampling in three fundamental ways: as a tool of communication (to raise awareness of minorities; SSR: active, specifically solidary perspective); as a tool of memory and identity construction (to address own lived experience and to express Argentinianness; SSR: personal perspective); and as a compositional tool (to zevoke a particular atmosphere; SSR: narrative perspective/material approach). Three concluding aspects will now be discussed: (a) the non-contextual character of the sampled source material and its implications for sampling as a production method; (b) the established process of the politicization of sound; and (c) the analyzed track's seismographic substance.

(a) Processing Non-Contextual Sounds

In contrast to the other case studies in this book, "Libres" processes an almost non-contextual sound. This means that the sound source did not bring substantial contextual information into the sampling process. However, the chain sound was by no means completely

free of contextual meaning—if such a thing as a completely non-contextual sound exists at all. The sound of a chain is culturally coded and may represent bondage or imprisonment in many contexts. As shown, the producer later connected to this level of meaning—and he did not do so by accident.

Nevertheless, the sound did not come with specific contextual information regarding where and for what purpose it was originally recorded. To a certain extent, this sound is acousmatic (Schaeffer 1966). The pioneer of musique concrète, Pierre Schaeffer, introduced this term to describe sound that is heard without its originating source being visible. This term could be applied to all sampled sounds that are not played in combination with a projected (moving) image: the source in sample-based music is, by definition, never visible. However, if we widen our understanding of the concept of visibility, we could consider sounds to be acousmatic if they are audible to a high degree (FOV fader 1) while simultaneously (almost) completely concealing their sources (FOV fader 5, or the appearance of the sound in its source context).

Hence, sounds can either already appear acousmatic in their source context ("Libres"), or they can acquire an "acousmatic character" through particular methods of sampling ("Perversas" and "Methy Imbiβ"). In "Libres," the acousmatic character of the sample source opens up a space in which the producer can apply his own layers of meaning. This strategy allows the producer to avoid delicate ethical debates, such as those on cultural appropriation. Such debates would become relevant if Guz Bejar had, for example, used sounds from Black history in place of the chain sample.

The acousmatic character of the sample source opens up a space in which the producer can apply his own layers of meaning.

The processing of non-contextual sound also raises the question of the particularity of the production method of sampling as such. In fact, sampling is not essential in the present case. The same result could have been achieved through processing a recording of a "self-played" chain. In all of the other case studies, a simple substitution of the sampled sound with a self-recorded alternative would not have been possible without losing crucial levels of meaning. In other words: if the chain sample had been taken from, for example, a YouTube video that brought with it some contextual information, our analysis of the sampling strategy would have been substantially different.

This leads me to two wider conclusions at this point: (1) a particular strength of sampling as a musical production technique is its ability to connect various complex levels of meaning; and (2) there is a further, pragmatic reasoning behind Guz Bejar's sampling strategy: it would have been impractical to self-record a chain sound. However, this reason, which would belong to the procedural approach in the SSR, was not a conscious intention on the part of the producer.

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(b) The Politicization of Sound

As Guz Bejar explained, his processing of the chain sample emanated from a compositional experiment: "[I was] experimenting with grabbing something that has no rhythm and put[ing] it with another thing." More precisely, he took the non-contextual sound of a chain and combined it with a particular rhythm, the clave pattern. In this way, the two elements, the chain sound and the rhythm, brought to the final track their own levels of meaning.

Through sampling, Guz Bejar recreated the soundscape of protest, turning "Libres" into a form of 21st century protest music.

Through this process of sampling, Guz Bejar composed a political message without recourse to lyrics. He not only connected the past (the transatlantic slave trade) with the present (the global refugee "crisis" and the situation of minorities in Argentina). He also wove his personal lived experiences of protest into the track: the combination of the "image of falling chains" with the protest-related clave rhythm turned the track into a call for freedom, or to resistance. Through sampling, Guz Bejar recreated the soundscape of protest, turning "Libres" into a form of 21st century protest music.

This sampling strategy corresponds with general statements about sampling made by the producer, as previously quoted. Guz Bejar understands "sampling as a weapon of expanding or remembering a message": a distinctly communicational motive. "You can also see sampling as a way to agree with some idea," the producer added.[9] However, our analysis of the visibility of the sampling process in question has shown that the producer left it open whether his message or, in this case, his protestation will be heard. This pushes me to understand this sampling strategy as personal too; as, at least to a certain extent, a personal argument regarding a political subject (similar to Lara Sarkissian's "kenats"). One might now ask if this example suggests that, more generally, the character of musical protest in the 21st century is neither obvious nor concealed. Further studies need to take over at this point, among them an elaborated study of reception.

I finally understand this sampling strategy as an example of the politicization of sound material. A formerly non-contextual sound is loaded with context and political meaning through the process of sampling and the application of a particular rhythm. I draw the concept of politicized sound from Helmut Rösing (2004). Rösing characterizes the politicization of music as the transformation of "autonomous music," which was not composed with a political intention, into music that is connected to the political. He gives the example of Franz Liszt's symphonic poem "Les Préludes," which became political music when it was used to introduce German

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9   This could also be interpreted as a general sampling motive, categorized under the procedural approach. However, in this analysis, this motive is also present in the three contextual perspectives.

Radio announcements by the Wehrmacht during World War II (163; Liechti 2010). Rösing describes a process of reception which involves the reinterpretation of the musical source. If we understand sampling as a process of reception too—reception of the sampling material—we can apply Rösing's concept to it. In our case, it is not about the politicization of previously neutral music but the politicization of previously non-contextual sound.

(c) Seismographic Substance

Let me finally discuss the seismographic substance revealed through this close reading of the sampling strategy behind "Libres." In short, the track speaks of the producer's own lived experience of this world. The subject of the track (transatlantic migration) reflects political events (the global refugee "crisis") and social realities (the invisibility of ethnicity in Argentinian society) in the year of its production (2015). The application of the clave pattern reproduces soundscapes familiar to the producer (the sounds of Argentinian protest), and by using the metaphor of the chain and by emphasizing the clave pattern (the "DNA of Afro-South American music"), the producer challenges Eurocentric narratives, as I have shown. "Libres" thus represents a non-European view of the world in a domain largely shaped by "Western" approaches: experimental electronica.

It is remarkable that Guz Bejar himself crossed the Atlantic, moving to Berlin after the production and release of his first EP. This path of migration has also left traces in Guz Bejar's musical practice; analyzing his sampling strategies could reveal such a trace. As I have mentioned, Guz Bejar once again addressed the subject of protest on his second EP, *Irrelevant*, released in 2018. He produced this EP mainly in Europe and was working on the final productions for it when I spoke to him in front of his computer in his Berlin apartment. On *Irrelevant*, he sampled metal sounds from the characteristic South American cacerolazo protests. More than on his first EP and the track "Libres," the subject of protest had become a strong reminder of the producer's home, and sampling had become a tool of memory. This episode shows the potential for further anthropological fieldwork. Such research should sharpen the producer's position in Argentinian society in particular, further contextualize the producer's sampling strategies, and analyze correlations and potential discrepancies. Such a study could ask how place influences the musical practice of producers, and how migration affects cultural meaning.

A formerly non-contextual sound is loaded with context and political meaning through the process of sampling and the application of a particular rhythm.

To close this case study, I will, once again, reflect on the involve-ment of the producer in my research. In contrast to the other case studies, Mauro Guz Bejar gave no particular reason as to why he was willing to contribute to my study. To my question he replied simply, "I guess it sounded like a nice thing to do." This time, we must content ourselves with no concrete motivation. For a study focusing on motives, motivations, and intentions, this represents a crucial limitation: despite in-depth research, it is not always possi-ble to access important motivations and intentions behind human actions. Sometimes there simply were none. But sometimes this means that they remain concealed, whether consciously or uncon-sciously.

The previous case studies have examined sampling strategies in which both active and personal contextual perspectives were in-volved. They enabled rich and in-depth discussions of the process-es of sampling in question. As we will see in the next case study, if these two perspectives are missing, the methodical approach un-dertaken in this study cannot reach comparable depth. It is none-theless important to include such strategies, first to show the range of sampling strategies, and second, to further illustrate the applica-bility of the tools developed in this book. Eomac's "Perversas" rep-resents the opposite approach to that found in "Libres": instead of politicizing non-contextual sound, our next producer depoliticizes highly contextual media material.

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"Perversas" by Eomac: Depoliticizing Sound

Instead of politicizing non-contextual sound, this sampling process depoliticizes highly contextual media material.

The musician behind the alias Eomac is Ian McDonnell (*1979), an Irish-born electronic music producer and DJ.[1] Beyond his solo projects Eomac and EeOo, McDonnell performs and releases music as a part of the duos Lakker (since 2003) and noeverything (since 2016), and runs the label Eotrax. The producer took piano lessons from the age of six until his early twenties. He then studied music and music technology at Trinity College Dublin, gradually shifting his focus to electronic music. His early productions were shaped by hip hop and drum & bass, before he became influenced by techno and increasingly focused on experimental approaches.

After moving from Dublin, Ireland, to Berlin, Germany, in 2014, McDonnell felt part of the Berlin techno scene, even though he considered (and still does) his music to be "kind of different sounding to a lot of the music within that scene." He stated that he currently sees himself as "part of a wider electronic music scene." In recent years, McDonnell has earned his living from music. He produces music on his laptop in his home studio or, occasionally, while traveling to one of his regular live performances and DJ sets. McDonnell's music is distributed digitally (Bandcamp, SoundCloud, Spotify) and on vinyl.

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[1]   Unless otherwise stated, this chapter is based on email conversations that took place between January 1, 2017 and February 15, 2017; one interview in Berlin on January 24, 2018; and one interview via Skype on December 19, 2018.

When researching tracks for this study, my interest in McDonnell's productions was aroused early on, as he is involved in a number of projects with a particular focus on sampling. With Lakker, he has made an album exclusively using samples from the archive of the Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision (*Struggle & Emerge*, 2016), while as Eomac, he has made an album processing traditional sound material from the "Arab world" (*Bedouin Trax*, 2016).[2] I once asked McDonnell about other tracks of his containing samples from external media material. In response, he mentioned the track "Perversas," which was—at that time—titled differently ("We're not Supposed to Live this Way") and still unreleased.

Compared with the other case studies, this track is the most distant from the prevailing sound aesthetics of experimental electronica. It lacks the usual cuts and fragmentation, abrasive sounds, and atonality. Instead, the track adheres to a loop-based and stable rhythmic structure. Although the kick drum does not play a four-on-the-floor beat, this conventional techno pattern shines through; first without being present, and later (from 01:00) via a percussive sound resembling a hi-hat. Hence, "Perversas" is not representative of what I describe as experimental electronica. Among McDonnell's productions, other projects and tracks can be better described as experimental electronic popular music. However, I chose "Perversas" because I was generally interested in McDonnell's sampling approach, and the sampling strategy behind the track reveals an approach to sampling that substantially differs from the other case studies.

> *The sampling strategy behind the track reveals an approach to sampling that substantially differs from the other case studies.*

Three features illustrate these differences: (1) the layers of meaning of the source material are of limited significance to the producer. (2) There is no overt political intention behind the track, unlike in the three case studies analyzed so far. (3) The source material reflects my broad understanding of "the political" as a signifier of the social. To elaborate: I do not only consider something "political" if it refers directly to public expressions of opinion (e.g. protests) or the day-to-day business of political parties, parliaments, and governments. In my understanding, "the political" refers to issues that are relevant or urgent for a specific group of people and/or that are publicly debated. In the present case it is the topic of bestiality—sexual intercourse between humans and animals—that is debated. This topic can be considered "political" in a broad sense, as it represents a social taboo.

In this analysis, I will examine the mechanisms and reasons behind a sampling strategy that clearly avoids taking on any political character. This analysis will discuss the function of such a sample and of the technique of sampling as such. It will present a sampling

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2   I consciously use the term "Arab world" here without further specification because it was used by the producer himself in our conversations as well as in the press releases of the *Bedouin Trax* album.

strategy whose primary concern is the concealment of the processed sources.

The track "Perversas" was released during my research, on the compilation *Elephant Road* from London-based label Candela Rising, on April 13, 2017. I have no access to statistics regarding views and sales. However, the little publicity the compilation has received, and the likes (26) and views (1,177, as of July 2021) of a non-official YouTube upload of the track, allow me to suggest that the track has had a limited reach.

Background: Bestiality and Zoophilia as Social Taboos

If one only wants to understand the reasons behind McDonnell's sampling strategy, the layers of meaning found in the sample's source context are not of primary importance. However, a few introductory remarks are still needed in order to trace and discuss the socio-political mechanisms behind the strategy. The sample in question consists of external media material, specifically an excerpt from a video of a young couple talking about their relationship and their shared sexual preference for animals, especially horses (xoffender45 2007). This sexual practice is called bestiality or zoophilia. The terms are sometimes used interchangeably; in academic discourse, bestiality is understood to refer to sexual activity between animals and humans, while zoophilia describes the sexual fixation on, or attraction towards, animals (Ranger and Fedoroff 2014; Kahn 2007). Colin J. Williams and Martin S. Weinberg have pointed out that academic research on sexuality gives only marginal attention to these practices. They state that research on the topic "simply notes that the behavior is rare and confined to certain groups (…), although the practice is said to occur throughout history" (Williams and Weinberg 2003, 524).

Today, the practice is prohibited in most countries. The first two decades of this century even saw an increase in the passing of new laws against bestiality (Wikipedia 2019c; Shir-Vertesh 2013, 162). Dafna Shir-Vertesh (2013, 161) writes that "most societies view sexual relations with animals as a cardinal sin or perversion." This understanding does not correspond to approaches in the psychological and medical fields, where the practice is only defined as a diagnosable mental disorder when accompanied by "distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning," as can be read in the fifth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-5 2013, 705).

In public, however, the topic is rarely discussed. In her pioneering research on zoophilia in Israel, Shir-Vertesh (2013, 162) emphasizes that there is "no public awareness that sexual relations with animals are more than a rare oddity." In her fieldwork, she was confronted

with a set of basic reactions. It is worth quoting her conclusions zat length, as they illustrate how the phenomenon is treated in a particular context:

> The various Israeli settings I explored demonstrate that zo-ophilia is one "different thing" that people in Israel, on the one hand, are not willing to accept, and on the other, find captivating. At first glance, zoophilia does not "officially exist" in Israel and is rarely discussed. This silence can be seen as a major comment on the unacceptability of these actions. When the silence is broken, mention of human-animal sex draws strong interest and even stronger reactions. The intense, uncensored, reactions to zoophilia indicate that while most Israelis prefer to ignore the phenomenon, when directly faced with it they find it strikes a chord. Their reactions fall into the three main categories of humor, disgust, and lashing out. (167)

Although grounded in another context, Shir-Vertesh's findings will be helpful when analyzing the producer's attitude towards this topic, and when developing some concluding thoughts on the case study. In summary, these reactions—between ignorance and fascination—are typical of the treatment of social taboos. Shir-Vertesh quotes Andrea Beetz, who considers bestiality and zoophilia "one of the last persevering taboos" in most societies (161). It is considered threatening to address social taboos proactively, even in research, as Shir-Vertesh demonstrates. Hence, the anthropologist analyzes zoophilia as a threat to the dominance of the human species: "Zoophilia is an ultimate transgression of human boundaries, and as such defies the very cultural perceptions of 'who we are', and what it means to be human in Israel" (170).

This view corresponds with that of Christie Davies (1982, 1060), who analyzes the maintaining of sexual taboos, such as those around homosexuality, bestiality, and transvestism, as a longstanding and successful effort by Western societies to "establish and defend strong ethnic, religious, or institutional boundaries." Through the establishment of social taboos, Davies states, the leaders of groups or institutions—such as the military or the Catholic Church—can constitute their own identity. By defining which sexual practices are not accepted, they draw the line between a group and outsiders. In other words, sexual taboos define who belongs to a group and who does not.

It is not the practice as such that is political so much as the debate—or rather the lack of debate—around it.

These discussions illustrate that it is not the practice as such that is political so much as the debate—or rather the lack of debate—around it. By processing material related to a social taboo, Ian McDonnell's sampling strategy inevitably becomes part of this "debate."

Sample Source

McDonnell recorded the sample from the video platform YouTube. The source video is 4 minutes and 10 seconds long, bears the title "Horse Humper Bestiality Documentary," and was uploaded by the user xoffender45 on January 8, 2007. The video is categorized in the "Comedy" section of the video platform. As of July 2021, the clip has had 581,987 views, 1,073 comments, 786 likes, and 848 dislikes. These high numbers characterize the clip as a popular and viral video.[3]

The clip shows an outdoor scene in which a couple (Can and Ellie) are looking for firewood. They sit down by a campfire and speak about how they met and their experiences of sexual intercourse with horses. Figure 9.1 shows two screenshots of the low-quality video, taken from YouTube. Beyond the voices of the two protagonists, the video's audio track contains some soundscape noises in the background and, at the beginning, a few repeating, dissonant organ tones. Although not sampled in "Perversas," these tones—deriving from the soundtrack of the documentary from which the video was originally taken—might have influenced the producer's perception of the video and his association of it with a particular atmosphere, as I will explain later.

Figure 9.1: YouTube screenshots of the sample source of "Perversas" (xoffender45 2007)

The beginning of the video (in which a narrator says, "She did eventually meet Can") indicates that the clip is an excerpt. The watermark in the video's bottom right corner suggests that the uploader, xoffender45, must have copied the video from the website eBaum's World (ebaumsworld.com). eBaum's World presents entertaining and humorous web content uploaded by its users, such as memes, images, viral videos, and articles. The video in question was uploaded to eBaum's World on January 4, 2007, with the title "Horse Humper." It is an excerpt from a 2004 documentary on Zoophilia, *Animal Passions*, written and directed by Christopher Spencer.

3 In the course of this project, the views increased from 521,000 (March 2018) to 556,000 (June 2019) to 581,987 (July 2021). Although new comments were added in the period in question, the total number of comments decreased from 1,202 (March 2018) to 1,138 (October 2018), raised again to 1,153 (June 2019), and finally decreased to 1,073 (July 2021). The most plausible explanation for these changes is that some comments were deleted by YouTube due to prohibited content (e.g. homophobia, hate, or violence).

Sample Processing

In "Perversas," Ian McDonnell sampled a short excerpt of nine seconds from the YouTube video (2:34 to 2:43, sample-clip 2). The excerpt contains the woman's stuttering voice explaining her sexual practices with her miniature stallion: "Uhm… I li… I like to… to… suck on him… orally. Uh… and… he exp… especially enjoys that." This passage is presumably, for most viewers, one of the most disturbing moments of the entire video. It summarizes Ellie's sexual preference in one short sentence. However, McDonnell uses sample-clip 2 only once. The dominant sample in the track (sample-clip 1) is a shorter version (2:34 to 2:37 in the video) of the initial sample-clip.

Sample-clip 1 is three seconds long and contains only the first part of Ellie's quote: "Uhm… I li… I like to… to." Isolated in this manner, the meaning of the source context cannot be understood without further contextual information. I assume that McDonnell cut the initial sample according to the fixed length of the bars—the track is in a 4/4-time signature and the overall bpm is 129, meaning sample-clip 1 corresponds to the length of two bars.

Figure 9.2 and Figure 9.3 show the processing of the sample in "Perversas." The first figure is a screenshot from the track's Live project, containing the audio track with the YouTube sample. McDonnell labeled the sample itself as "HorseInterview_WRONG" and the respective audio track as "hORSE."
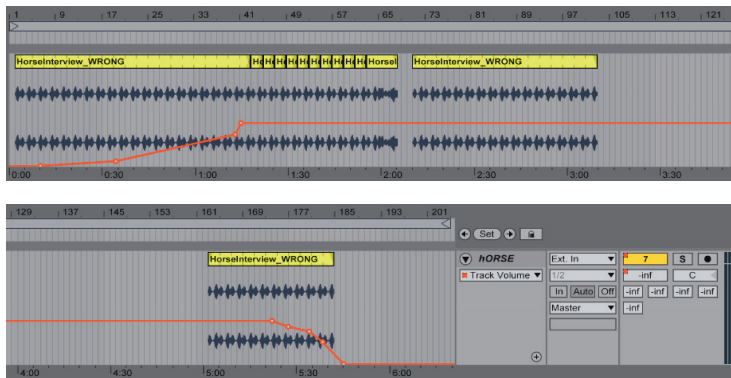
Figure 9.2: Sample processing in "Perversas" (screenshots from Live)

Figure 9.3 displays a transcript of "Perversas" with a focus on both sample-clips. They are represented as they appear in the Live file. McDonnell deployed two techniques of repetition: copy-pasting the samples (bars 43–62) and looping them (bars 2–42, 71–102, 163–185). The rows below the sample represent the other audio tracks in the Live project, containing the rhythm section and some ambient sounds. I have indicated McDonnell's labels for the respective track or track group in brackets.

Three shades of gray further show various levels of intensity. The kick drum consists of different layers that are not always played simultaneously. The hi-hat accents shift from falling on all quarter

This can also be seen in the Live screenshot in Figure 9.2. Sample-clips that have been copied and pasted are margined by vertical black lines, while looped sections appear without lines in the yellow title row.

notes to falling on all eighth notes. Finally, the drone sounds are present throughout the track, changing their dynamics significantly.

Both figures illustrate that the sample mainly appears in the track's intro and outro sections. The sample is also present in the first section of the main part (bars 71–102), which is the first of two climaxes in the track. The second climax occurs at bars 143–162. Both climaxes are announced by a breakdown section.

Figure 9.3: Transcript focusing on processing of the YouTube sample in "Perversas"

The structure of the track is typical for electronic music: the various layers are introduced one after another. The track starts with the kick drum and some vinyl crackle, followed by the hi-hat in bar 33 and the vocal sample in bar 41. Although the drone sounds are present from the beginning, their intensity is slowly increased until the climax at bar 71. The first breakdown section (bars 57–70) is reached through a consistent building up of the track's layers. The full-length sample (sample-clip 2), presented for the first and only time, is a significant part of this section.

Although it appears in fewer than half of the bars in the track (82 of 204), the vocal sample is prominent in "Perversas." This is primarily due to its different standing compared to the other sounds processed in the track, which are either part of the rhythm or treated as ambient sounds. Moreover, the presentation of the full-length sample directs all attention onto it, as it is followed by the track's

only full breakdown (bar 70, on beat number four).

The sample progressively loses its significance, being used less and less as the track progresses. McDonnell used at least four other methods to further conceal the sample towards the track's end. (1) He sampled a part of the YouTube video that is of limited comprehensibility (the woman stutters; the sentence is only a fragment). (2) The producer manipulates the sample with a range of effects. Figure 9.4 and Table 9.1 show the effect chain that McDonnell applied to the vocal sample. With all effects enabled, it is impossible to understand the sampled voice. All that remains are its contours; the attacks of the syllables build a rhythmic element rather than a semantic unit. McDonnell described the technique as follows:

The attacks of the sampled syllables build a rhythmic element rather than a semantic unit.

> I didn't remove it [the sample] absolutely. It's kind of distorted and hidden in the texture of the track so that you can't hear what they are saying anymore but you can still hear the kind of contour of the voice, you know as if they are metrical *M m m m m*—it sounds like humming. So, they are still there but you can't hear the really disturbing words.

Figure 9.4: Effect chain applied to YouTube sample in "Perversas" (screenshots from Live)

The next means of concealing the sample appears towards the end of the track. (3) Here, the drone sounds gradually come to the foreground, finally superseding the vocal sample in the last looped section of the sample (bars 163–85). (4) In this last section, the producer alters the volume of the audio track along with a few effect parameters. Figure 9.5 shows how McDonnell manipulated the audio track volume and the effects Simple Delay (parameters Dry/Wet and Feedback), Reverb (Dry/Wet), and Auto Filter (LFO Amount, Frequency) in the aforementioned bars, thereby concealing the sample further. (The same figure also shows how the volume of the sample track is decreased towards the track's end.)

No.	Effect	Impact	Selected Settings
1	Auto Filter	cuts low frequencies	Filter Cutoff: 196 Hz Resonance/Bandwith: 0.75
2	Simple Delay	repeats the audio signal with a delay	Delay Time Left: 4 16th notes Delay Time Right: 6 16th notes
3	Compressor	a sidechain compressor links the voice sample with the hi-hat; on each hi-hat accent the signal of the sample is compressed	Threshold: -41.1 dB Ratio: 3.66: 1
4	Reverb	adds some reverb to the signal	Pre-delay: 2.50 ms Size: 254.85 Decay Time: 6.24 s
5	Compressor	creates a more consistent volume by compressing the audio signal	Threshold: -50.9 dB Ratio: 5.57: 1
6	Auto Filter	cuts high frequencies	Filter Cutoff: 877 Hz Resonance/Bandwith: 1.23
7	EQ Eight	another low-cut filter	Frequency: 152 Hz

Table 9.1: Impact and settings of the effects applied to the main sample in "Perversas"
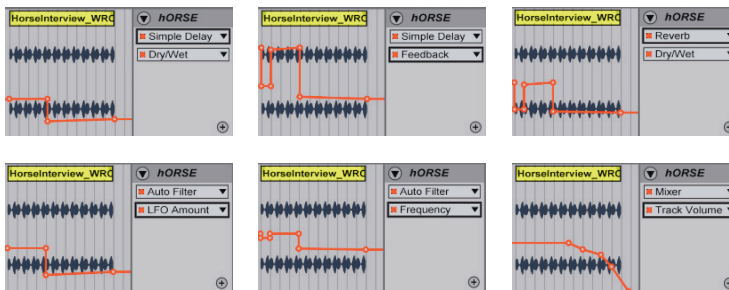
Figure 9.5: Altered effects and volume of sample in bars 163–85 in "Perversas" (screenshots from Live)

Just as the sample becomes more and more concealed as the track progresses, a similar process shapes the various steps in the process of sampling more broadly. This can be seen, for instance, in the first looped section of the sample (bars 2–41). According to Figure 9.3 and the Live file, the sample is looped here 20.5 times. However, as its volume only rises slowly, the sample remains inaudible until bar 41 in the mastered track. This long, muted section of sample-clip 1 can be seen as a leftover from an earlier stage of production, where the sample was more prominent earlier on. This shows McDonnell's intention to increasingly obfuscate the sample during the production process. I will comment on this later.

Sample Visibility and Reasons for Sampling

(a) Reasons for Sampling

This case study represents a sampling strategy that does not place much emphasis on the (extra-musical) meaning of the sampled material. This is shown by the SSR below: the fewer areas filled out on the left side of the diagram, the lower the significance of the extra-musical to the sampling strategy in question.

Nevertheless, I have identified aspects of all four approaches in McDonnell's sampling. The most significant category is the narrative perspective within the contextual approach. Put simply, McDonnell sampled the YouTube video to convey a particular atmosphere. In our conversations, he repeatedly emphasized this intention: "It was to convey this feeling of uneasiness and discomfort. I think that was the main kind of intention with that."

McDonnell sampled the YouTube video to convey a particular atmosphere.

In order to understand the process of sample selection, it is worth looking at the entire production process, which took considerable time. According to the oldest time stamps on some of the Live files and his own statements, McDonnell started working on the project in 2010. The time stamp on the sample file (November 20, 2009) indicates that the sample was first recorded even earlier. It took McDonnell seven years to finally release "Perversas," in early 2017. Accordingly, there were two moments of selection: an initial one, when the producer watched the YouTube video and recorded the sample; and a second, when the producer selected the sample material for processing. McDonnell recalled the moment when he initially watched the video:

> *I clicked on it and... to check it out... it is an interesting topic, human sexuality, in all its various forms and perversions—it's interesting and this was like "Okay, I gotta hear what these people are saying," and then... yeah just the... the nature of what they're saying and the sound of their voices, well everything about it is really disturbing and so I thought yeah, this... this could work for... for a sample in something.*

McDonnell recorded the sample in Live and saved it in a folder on his computer. There was no aim to sample the material in a specific track. He merely stored it for potential later use, a practice that I call bookmarking of sampling material (this represents the storing stage within the process of sampling). McDonnell confirmed that he often pursues this practice, though in the end he only processes a fraction of the stored material: "I rarely use them, but I want to have them just in case they work for a track... So, there's that aspect of hearing and putting it aside for later for that might work

→ Figure 2.1

for something." This case study thus illustrates that the mere act of browsing through YouTube has become an integral part of the process of music-making (see also a similar conclusion drawn in the interlude of this book later). This reflects the incorporation of the stage of research and active and passive listening into the process of sampling.
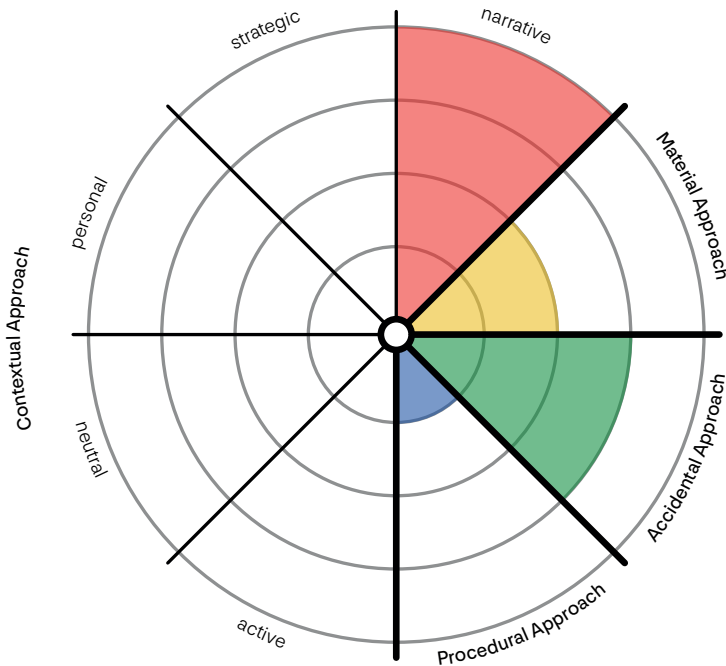
Figure 9.6: SSR: reasons for sampling in "Perversas"

When starting to work on "Perversas," McDonnell first focused on the drone sounds. While working with them, he remembered the YouTube sample and thus arrived at the second moment of selection:

I think it was these [drone sounds] I initially started working with. They have this kind of eerie, strange to me atmosphere as well. When I was working on these, I thought of the sample that I had bookmarked, and thought that conversation would work well with [this] really strange sound/ drone.

Those vocal samples that were eventually used in "Perversas" just kind of fit the mood of the track that I was already working on.

It was a particular atmosphere or "mood" that McDonnell intended to evoke with the track. He wanted to intensify this atmosphere through sampling and felt that the YouTube sample fit the desired atmosphere. In our conversations, he described the atmosphere as eerie, strange, disturbing, weird, uncomfortable, and dark. At this point, the original meaning of the sample material—a woman

talking about her sexual preferences towards a miniature stallion—had already shifted to the background. The particular content of the material was no longer significant so much as its association with an abstract "strange and eerie" feeling.

This feeling still connects to the extra-musical. It is questionable whether McDonnell would have related the video with this atmosphere without further context—for example, if the same couple had talked about other preferences or actions not connected with a controversial topic such as bestiality. More fundamentally, relating a sound to an atmosphere is an act of linking the musical with the extra-musical. Hence, I interpret this sampling intention as primarily contextual.

Still, it cannot be denied that the material approach is also relevant to some extent. McDonnell repeatedly stated that "there was something about the tone and inflection of their voices that was equally disturbing," and that they "fit with the tone of the track." But there is no sharp distinction between the material and the contextual here. I assume that this particular "tone" or "inflection" is intrinsically tied to extra-musical information from the source video. In other words: the content of the source video affected how McDonnell perceived the tone of the voices.

Another element, beyond the content of the conversation, might have affected McDonnell's perception of the video: the background music in its first 30 seconds. These repeating, dissonant organ-like sounds—belonging to the soundtrack of the documentary from which the source material was extracted—might have been a precondition for perceiving the video as "strange and eerie." Although this is just an assumption that cannot be verified, I suppose that McDonnell might have selected the sample not primarily for its content, but because he found a particular sonic quality in the sample that he was looking for.

When discussing the act of sampling with McDonnell, he emphasized the significance of the material approach for his sampling practice in general:

> I pretty much sample anything that has (to my ears) an interesting sonic quality. I'm not overly precious about the source.

> I also often record vocal snippets of interesting or unusual topics from YouTube etc., and sometimes use them in tracks. They can add texture and tone in interesting ways.

In other words, when sampling, McDonnell's focus lies on the sonic and thus material qualities of the sample material in general, such as tone and texture.

The particular content of the material was no longer significant so much as its association with an abstract "strange and eerie" feeling.

The use of this particular vocal sample in the track was also—at least to some extent—determined by chance. This becomes clear when we look more closely at the first moment of selection. McDonnell recounted how he found the video:

> *I can't remember how I actually got to that point. I think it must have come up as a video on the right-hand side[4] and I clicked on it to just check it out.*

> *I kind of stumbled across it. I wasn't looking for anything specific, I wasn't looking for samples or subject matter or anything like that. I just came across this and I was "Yeah I'm gonna record this."*

As with the case study of Lara Sarkissian, the algorithms of YouTube partially defined the framework for this sampling process. In this case, I would even place greater emphasis on the accidental approach than in the analysis of "kenats." Instead of a conscious and targeted search, McDonnell literally "stumbled across" the sample.

Instead of a conscious and targeted search, McDonnell literally "stumbled across" the sample.

The last aspect to discuss here is the procedural approach. For McDonnell, the method of sampling serves as a tool of compositional limitation. He uses samples not only because of their contextual meaning or material nature, but also because the sampling material serves simply as a means to an end: the composition of new music. The sample serves as a point of departure with an unknown destination. It is not important whether the sample is still recognizable, or indeed present at all, in the final result. The producer confirmed this method as one of his general approaches to sampling: "I'll start with a particular idea in mind for the sample, and, as I work with it, it becomes something else because I find something even more interesting beneath the layers that the process reveals."

McDonnell describes here a sampling tactic similar to those identified by Paul Harkins. In the first of three tactics described by Harkins, a sample is concealed at first before being disclosed towards the end of the track (Harkins 2010a, 9). In "Perversas," the process was exactly the opposite. Harkins' second sampling tactic fits even more closely: in his "additive approach," a track is built around an atmospheric sample that might ultimately disappear from it (10). A similar tactic has been described by Justin Morey (2017, 291) as "start with a sample, then discard it."

The track examined in this case study might rely on a similar strategy. The increasing concealment of the sampling during the production process supports this idea. In fact, McDonnell tried at one point to discard the sample, but with no success:

> *At one point I think I took [the sample] aside completely as I said "Ok, let's just make it a track that's just the drums*

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and the drones," but then it didn't have the same atmos-
phere, just didn't grab your attention in the same way (...).
So initially, it was there as a much more prevalent, upfront
element of the track then I got rid of it completely and then
I brought it back.

This quotation shows that it was crucial for the track that the sample remained part of the project. Accordingly, the sample was definitely more than just a "compositional crutch." However, this means that the procedural approach does not serve as a primary explanation for McDonnell's choice of sample.

(b) Attitude

Although the contextual aspects of the sampled source are not much valued by the producer, it is important to discuss his attitude towards the sampled material. The YouTube video seemingly provokes harsh reactions in general, as a look through its vast number of comments reveals (xoffender45 2007). Statements range from incomprehension and shock to humorous and ironical responses and dismissive and overtly homophobic and hostile utterances towards the couple. Only a few commenters try to establish a certain understanding of the practice by engaging with the moral dilemmas it implies, though they almost always clearly distance themselves from it. All of these comments correspond to the basic reactions to zoophilia identified by Dafna Shir-Vertesh (2013, 167) in Israeli society: "humor, disgust, and lashing out." Where on this spectrum (or beyond) the producer places himself has a bearing on the analysis in this case study, regardless of how the material was eventually processed.

Finding an answer here was more difficult than in the previous case studies. As McDonnell mentioned, he felt "uncomfortable" when he watched the video; it was even "disturbing" for him. Beyond these vague statements, only the track's title can provide further indications: the word "perversas" is either a Latin or Spanish form of the adjective "perverse" in its plural feminine form. It remains open why the producer chose this particular declination. I would primarily assume aesthetic considerations—the producer uses Latin track titles now and then. The title contains a strong negative evaluation and is clearly connected to the sampled material. This allows me to assume that McDonnell considers the practices of bestiality or zoophilia to be perverted. This is not an unusual reaction to a socially taboo sexual practice, as shown above.

However, the track only acquired its current title shortly before its release. Until then the track was called "We're not Supposed to Live this Way," a title that leaves the producer's stance more open and points to the subject in question being a social taboo. McDonnell changed the title because he submitted the track to a compilation released as part

The new title clearly distances the producer from the processed material.

of a campaign against ovarian cancer. The organization releasing it asked McDonnell to change the wording as they considered it inappropriate in the context of their project. At first sight, the new title might be more disguised than its predecessor, not least because of its Latin root.[5] However, a second glance reveals an even stronger potential attitude behind it. The new title clearly distances the producer from the processed material. Nevertheless, whether this title fully reflects the producer's attitude or should be seen more as an aesthetic experiment must remain open. The processing of the sample at least suggests the latter, as it prioritizes aesthetics over meaning.

(c) Visibility

In "Perversas," Ian McDonnell processes controversial sampling material in a way that is almost completely concealed, as illustrated by the FOV. The master fader is positioned in the lower part of its range. Only the first fader is at its highest position, as the sample is clearly audible, at least in the first part of the track.

AUDIBILITY	SIGNALIZATION	REFERENTIALITY	RECOGNIZABILITY	EXTRA-MUSICAL SIGNALIZATION	MASTER VISIBILITY
audible	signaled	indexical	recognizable	announced	obvious
muted	unsignaled	non-referential	obscured	unmentioned	concealed
1	2	3	4	5	6
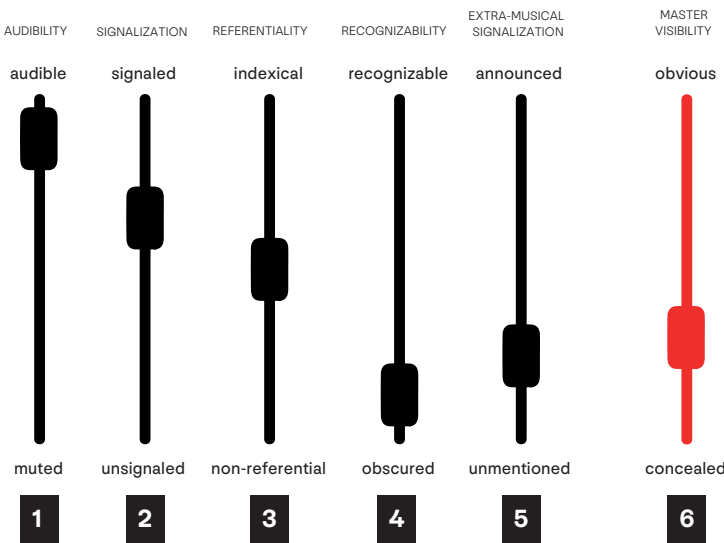
Figure 9.7: FOV: sample visibility in "Perversas"

The sample is textually signaled as such: it is clearly recognizable that vocals were processed and manipulated in the track. The vocal character of the sample becomes especially apparent when it is presented in full in bars 63–68 (sample-clip 2). The prominent vinyl crackle in the introduction further intensifies the potential perception of the track as containing sampled material. Nevertheless, it is still possible that the vocals could have been recorded by the producer, rather than sampled from external media material. Therefore, fader number 2 is not placed at its highest position. Similar to

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5 Further studies of reception could step in here and examine how such a title is perceived by listeners.

the audibility of the sample, the degree of signalization decreases over the course of the track. In the last loop of sample-clip 1 (bars 163–185), the voice sample is almost muted and the vinyl crackle stops.

Fader number 3 (referentiality) is in its middle position. The sampled material makes no hard references. The particular atmosphere it is intended to evoke, described by the producer as strange, eerie, and uncomfortable, can be categorized as a soft reference. Meanwhile, fader number 4 (recognizability) is at its lowest position due to the sampled material being completely obscured by a considerable number of effects. Although a sampled voice can still be heard, the words are not comprehensible. Furthermore, this fader changed position during the process of production, as I will discuss below.

The fifth fader is also positioned at the bottom of its range, as there is almost no extra-musical signalization of the processed material. McDonnell did not talk about the material in public, explaining when asked that "it was enough to get the feeling." The only reference made is through the track's title, but this does not reveal the sample's source. The listener would need further information to identify this.

There is an interesting comment to be made at this point. The description provided by the FOV represents the situation before my research. Having since published a short article on McDonnell's sampling strategy on Norient (Liechti 2018c), I should raise the position of fader number 5. Thanks to this article, all information on the source of the sample can be traced publicly. McDonnell's participation in this study shows that he accepted the ensuing risk of his sampling strategy becoming more visible. This might not have been a difficult decision, given the limited reach of both track and article, meaning there is no foreseeable negative consequence for the producer in sharing this information publicly. However, this consideration points to a basic problem of studies on sampling practices: there are concealed sampling strategies that will never be uncovered. This case study thus serves as an accessible example of such an approach. Furthermore, it accentuates yet again the impact of the researcher on their object of study, and helps us to be aware of such issues.

This is equally the case for the analysis of M.E.S.H.'s "Methy Imbiß" (Chapter 10).

There are concealed sampling strategies that will never be uncovered.

As mentioned, if we were to focus on an earlier stage of the production process, we would need to place fader number 4 in a higher position. This illustrates a central characteristic of the sampling tactic under discussion: a development from open processing of the sample material at the start of the production process to its increased obfuscation towards the end. McDonnell explained that there were different versions of the track:

> As the track progressed you could initially hear exactly what they were saying, the sample was very clear. And as

the track progressed and changed, I started adding beats and then this became more and more like a... [conversation interrupted]

I have already discussed a remnant of this process: the long loop of sample-clip 1 that is still present in the Live file but completely muted in the mastered track (bars 2–40). In an earlier quotation, McDonnell emphasized the sample's importance to the track. Without it, he felt the desired atmosphere was lacking. On another occasion, he referred to this atmosphere as "the feeling behind the sample." This feeling seemed to be more important than the words:

Somewhere on the track it made more sense to obscure it and just use the... maybe the feeling behind what they're saying, the contour of the voice rather than the explicit words... if that makes sense. I think sometimes it becomes too explicit when I use somebody else's voice like that in my music. And I'd rather use the... the feeling behind what the words are saying than the actual words.

This concealment of the sample was also, McDonnell explained, a conscious strategy to avoid "cheesiness." Indeed, reducing a sample "down to anything that works" is one of his usual approaches to music production. This was not always the case. He said that his way of working with vocal samples has changed during his career, from obvious processing towards increased concealment:

Particular vocal samples I'm often reluctant to use. I use them initially and then somewhere along the way I don't work with them anymore because they are too obvious and then either I remove them or disguise them like this.

Accordingly, concealment, in this case study, is a threefold process, taking place during the process of musical production, in the course of the track, and as a part of the producer's artistic development. As a result of this process of concealment, the layers of meaning carried by the sampling material are further pushed towards invisibility, and the sample-clips are primarily used as musical material.

Drawing on the <u>general fields of sampling motives</u> introduced earlier in this book, I would characterize this sampling process as focusing on the fields of inspiration and communication, while having no further ambition regarding the content of the source material. The fields of inspiration and communication are in fact intertwined: on the one hand, the sample inspired McDonnell because it fit the mood of the sounds he had already composed; on the other, he used the sample to evoke a particular atmosphere and to transfer this atmosphere to the listener.

Conclusion and Prospect

In this case study, I have presented a sampling strategy that does not stress the layers of meaning in its source material. The producer feels no need to refer to the original source—apart from in the track's title, which offers a brief hint towards the sample's origin. Without further information, it remains almost impossible to access the original layers of meaning in the sampled material. The sample primarily functions as a melodic line, taking from its source nothing more than an abstract feeling. This was the main intention behind this sampling strategy (narrative perspective).

The sample primarily functions as a melodic line, taking from its source nothing more than an abstract feeling.

Further reasons for sampling relate to the aesthetic nature of the sample (material approach), the producer's accidental encounter with the source material (accidental approach), and, to a lesser degree, the use of the sample as a "compositional crutch" and as a means to an end (procedural approach). The sampling strategy itself was shaped by a process of concealment of the sampling material, which corresponds with both the final processing of the sample in the track and the producer's general artistic development.

Finally, this analysis revealed thought processes that take place during the production of electronic music: should I leave the sample obvious or concealed? How do I avoid being "cheesy"? How can I intensify the desired atmosphere? Should I use the sample at all or should I discard it? All of these processes remain hidden to the track's recipients. In saying this, I do not want to claim that the audience should know about these processes. Such knowledge is not necessary for a successful encounter with the music. On the contrary, knowing such details relating to a sample could substantially hinder the reception of an artistic work. Nevertheless, I am convinced that such an analysis can help to reach a better understanding of popular music. It illustrates how popular music is made, *and* shows the kinds of aims, motivations, and considerations that lie behind it—and those that do not. Last but not least, disclosing sampling strategies shows mechanisms of culture at play. In the case of "Perversas," the sampling strategy points to at least three larger issues: the treatment of social taboos, voyeurism, and circulating media material as culture-making. These three issues illustrate the seismographic substance behind "Perversas."

(a) The Treatment of Social Taboos

One could characterize this sampling strategy as non-political. There is neither a political intention behind it nor any overt anchor point allowing a political reading of the track in the first instance. However, I have shown that McDonnell processed material that

deals with a highly political topic and is part of a (hidden) public debate around a social taboo. By sampling such material with a non-political intention, and by simultaneously keeping it audible, the producer depoliticizes the sampling material. He eliminates the (political) layers of meaning and completely focuses on the aesthetics of the material. Others have described similar strategies as aestheticization (Rösing 2004, 165). I consider the aspect of audibility to be crucial when using such labels. I would not speak of depoliticization or aestheticization when the sample is completely concealed, as in such cases no examination of the aesthetic potential of the material takes place (see next case study, on "Methy Imbiß"). The sampling strategy behind "Perversas" is opposed to the politicization of sound material by Mauro Guz Bejar analyzed in the previous case study.

This strategy of depoliticizing sampling material further points to the treatment of social taboos in particular societies. The comments below the YouTube video processed by McDonnell, and his own approach to it, correspond to Dafna Shir-Vertesh's observations regarding (Israeli) society's response to the social taboos of zoophilia and bestiality. Shir-Vertesh emphasizes the epistemological value of content similar to that sampled in "Perversas": "Popular culture manifestations that make people laugh or enraged can inform us of the ways people incorporate pop culture into their experiences and construct their own interpretations from them" (Shir-Vertesh 2013, 163).

"Perversas," and the sampling strategy behind it, can be regarded as just such an interpretation. Through progressive concealment of the samples over the course of the track, McDonnell mirrors society's handling of the issue in question: he broadly ignores it, while, as we have seen, personally condemning the practice. This interpretation far exceeds the analysis of authorial intentions. It is also not my intention to judge McDonnell's practice, nor to claim an elaborate stance on the part of the producer. As I have shown previously, this issue did not shape McDonnell's considerations during the production process. I rather want to emphasize the potential of popular music to reproduce and reveal social processes and phenomena. The question, however, of whether such tracks could serve as representative examples of the handling of social taboos, and to what extent such taboos might be strengthened or dissolved through popular music, would merit further study far beyond the discipline of cultural anthropology. It should also be noted that McDonnell's depoliticization of the sampled sound material in "Perversas" is not complete: through the track's title, he reintroduces the extra-musical and thus the political.

> **By sampling such material with a non-political intention, and by simultaneously keeping it audible, the producer depoliticizes the sampling material.**

(b) Voyeurism

A second discussion centers around voyeurism as part of the phenomenon of so-called "viral videos." Often humorous in content, these videos typically become popular through being shared on video platforms and social media or via online communication. The presence of the sampling source of "Perversas" on two significant web platforms for such content, YouTube and eBaum's World, its number of clicks and views, and its categorization as "Comedy" on YouTube suggest it is a characteristic example of such a viral video. The self-description of the web platform eBaum's World summarizes the character of this kind of widely circulated online media material: "A nonchalant collection of funny pictures, slightly-dank memes, and somewhat crazy videos that eBaum's World users uploaded from all over the internet" (Google 2019).

The main aim of these videos is to entertain. For viewers they evoke, on the one hand, positive feelings such as amusement and astonishment, and on the other, negative feelings such as disgust and incomprehension. The reactions to the YouTube documentary snippet discussed above show elements of both. Considering that only a portion of such viral video content is intended as ironic or funny by its makers or protagonists—in our case, the clip stems from a presumably serious documentary—we should regard this phenomenon as problematic. I would argue that there is an element of voyeurism to it.

Voyeurism is generally understood in two ways, as either "enjoyment from seeing the pain or distress of others," or as a sexual practice (Oxford 2019a). I refer to the first meaning. Most viewers of this video presumably feel some kind of superiority over the couple portrayed in it. One is tempted to laugh at or feel sickened by them. In short, the consumption of such video content establishes or strengthens relations of power. Shir-Vertesh similarly argues that, in these contexts, "disgust" becomes a powerful tool:

> *Most viewers of this video presumably feel some kind of superiority over the couple portrayed in it.*

> According to [William] Miller (1997), disgust is, above all, a moral and social sentiment, a key element to social control, one that ranks people and things in a kind of cosmic ordering. Thus, disgust is a feeling that has political significance. It can maintain hierarchy, can constitute claims for superiority, as well as be elicited as an indication of the proper placement in the social order. (Shir-Vertesh 2013, 168)

Again, these thoughts represent my own reading of the track as a substitute for social processes, rather than reflecting authorial intentions. It is not my aim to accuse the producer of "Perversas" of voyeurism. Nevertheless, a clear voyeuristic intention is not necessary for a situation to be characterized as voyeuristic. Moreover, I assume that the feelings of "uneasiness and discomfort" that McDonnell mentioned as his main sampling motivation are connected

with this discussion. These feelings might have been pro-
voked because McDonnell, at least subconsciously, rec-
ognized the problematic aspects of his encounter with the
video. McDonnell's track doesn't just reflect an interest in
or fascination with the perverse, as the historian William
Graebner has identified in rock music in the 1980s (Graebner 1988).
Through the use of sampling, the interest becomes voyeuristic.

*Through the use
of sampling, the
interest becomes
voyeuristic.*

It would now be the task of further, more specific studies to ex-
amine whether this track indeed represents a voyeuristic practice
and—more generally—to what extent this example mirrors grow-
ing tendencies towards voyeurism in the time of the Participatory
Web.[6] A comparative study with other tracks that sample viral me-
dia material, and an examination of the reasons for sampling be-
hind them, could result in further insights.

(c) Circulating Media Material as Culture-Making

The last aspect I want to highlight is the importance of circulation
in the present sampling strategy. Margie Borschke (2017, 159) has
examined the circulation of recorded music on the internet. In
her book on remix culture and the materiality and the aesthetics
of copies, she sets out to study culture "from the perspective of
circulation." She quotes David Novak (2013, 17–20), who showed
that circulation is part of the creative process, and thus a formative
force behind musical phenomena and culture.

Following Borschke and Novak, I want to stress the significance
of circulation in processes of sampling as well. This case study
shows this particularly clearly, as the track is substantially based on
the circulation of media material. The YouTube sample originates
from a documentary movie, an excerpt of which appeared on var-
ious online video platforms, before finally ending up in a track of
electronic popular music. There, it was processed as aesthetic ma-
terial, but it also provokes questions regarding how we handle cir-
culating media material and how we reflect on and articulate our at-
titudes towards it. To a great extent, this track represents the way in
which popular music is produced in the 21st century. We must now
ask whether this way of producing music is changing music and
culture, and if so, how? Or else we must address the question of
how this process of circulation continues further, including through
the present study.

■

To close this case study, I once again turn to the producer's rea-
sons for participating. When I posed this question to McDonnell,

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he said that he was first and foremost interested in the subject of the study.[7] As McDonnell uses sampling in all of his musical productions in various ways, he showed great interest in discussing his own approach to sampling with me. For me as a researcher, this was an ideal and welcome opportunity to gain access to a producer who had already reflected considerably on his own sampling approach. Moreover, McDonnell was open to giving deeper insights into the production process behind the track in question, although he had previously decided not to disclose his reasons for sampling to a broader audience.

The next and final analysis presents the most concealed sampling strategy among all of the case studies. The track "Methy Imbiß," by electronic music producer M.E.S.H., brings back the overtly political, and shows that the processing of political sampling material must not necessarily be based on a general communicational motivation or intention.

7   A thorough examination of this question would, for all case studies, require a multi-layered analysis of motives, motivations, and intentions, such as I undertake with regard to reasons for sampling in this study. For example, strategic reasons might also play a role in a producer participating in such a study. Being part of institutional research could significantly enhance the producer's symbolic capital, in the sense of Pierre Bourdieu (Johnson 1993, 7). Such reasons might rarely be verbalized by the interviewees, see also my discussion of the strategic perspective in the SSR in Chapter 5.

10
"Methy Imbiß" by M.E.S.H.: Concealed Politics

The producer's sampling of sounds of war is motivated by a desire to incorporate his own lived reality into his music.

This case study focuses on electronic music producer James Whipple, active under the alias M.E.S.H.[1] Born in Seattle, U.S. in 1985, Whipple grew up in Santa Barbara, California, and later studied in the design and technology department at New School University in New York. In 2009, he moved to Berlin, where he is currently based. Regarding his musical background, he mentioned taking a few lessons in electric bass as a teenager, "without going far." He started producing electronic music at around the age of 15, and has since developed his producing skills on his own. Music journalist Aimee Cliff summarized his musical development:

> *After briefly dabbling in pop-punk bass guitar at the age of 13, Whipple moved on to making a mixture of noise, musique concrète and drum 'n' bass on Fruity Loops as a teenager, developing a sweeping collage style that can be traced all the way through to his idiosyncratic productions today. (Cliff 2015)*

Since 2014, Whipple has supported himself through touring around the world as both a DJ and live performer. He is closely connected to electronic music scenes in Berlin, and co-founded the Janus collective, which organizes a regular club night (currently

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1   This chapter is based on email conversations conducted between July 8, 2016 and February 1, 2017; an exchange of emails in February 2019; one interview via Skype on January 25, 2017; one interview in Berlin on January 25, 2018; and a few interviews published in online magazines: Cliff 2015, Finlayson 2015, Shape 2016, Twells 2017, and Wilson 2015.

resident at the influential Berghain club), hosts one-off club events all over the world, and acts as a label.[2] Janus is a well-known actor in global circles related to experimental electronica, as is the label PAN, which has released most of Whipple's musical output so far. Whipple's tracks explore the possibilities of electronic music on various levels. His compositions maneuver between spacious sound textures and sharp and complex rhythms not bound to a fixed rhythmic grid. His sound aesthetics are shaped by synthesized sounds, but he also regularly uses external sampling material. Whipple's sound is sometimes described as IDM (intelligent dance music)—a (rather elitist) label used in the 1990s to refer to a range of genres and sounds that were not primarily club-oriented—or as "IDM 2.0" (Twells 2017).

His compositions maneuver between spacious sound textures and sharp and complex rhythms not bound to a fixed rhythmic grid.

Whipple lives in the attic of an apartment building between Berlin Kreuzberg and Neukölln. This is where he has set up his home studio and where he has produced most of his tracks, including "Methy Imbiß."[3] Our only in-person interview took place at his workstation in his bedroom; some of his gear was installed in a further room. When we met, in January 2018, he complained about the acoustic situation in his apartment, which he considered "terrible." He was at that time planning to move into an external studio. Whipple publishes and distributes his releases digitally through all prevalent online platforms and on vinyl.

As a known and visible actor in the field of experimental electronica, my attention was drawn to Whipple's music while researching potential tracks for this study. At that time, in 2016, he had just released his EP *Damaged Merc*, so I contacted him to ask about its sampling sources. Through a brief exchange of emails, I became particularly interested in the track "Kritikal & X" from his debut album *Piteous Gate* (2015). In this track, Whipple processed a YouTube video of an argument between two gamers playing the video game *Counter-Strike* (Liechti 2017i). After I conducted a longer interview via Skype on the sampling strategy behind this track, Whipple sent an email with some additional information, mentioning that another track from the same LP, "Methy Imbiß," also featured sampled media material: "One more sample from *Piteous Gate* I forgot about, in 'Methy Imbiß' all of the sweep effects and voices come from a heavily processed sample of a militia firing mortars in Eastern Ukraine."

This disclosure caused me to shift my focus to this track. It

2   Moro, featured in Chapter 8, released his second EP *Irrelevant* (2018) through Janus. It was their seventh release in four years (2014–2018).
3   I will not further discuss the track's title in my analysis. With "Methy," Whipple refers to a particular "damaged, post rave" aesthetic that sounds like it has been played on "completely smashed" synthesizers. The German word "Imbiß" refers to particular places: "This just made me think of a lot of the terrible sort of snack shop 'Imbisses' in Berlin, or even in a lot of Eastern European places that I have been. Just like the late-night place where everyone's drinking schnapps and gambling. Just the kind of dark, methy energy, like seven in the morning in one of these places." See also the meaning of "methy" in Urban Dictionary (2019).

caught my interest because the processed sound material is highly political and controversial while also being almost completely concealed: an excellent precondition for a case study. This analysis thus centers on questions such as "why would a producer sample field recordings from a war zone in a concealed way?"

Why would a producer sample field recordings from a war zone in a concealed way?

The track was released on the LP *Piteous Gate* on July 15, 2015, as number eight of a total of nine tracks; on the vinyl version it appeared as the fourth track on the B-side. In the last six years, an unofficial upload on YouTube (uploaded on September 5, 2015) has reached 7,135 views and 172 likes. On SoundCloud, another upload by the music magazine *self-titled* has reached 4,121 plays, 97 likes, and 9 reposts in the same period (as of July 2021).

The research and analysis of this case study faced several challenges that I will briefly address here before analyzing the sampling process in detail. Among all of the case studies in this book, this track is the oldest (released in 2015). At the time of my research, Whipple had already begun work on his second album, *Hesaitix* (2018). Consequently, Whipple's memory of the production process of his previous tracks was diminishing, and he could not answer some of my questions with certainty. Although he shared two Ableton Live versions of the track with me (the album version and a live version), I could make only superficial use of them as a source for analysis due to missing plugins and instruments. Even on the producer's end, the files had lost their usability over time: "Most of the channels aren't working anymore," Whipple told me.

This situation makes clear that if in-depth analysis of electronic popular music wants to tackle production-related issues, it must focus on tracks that are in the process of being made, or at least recently published. Another challenge—once again characteristic of the field, as I will discuss later—was Whipple's extensive travel for DJ sets around the world, which meant he was unable to answer some of my interview requests. Finally, Whipple's working process complicated the analysis too. In an online interview he described his workflow:

> *So before I even started writing I spent a long time making sounds and collecting samples, messing about with things and saving presets. I made my own huge preset library with all the effects bundled together, just so everything's ready to go. Because I really, really hate starting with a blank slate, it drives me insane. Often my tracks will all be splintering off from the same project file, I'll constantly be like "Save As...," "Save As...," "Save As...". I'm copying and pasting the project, and deleting everything, but all the sounds are still there. So the tracks are kind of feeding on themselves. (Whipple in Finlayson 2015)*

The project file of the track under examination was labeled "finalthoriumpillthurs-MAY." The title indicates that the file is based

on the project file of the track "The Black Pill," which was itself based on the project file of the track "Thorium"—both tracks which appear on *Piteous Gate*. This workflow makes it especially hard to reconstruct the compositional process, as we can never be sure which traces took root in which project. On the other hand, it exemplifies an existing compositional practice, and shows the significance of samples in Whipple's productions in general.

What follows is an analysis of the sampling of Ukrainian war footage in "Methy Imbiß," which will show the concealed sampling of highly controversial source material beyond a communicational intent.

Background: Eastern Ukraine and the War in Donbas

To contextualize the sampled material, I want to proceed with a few remarks on the history and ethnic composition of Eastern Ukraine, as well as on the events of the military conflict which started in 2014. Throughout its history, Ukraine has been at the mercy of influential powers such as Russia and Poland. Barring a few exceptional periods, it is only since 1991 and the collapse of the Soviet Union that Ukraine has been a sovereign entity. Processes of nation building are therefore still ongoing. Moreover, as Andreas Kappeler (2019, 28) observes, Ukraine has always had a polyethnic and multi-religious character. My focus here lies on the Eastern Ukrainian regions of Donetsk and Luhansk, mostly collectively addressed as the Donets Basin, or "the Donbas." This region was a center of heavy industry for the late Tsarist empire and during the Soviet period.

Today, according to Kappeler, around 40 percent of the population of the Donbas is ethnically Russian, and 80 to 90 percent are native Russian speakers (357). These numbers are similar or even higher for other Eastern and Southern regions of Ukraine, in contrast to regions in the country's center, North, and West (Ivanov 2016). While the South and East are traditionally oriented towards Russia, the North and West look towards Europe.[4] These significant differences have led Kataryna Wolczuk to speak of present-day Ukraine as "an amalgam of regions" (Jordan 2015, 114). These statistics also show that, in the case of Ukraine, language is "not necessarily a marker of [ethnic] identity" (115). Although most people in Eastern Ukraine speak Russian, not all of them are ethnically Russian. This will also become clear in the analysis of the source video for this case study.

The large Russian population—after 1991, Ukraine encompassed the largest group of ethnic Russians outside of the Russian

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4   Some authors have argued that this widely repeated dichotomy oversimplifies the complex reality in Ukraine. See Hansen et al. 2019, 40.

Federation (Bremmer 1994, 262)—and the economic strength of the region are just two factors explaining the significance of Eastern Ukraine to neighboring Russia. In fact, Ukraine and Russia claim the same historical roots, in the medieval Kyivan Rus'. Referring to this shared history, the current president of Russia, Vladimir Putin, has repeatedly emphasized that Ukraine is part of "the Russian world" (Kappeler 2019, 335, own translation), and this formed part of his justification for escalating the conflict during the final phases of this book being written, in early 2022. In summary, Eastern Ukraine is of considerable strategic and ideological significance for Russia. Other major powers, such as the EU and the U.S., also consider the region around the Black Sea to be of great geopolitical importance (Ivanov 2016, 53).

According to Oleh Ivanov, the military events in the Donbas region since 2014 must be seen against this backdrop, although linguistic-ethnic heterogeneity was not their immediate cause (ibid.). Support for the pro-European Euromaidan protests of winter 2013, which emerged in the capital Kyiv, was significantly lower in the East of the country than elsewhere. In fact, in the East, this broad revolutionary movement fueled pro-Russian sympathies and separatist tendencies. After Russia's annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in March 2014, armed conflicts that were heavily influenced and supported by Russia began to spread in the Donbas. In 2014, the conflict reached several bloody peaks, in particular between May and September. While finishing this book, the conflict was still ongoing, escalating to a new level in early 2022.

Ivanov describes the character of this military conflict using the term "hybrid warfare," by which he and other scholars refer to the use of the information sphere as an integral tool of war. Although Russia has officially denied its involvement in the conflict, they support pro-Russian fighters with weapons, elite troops, and propaganda campaigns. Kappeler (2019, 371) writes that the conflict has increasingly taken on the character of a Russian-Ukrainian war. However, the actions of the fighting units are often uncoordinated. On the Ukrainian side, a diverse mix of forces are involved, including the army, the National Guard of Ukraine, and various volunteer troops with highly suspect members. Among them is the Donbas Battalion, which is subordinated to the National Guard and, according to Kappeler, harbors right-wing extremists among its volunteers (365). It is volunteers from the Donbas battalion that are featured in the sampling source for James Whipple's "Methy Imbiß."

Sample Source

The track processes external media material from a YouTube video. According to the ID3 tag of the sample file and the clip title in the track's Live project, the source video had the title "Ukraine War 2014 – As the Soldiers of the Battalion 'Donbass' Bombs Position," and was seemingy uploaded by the user "DeathWar." The clip title in Live further delivers a YouTube code ("aDkv5njFk Ng"), but the corresponding video is no longer accessible online. ("This video is no longer available because the YouTube account associated with this video has been closed.") Still, I was able to find at least three videos on YouTube that correlate with the audio of the sample and that share the same or similar titles.

All three videos run for 2:05 minutes and were uploaded between August 30 and September 8, 2014.[5] I assume that the video was recorded on a phone camera and uploaded shortly after recording, and that other users then copied and re-uploaded the video. While I cannot be certain, I believe that the documented events actually took place in July or August 2014, during one of the conflict's offensives. One of the three videos (Mimi 2014) also begins with a two-second musical clip of drums and bass that has no connection with the ensuing video. As this short sound is also part of the sample used by Whipple, I assume that this clip correlates with the version sampled by the producer in "Methy Imbiß."

The videos begin with images from the battlefield: we see a cardboard sign warning of a mined area ("мины," "mines" in Russian, 0:04), a bombed apartment building (0:07, 0:16), and empty bullet casings (0:11). A group of soldiers then appears. The title of the video suggests that they are part of the Donbas Battalion, and this seems to be corroborated by the battalion's emblem, which can be seen both on the left arm of one of the soldiers (1:38) and on a car number plate (2:00). The soldiers then position, load, and fire off mortars. We see roadblocks, and civilians hiding around a stony road sign that reads "Щасливої дороги" ("Have a nice trip" in Ukrainian, 0:51). The sign locates the video outside of a village somewhere in the Donbas.

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5   The first video was uploaded on August 30, 2014, by the user Tuna GULL, and had received approximately 252 views by June 2019. By the time of this book's completion, this video was no longer available as the connected user account had been closed. The second video was uploaded on September 4, 2014, by the user Clashes, and has 54 views (Clashes 2014). The third video was uploaded on September 8, 2014, by the user rhali mimi, and has 24 views (Mimi 2014). View counts are noted as of July 2021.

Figure 10.1: YouTube screenshots of the sample source of "Methy Imbiß" (Mimi 2014)

Figure 10.2: Donbas Battalion emblem (source: Wikipedia)

The video contains snippets of a conversation, both in Ukrainian and Ukrainian-accented Russian.[6] Table 10.1 shows a transcript of the comprehensible parts of the video. The highlighted part was sampled in "Methy Imbiß." The conversation concerns the bombardment of the enemy. One mortar seems to hit its target, though we do not know what (or whom) it hits. Towards the end of the video an out-of-shot voice asks, "Who is there now?" This might be the voice of the person filming.

6 Information verified by Alexander Tschumi, personal communication.

Time	Language	Transcript
0:25		*incomprehensible*
0:39	Russian	"They got killed! They got killed!"
0:56	Russian	"They shoot at us."
1:00	Russian	*offscreen* "What, what?"
1:03	Russian	*offscreen* "At us?"
1:05	Russian	"They shoot at us."
1:08		*incomprehensible*
1:13	Russian	"Shoot!"
1:34	Russian	"That one has crashed!"
1:40	Ukrainian	"More than struck."
1:42	Russian	*offscreen* "A direct hit!"
1:45	Ukrainian	"Precisely where it should be."
1:46	Russian	"Absolutely right on target."
1:48	Ukrainian	*offscreen* "And who is there now?"
1:50	Russian	"Yes, there we have recognized an observational convoy."

Table 10.1: Conversation transcript of the source video processed in "Methy Imbiß"[7]

The final piece of dialogue allows me to speculate on the potential documentary character of the video. It appears that the person filming wants to share a particular scene with a broader audience. However, the intentions behind both the recording of the video and its distribution remain unknown.[8] We also do not know how close to the actual frontlines these events occurred, and whether or not they were staged for the recording.

The intentions behind both the recording of the video and its distribution remain unknown.

Regarding the processing of the video as sampling material by the producer James Whipple, it is important to contextualize the video as spontaneous, documentary-like footage from the battlefield of the war in Eastern Ukraine in summer 2014. The mixture of languages, the date of upload, and the unit of voluntary fightters featured clearly locate this video in the Donbas.[9]

Sample Processing

Whipple sampled one extract from the YouTube video in "Methy Imbiß" (1:09–1:41). The sample features the firing of a mortar and the soldiers celebrating their strike (see conversation transcript and the highlighted parts above). The clip is processed in full only once (sample-clip 1), while a shortened version is repeated twice

7 Transcript made by Alexander Tschumi, February 2019, personal communication.
8 A broader analysis of uploaders, viewers, and commentators of this and similar video content might offer more information on a potentially propagandistic usage.
9 The phenomenon of "mixed language" is more thoroughly discussed in Bilaniuk 2005.

(sample-clip 2; 1:09–1:24). The second repetition of sample-clip 2 (sample-clip 2'; 1:09–1:25) is one second longer than its precursors. All sample-clips contain the sound of the mortar being launched (1:21–1:25), which is the constitutive acoustic event of the sample, while only sample-clip 1 contains voices.

Figure 10.3 shows the extraction of the sample-clips from the source file. The noise of the mortar is visible as the loudest acoustic event in the excerpt, at around 1:20.
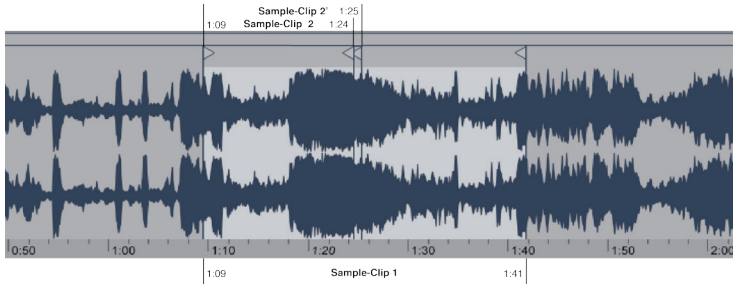
Figure 10.3: Sample-clip extraction from the main sample in "Methy Imbiß" (screenshots from Live)

Figure 10.4 shows the structure of the track by focusing on the processing of the sample in question. It only displays the track's most important elements, meaning many parts are not sufficiently represented. The transcript is structured according to the bars of the Live project file (set in 4/4 time signature).[10] However, as we can see from the timestamps, we cannot take these bars as a time measure. Whipple constantly changes the track's tempo, meaning it does not adhere to a fixed meter. The transcript only serves as an orientation grid, showing the track's structure and arrangement.

"Methy Imbiß" follows a three-part structure with an intro and an outro. Each part is introduced by a short breakdown and marked by a new sonic character. Only the breakdown at bar 48 is completely empty; the others (at 96 and 116) still contain a few sounds. The highlighted ambient noise doesn't represent a single audio track from the Live file, instead combining several sounds. These indications are only approximate, as it is difficult to identify when these sounds are playing and when they are not, especially since they can no longer be precisely traced in the Live file. The track's rhythmic elements consist of three different patterns (a, b, and c) that loop throughout. One highlighted unit marks the playback of one execution of the respective pattern. Due to the constantly changing tempo, the repetitions of these patterns do not always sound the same. The sign × indicates the characteristic snare pattern that occurs regularly in four slightly different versions (×, ×', ×'', ×'''). Finally, the transcript shows the arrangement of the war sample. Due to a slight adjustment of the pitch—minus three semitones in its first appearance (bars 49–58)— sample-clip 2 is longer than when it is repeated in bars 81–88.

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10   The fact that the track starts at bar number 37 indicates that the mastered track is an excerpt from the Live file. Before bar 37 and after bar 132 there are further compositional components that are not part of the mastered track.
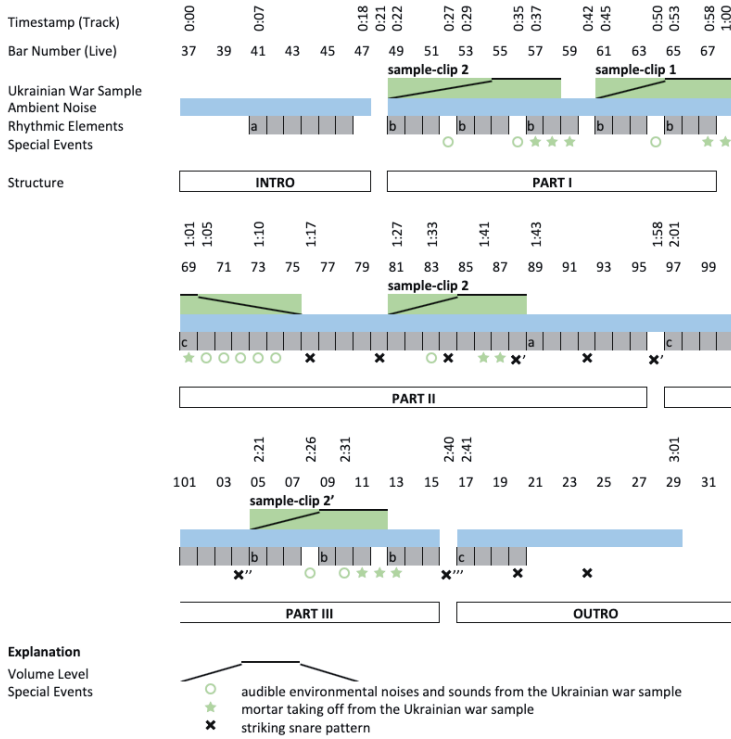
Figure 10.4: Transcript focusing on processing of the war sample in "Methy Imbiß"

Despite its considerable presence throughout the track, the sample is barely audible due to heavy manipulation. Whipple manipulated a whole range of parameters relating to the sample-clips; I will only describe the most important here. The transcript above, for example, shows how the producer fades the sample-clips in and out. The sound of the mortar taking off thus always appears at full strength, while the beginnings of the clips—and, in the case of sample-clip 1, the ending—are partially hidden. Whipple also applied two effects to the sample-clips: both a flanger effect (Uhbik-F) and a granular pitch shifter (Uhbik-G) change the pitch and playback time (delay) of the audio signal. As a third measure, the producer constantly changes the tempo of the entire composition, within a range from 60 bpm to 200 bpm:
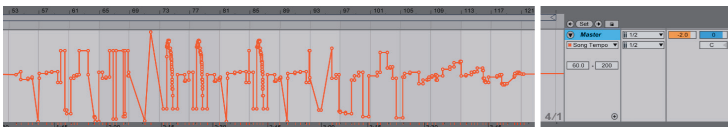
Figure 10.5: Automated parameter "Song Tempo" in "Methy Imbiß" (screenshot from Live)

This extended process of manipulation—as well as the layering of a range of rhythmic and atmospheric elements—precludes a clear perception of the sampled material. In the final mixdown of the track, the material is only audible in select, short moments. The sound of the mortar taking off is most audible, as an undefined, flickering noise. In the transcript above, this explosive sound is

highlighted with the symbol ★. In bars 13 and 59, the sound exceeds the duration of the sample because of the applied delay effect. The symbol ○ finally indicates audible environmental noises and sounds from the sample. While the noises at bars 83 and 108 are only barely audible, the sharp whistle preceding the mortar taking off (at bars 56 and 110), and the human whoop following the apparent strike and some fragments of voices (bars 71 and 73), are quite clearly perceivable. This latter section (bars 67–74) also contains the most prominent appearance of the sample in the track.

The sound of the mortar taking off is most audible, as an undefined, flickering noise.

Sample Visibility and Reasons for Sampling

(a) Reasons for Sampling

The processing of battlefield sounds in a popular music track inevitably raises critical questions: what is the aim of a producer in processing such controversial sound material? Is there a political message behind it? Is the producer aestheticizing war? Are there ethical boundaries in sampling? What does it say about our society when such sounds become an integral part of popular music? These and more questions highlight the need for a precise analysis of reasons for sampling. My analysis will describe a sampling strategy that allows for a nuanced view on the matter: the sampling of battlefield sounds in "Methy Imbiß" most of all demonstrates the wide field of artistic expression and action that lies between direct political communication on the one hand and naïve aestheticization on the other.

The sampling strategy behind "Methy Imbiß" is affected by all four approaches of the SSR. What stands out at first is the absence of the active perspective in the contextual approach. Instead, the neutral perspective appears to be most important. In my conversations with Whipple and in press interviews, he emphasized his personal interest in particular political events during a particular time period. Most of the tracks on the album *Piteous Gate* were produced over a short period in winter 2014/15; Whipple said it took him around "three months" to finish them (Finlayson 2015). In retrospect, it is hard to trace the exact period of production for "Methy Imbiß." The meta tags of the sample file itself list April 4, 2015, as the date of creation, making it likely that Whipple converted the sample from YouTube on that day. However, the producer assumed that he had started work on the track "a few months before."
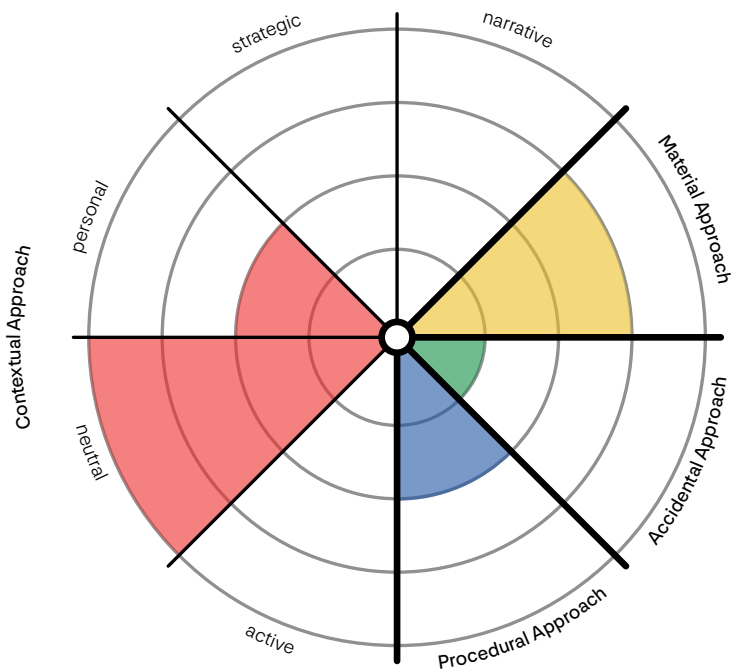
Figure 10.6: SSR: reasons for sampling in "Methy Imbiβ"

What we know with certainty is that Whipple was interested in "following unfolding geopolitical maneuvering" at that time. He was referring especially to the Russian military intervention in Ukraine that started in February 2014. He mentioned that he was "obsessed" with these events, following them through various online channels:

I was heavily online at the moment. During the time I was writing that record, I was very, very online and I felt wrapped up in what was happening. I was following lots of stuff, involving Syria and Ukraine.

I found the sample because I was following various press and propaganda channels on YouTube and LiveLeak and the website www.liveuamap.com. It was possible at a certain point to follow various militias through social media and forums.

An excerpt from an online conversation further specifies Whipple's interest:

Whipple immersed himself in all angles of the conflict he could find across the media and the internet, from the reporting on Russian television to the videos uploaded from the mobile phones of soldiers on the ground. The experience of being totally immersed in the feed and trying to decode differing points of view left him feeling understandably overloaded.

We're living in a weird era right now, this second coming of geopolitics. It's almost like the 19th century. It's not the

> 90s, it's not an 'end of history' thing – suddenly we're back to the world being divided into different factions," he explains from his home in Berlin. "I feel this kind of moral ambivalence and weirdness in the atmosphere right now. Politically it's just not enough to demonise one thing before another thing – everything just feels so compromised right now. Something could pop up in your feed that's this really invigorating great piece of progressive news, then you dig a little deeper and it's some group that's trying to undermine something by feeding it into the media. (Whipple in Wilson 2015)

In the last quotation, Whipple was referring to what I previously introduced as "hybrid warfare": the propaganda and targeted disinformation that plays a crucial role in the military conflict in the Donbas. Whipple is obviously aware that the sampled video might be part of this practice too, and this is precisely what fascinates him: there is more news and information available on a given military conflict—and we should say *instantly* available—than ever before, but one can never be sure which source the information comes from and what intentions lie behind it.

There is more news and information available on a given military conflict than ever before.

This sampling strategy exposes a personal practice of the use of media and shows how this everyday practice is connected to the process of musical composition. When asked how he consumes news in general, Whipple emphasized his ambition to develop his own opinion on a given topic from various angles:

> I try to avoid following publications / magazines / newspapers / channels directly and just follow specific writers directly on Twitter. If someone seems trustworthy and is good at Twitter, I will follow them and see what they're interested in. You're less likely to get a manipulative headline engineered to make you click. I think a lot of political psychosis derives from this practice. Most peoples' worldview is basically defined by what headlines and images their eyes glossed over, cumulatively over time. I also strategically follow people on several sides of any issue, to either drive myself insane or be less susceptible to propaganda and formulate my own opinion.

The sampling process in "Methy Imbiß" was an outgrowth of this opinion-forming process. Whipple was not at that point actively collecting sampling material towards an artistic goal. He was rather researching a topic that took his interest. In his own words, he was "privately following what was going on in the world, and that seeped into my music eventually." Moreover, he was "obsessed" by the close perspective he was able to get despite the geographical distance between him, producing music in his apartment in Berlin, and the battlefield in the Donbas. In fact, the war in Eastern

The war in Eastern Ukraine was one of the first military conflicts that could almost be streamed in real time.

Ukraine was one of the first military conflicts that could almost be streamed in real time.

> *You can go on YouTube and find videos of volunteer brigades in Ukraine laughing and joking around and stuff. I don't know, it's so addictive when you're following the news and you're following certain accounts on Twitter or Facebook or something like that. You're following day-to-day events as they unfold. I find that really addictive, maybe not in a cool way. It doesn't really relate to the music very much, it's more like my own personal interests, but I do follow a lot of stuff like that.* (Whipple in Finlayson 2015)

I assume that Whipple's first encounter with the video sampled in "Methy Imbiß" and the moment he selected it as sampling material did not coincide. The events in the video presumably took place between July and August 2014. As Whipple was following instantly generated news content at the time, he might have come across the video soon after its upload. It is likely that he then underline bookmarked it with no direct intent to sample it. He mentioned that he uses the online social networking community Are.na to save links and images that he finds interesting. Later, when going through his bookmarks, he selected the video once again (the stage of selection is reached for a second time). This would explain the gap between August or September 2014, when he might have watched the video for the first time, and April 2015, when he finally converted it from YouTube and imported it into the project file.

A considerable driving force behind the sampling of the battlefield footage was thus the producer's personal interest in certain political events. This is a good example of a strategy shaped by the neutral perspective. Whipple confirmed this interpretation:

> *That sample ended up in this track because during the time that I was writing the album I was just really closely interested in following something. But the original choice of the sample was aesthetic. It wasn't political but it reflects a sensibility or sort of only something that I was really just actively following and interested in, morally interested in, politically interested in and… it found its way into this sort of aesthetic thing that's not necessarily any kind of political statement and I think artists should reserve the right to do that.*

Here Whipple pointed to other motivations behind this sampling strategy that I will discuss later. First I want to comment on why I do not consider the active perspective relevant to this sampling strategy. As introduced earlier, this perspective encompasses sampling strategies that aim to protest, criticize, or, at least, actively communicate something. There is no obvious communicational intent in Whipple's sampling strategy; it is thus not about "saying something" (in contrast to the communicational intents I have detected in all other case studies). This will become increasingly

clear when discussing the visibility of the present sampling strategy below. In an interview, Whipple stated that "it's less that there's an agenda – it's a reflection of a mental environment" (Whipple in Wilson 2015). As such, Whipple strictly distinguishes between his own political attitude and his musical productions:

> *If I had some kind of ideological agenda I wouldn't make music – I'm a very political person, but for me this goes into much different territory. I think music is something very different. I think music is just something strange and from a different planet. I'm not trying to take the stand of the apolitical white dude, but for me this record is more of a reflection of a sensibility as opposed to a discrete statement. (Whipple in ibid.)*

Hence, the absence of a political agenda in music (i.e. the active intent to communicate) does not mean the absence of "the political" as a whole. Or, conversely, being a political person does not necessarily lead to the overt inclusion of "the political" in an artistic work. There are artistic possibilities in between these poles, one of them represented by the present track. Similar to the case study of Lara Sarkissian, "Methy Imbiß" thus bears the signature of a politically aware artist.

The absence of a political agenda in music does not mean the absence of "the political."

The second contextual category highlighted in the SSR is the personal perspective. By sampling Ukrainian battlefield sounds, Whipple incorporated his personal thoughts and reflections—his environment—into one of his productions, regardless of the material's controversial potential:

> *I'm happy if I can, as an artist, have some sense of my own lived reality whether that's a political reality or a personal reality. Even if it's very abstract music.*
>
> *So maybe the basic motivation behind this kind of sampling strategy for you is to include what's around you; to include the context that is around you in your music, but in a very non-obvious way?*
> *Yes, that's important to me.*

It was meaningful to Whipple to include battlefield sounds from Ukraine in his music. Not meaningful in the sense of a transfer of particular semantic content (i.e. the firing of a mortar by Ukrainian soldiers in a particular context), but in the sense that it referred to his personal thoughts and interests at the time of producing the track (his examination of "geopolitical maneuvering"). He uses the producing technique of sampling to link his musical practice with his "mental environment." This process is therefore not intended to be obvious to a broader audience, as the discussion of visibility below will further illustrate. Instead, it remains personal.

In this way, the present sampling strategy resembles the practice

of writing diaries. José van Dijck summarizes some of the central features of this longstanding cultural technique: "Paper diaries were meant to fix experience in time, to freeze one's thoughts and ideas into words (and perhaps illustrated materials) to serve as a reminder of former experience later on in life" (van Dijck 2004). Sampling is used by Whipple to freeze, in music, his thoughts and his experiences of his "own lived reality." For him, this track might always be connected to the political events of 2014. Finally, Whipple's sampling strategy should be regarded as part of processes of identity formation—similar to those demonstrated by COOL FOR YOU, Lara Sarkissian, and Moro. The producer's "own lived reality" processed in the track constitutes what Whipple calls his "inner environment":

> Piteous Gate *was a sort of document of a zone between a fraught inner environment, a series of loosely connected political moments, and the unthinkably complex and inhuman networked layers mediating between them.* (Whipple in Shape 2016)

In a quotation that appeared previously, Whipple mentioned that "the original choice of the sample was aesthetic." This suggests that we cannot fully explain the reasons behind this sampling strategy with the contextual approach; the material approach is also significant. This aspect connects to a particular function adopted by sampling in Whipple's general compositional practice. The producer stressed "the ability in recorded music of a certain high fidelity where you can create or replicate different spaces and transitions between spaces," confirming that he has "always been interested in that."

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For Whipple, sampling is a tool to add something to his compositions that he cannot access through sound synthesis alone: atmosphere. He wants to spatialize his music instead of working against an empty background—or on a "blank canvas," as he put it. This practice lies at the border between the contextual and the material. It is difficult to determine whether a particular selection is made because of the material characteristics of the sounds or because of the contextual associations they evoke. When a sampled sound is intended to evoke a particular atmosphere or feeling—such as in the previous case study of the track "Perversas"—we would find ourselves at the contextual end of the scale, and thus in the narrative perspective.

> *For Whipple, sampling is a tool to add something to his compositions that he cannot access through sound synthesis alone: atmosphere.*

However, Whipple is mostly concerned not with evoking a particular situation, but with the existence of space in general. Here, we are at the material end of the scale. (One could argue that "space" *per se* is an extra-musical concept and evoking space is thus *always* a contextual process.) In the present case, the emphasis lies primarily on the specific material nature of the sound and not on

the related extra-musical context. Whipple illustrated this practice with another example:

> *You can be working on something very simple and then you have a recording of just the air. Just a really quiet ambience recording and you put that on something simple that you're doing and it completely situates it.*

It is not crucial *where* this air has been recorded, or that it is air at all. What matters is that, thanks to the sample, the track contains particular frequencies that spatialize the processed sounds. Whipple is aware that this practice could be used in a highly manipulative way:

> *I'm always kind of framing things into little scenes and stuff. They're more removed from that primary impulsive electricity into circuit into amplifier into speaker thing [(pure sound synthesis)]. I'm working with these kinds of recordings. You can just play with the subtleties of hearing because you're creating different spaces that the listener unconsciously or consciously situates himself in when they're listening. And then it can be very manipulative or it can be a purely aesthetic thing you know. Like you can add crowd noise to a live recording to make it sound like there's more people there. Stuff like that can be really subtle. I find that interesting.*

Regardless, the sampling of the battlefield sounds in "Methy Imbiß" serves the aim of spatializing Whipple's composition. This is particularly clear in the short sections where environmental noises or voices from the sample are audible. The impulsive, choppy nature of the track overall depends on the small breaks between the main rhythmic patterns. By filling some of these breaks with environmental sounds, Whipple creates a feeling of space. It is important that not all breaks are filled: the feeling is intensified further when the listener recognizes differences between these breaks. Accordingly, one break is completely silent (bar 48), one features ambient noises only (60), two feature the striking snare sound (96, 116), and six breaks are filled with sounds from the sample (52, 56, 64, 68, 108, 112). It is striking that Whipple has processed the sample at exactly those parts where the rhythmic patterns contain longer and more explicit breaks (pattern b). This strategy supports his aim of using the sample for its spatializing effect. Here, the sound of the mortar taking off is the central acoustic event. The recording equipment assumed to have been used in the source video seems to be crucial as well:

→ Figure 10.4

The sampling of the battlefield sounds serves the aim of spatializing Whipple's composition.

> *The sound of the mortar taking off it's from a phone camera that's not necessarily pointing at it. Some guy with his phone trying to film the situation, and then they're just in the middle of the day sending some mortars, and the quality of that kind of terrifying sound, but filtered through the*

phone, and the sort of the angle of the phone creates this weird sense of space.

By heavily manipulating the sample-clips, Whipple finally liberates the sample from its semantic content, turning a contextually charged battlefield sound into a non-contextual environmental sound. As a result, the sample acquires an acousmatic character. Whipple stated:

> *This is just kind of incidental audio, like footsteps in the mud. [Whipple plays further parts of the sample on his computer] So with this simple kind of pitch effect it really kind of alienates the space. It's like a standard... [He plays a new sound in the Live project] foley sound kind of thing.*

Whipple uses sampling here as a tool of simulation. This strategy of simulating space requires the sample-clip to be audible, but at the same time not recognizable.

Beyond contextual and material motivations, Whipple also ascribes a procedural function to the technique of sampling in general. In brief, Whipple uses sampling, in his own words, as "a compositional crutch." Sampling supports (or limits) his compositional process on a structural level. He described this specific use of sampling as follows:

> *It's hard for me to write on silence. I have to have something in the background to write on top of, so there have been situations where maybe I'll sample something and I'll kind of have it as a loop and then I start a track on top of that and then I eventually remove that sample. Yeah, it's definitely like a compositional crutch in a way.*

Whipple here refers to sampling as a hidden practice. In this case, the function of the sample is neither to transfer semantic content to the musical product nor to contribute musical elements to it, but to enable an environment for the successful production of a new composition. It is hard to ascertain whether this strategy of compositional limitation played a role in "Methy Imbiß." Whipple's aforementioned habit of starting new tracks on the basis of older project files is certainly evidence for such a practice.

In fact, the Ukrainian war sample might have been the starting point for the track: "I must have started with it [the sample], yeah. It still has the '1 AUDIO' name that must mean that it was the first thing I did." Here, Whipple is noticing that the audio track featuring the sample is at the top of a list of 26 audio tracks in the Live file, leading him to suggest that the sample served as a basis for the whole composition. I am not entirely sure of this, since Whipple's memory for these details has become vague in the meantime. One could also suggest that the sample entered the project at a later stage. The sample file's date of origin (April 4, 2015), and Whipple's claim that he started the project a couple of months before, seem to support this view.

By heavily manipulating the sample-clips, Whipple liberates the sample from its semantic content, turning a contextually charged battlefield sound into a non-contextual environmental sound.

I will comment on the final highlighted category in the SSR, the accidental approach, only briefly. This sampling strategy contains an aspect of chance if one takes into account the selection of the sampling material. The selected material is arbitrary at least to a certain degree, and there is little evidence that it was important to include exactly this particular video. Whipple recalls: "At the time there were many strange YouTube and LiveLeaks channels with a lot of incidental cell phone footage, not of direct combat but of life out in the field, young men screwing around, machismo." Accordingly, a lot of other, similar web content from the battlefield in Ukraine could potentially have been selected. The actual selection was thus contingent on YouTube's algorithms, as well as on what Whipple found while researching the conflict.

(b) Attitude

The question of attitude is especially relevant in this case. Concealed sympathies for one or other of the parties involved in the conflict would considerably affect the evaluation of Whipple's sampling strategy. The producer said that he struggles to take a clear position on a general level, thus opting for a differentiated view on the matter:

> *You can't really be like "oh I'm on this side." Because like the [Ukrainian] government is so corrupt. All the new stuff that's happened the last one or two years, like rehabilitating all these old Nazis and all the nationalism and right-wing stuff that's happening on the Ukrainian side is really creepy. But obviously, I had some kind of sympathy for the original situation [before Russia's annexation of Crimea, note by the author] because it was so clearly a land cut.*

Accordingly, we can assume that Whipple has a distanced and critical view on the processed material. Further potential sampling motivations, such as advocacy for a certain group of people or, in the most extreme case, glorifying war can be excluded. When discussing some ethical questions this sampling strategy inevitably raises, Whipple repeatedly articulated a personal discomfort in having processed this sample:

> *Sometimes artists work with charged material and they make sort of pronouncements or statements that are not really their place to make. But as an artist it's important to bring things in and kind of work through it in an aesthetic way and see how it comes out versus some... I would never want to speak for other people or tell other people's stories.*

> *Were there, at any point in the production process, ethical questions that you thought about? E.g. can I use war sounds? What if someone was hurt or even killed by the actions taken in the video? If you knew someone was hurt,*

would it have changed something?

I didn't really set out to do it like that (sampling/fetishizing war). I would not use a sample with someone being killed, I don't like gunshot samples or this kind of obnoxious masculine posturing. I have a hard time with this question because I find these kind of shock tactics for example in a lot of older industrial and noise totally uninteresting. I'm not interested in either a kind of agitprop or edgy nihilistic gestures. (...) I used the sample in a very manipulated form, in a way that did not read clearly as related to warfare. I've traveled to Ukraine a few times now and have good friends in the Kyiv scene who have direct experience with what was happening post-Maidan. I would feel embarrassed if I had to say I was sampling war to make a statement or signal edginess (that is instrumentalizing it in a clear semiotic way). I probably should have left the sample out or never mentioned the source. A similar effect could have been achieved by blowing into a microphone.

Some of these doubts regarding his own sampling strategy only surfaced after Whipple had released the track and traveled to Ukraine to perform live and as a DJ. (He had not been there previously.) Having established some relationships in the country, he began to question the way he had treated the material. But these thoughts were not completely new. Fear of aestheticizing war, and discomfort about making a statement from a distant and uninvolved position, made Whipple finally decide to manipulate the sample into obscurity. This shows that the tension between the self and the other plays a role in this sampling strategy, just as it did in others we have examined.

(c) Visibility

Throughout this analysis I have repeatedly referred to the question of visibility. In comparison with the other case studies in this book, this strategy is the most concealed. Accordingly, the master fader in the FOV (number 6) is positioned almost at its lowest point.

The Ukrainian war sample is only barely audible. A casual listener would most likely only detect the voice at 1:09. However, a closer and more focused listen might make it possible to identify all the passages that I have marked in the transcript as audible. Fader 1 is thus positioned at the lower end of the scale, but not at its lowest position. In contrast, the sample is signaled as such. Once the sample is heard, most listeners would probably assume the sampling of environmental sounds and, in the context of the section around 1:09, of course, a voice. The degree of signalization is not consistently high though. The noise of the mortar being launched is not clearly signaled as a sample—it could equally have been synthesized. Accordingly, fader number 2 is positioned in the middle.

AUDIBILITY	SIGNALIZATION	REFERENTIALITY	RECOGNIZABILITY	EXTRA-MUSICAL SIGNALIZATION	MASTER VISIBILITY
audible	signaled	indexical	recognizable	announced	obvious
muted	unsignaled	non-referential	obscured	unmentioned	concealed
1	2	3	4	5	6
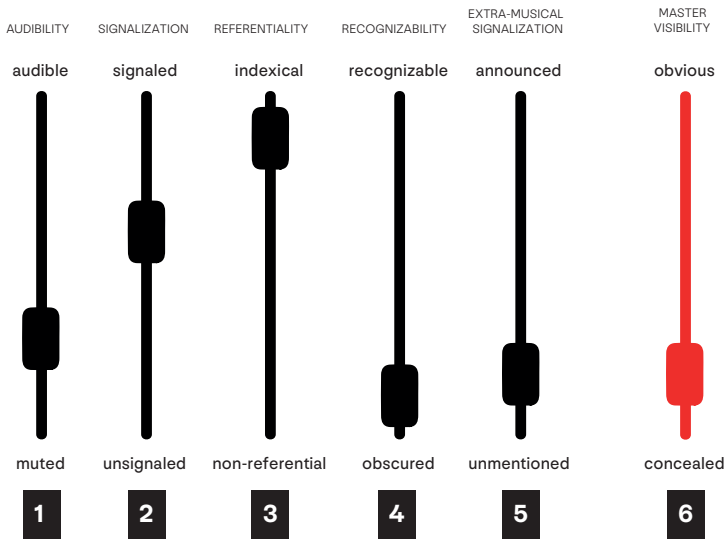
Figure 10.7: FOV: sample visibility in "Methy Imbiß"

Figure 10.8: Cover artwork of *Piteous Gate* designed by James Whipple (PAN Records 2015)

Fader number 3 is the only one positioned at its highest point, showing that the sample is clearly referential. For the producer, it refers to a specific geographical and temporal context. The next fader, number 4, is at its lowest position, as the sample is completely obscured and thus not recognizable at all. Finally, the last fader (number 5) is an interesting case. A few hints on the Ukrainian context are made in the communication around the album *Piteous Gate*. The cover of the

This sampling process can be said to be almost fully concealed.

album, for example, shows <u>a photograph</u> of the destroyed airport of Donetsk, Eastern Ukraine. Moreover, Whipple repeatedly mentioned in public interviews that he was influenced by the events in question and that he had processed material related to them on the album (Finlayson 2015, Shape 2016, Wilson 2015). Nevertheless, I have placed this fader at a low position, since Whipple has never mentioned these references in direct relation to the track, meaning this information has almost no effect on the visibility of the sampling process.

In conclusion, this sampling process can be said to be almost fully concealed. Relating to the three <u>general fields of sampling motives</u> introduced earlier, I identify the fields of content (strong interest in the source context) and, on an acoustic level, inspiration (spatializing sound) as crucial. The field of communication, however, is absent.

Conclusion and Prospect

This case study of "Methy Imbiß" by James Whipple (M.E.S.H.) has offered rare insights into the fabric of electronic music. I have described and analyzed a sampling strategy that is, to a great extent, hidden from the listener. The sampling of the sounds of war is motivated by the producer's deep interest in a specific subject (neutral perspective of the SSR) and the desire to incorporate his "own lived reality" into the musical production (personal perspective). Aspects of sound aesthetics (creating spatiality/atmosphere), the compositional process (sampling as a "compositional crutch"), and chance (accessing a particular video) also played a role. As its main seismographic substance, the sampling strategy behind this track gives an example of how a military conflict can be received and discussed by a popular music producer in the 21st century.

This track gives an example of how a military conflict can be received and discussed by a popular music producer in the 21st century.

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As should be clear, this book is not about demonstrating or unearthing any "real" content or fixed "determinations" in popular music, in the sense of "this track *is about* something" (as Whipple put it in our conversation). If we have not yet distanced ourselves from such a highly questionable project—can abstract electronic music without lyrics really be *about* anything at all?—this track is an ideal occasion to reflect on it. It is not my concern to present this track as being about war in general or the Ukrainian conflict in particular, despite the fact that we can find in it traces of this conflict and of a particular temporal context. My aim is rather to interpret and contextualize these traces, and to show what they mean for the act of producing popular music. Whipple himself addressed the issue of music with fixed content by comparing his productions to the artworks of painter and graphic artist Milton Ernest Rauschenberg (1925–2008). Rauschenberg included found objects in his works

that brought various contexts into them, such as photographs from history, street life, and contemporary history. As Whipple explained, "although these pieces made its way into the painting, it's not that the painting is *about* that thing." Still, the question remains: what does it ultimately mean when Whipple processes battlefield sounds from the war in the Donbas in his track?

In this concluding section, I want to approach this question from two angles. First, I will, once again, emphasize the significance of "the personal" in the sampling strategy under examination. Second, I will briefly argue why I do not consider the track a mere aestheticization of the sounds of war. Finally, as a prospect, I will propose an extended anthropological study that could deepen the insights gained here.

(a) The Significance of "the Personal"

> *I've internalised a lot of this talk about cultural appropriation in music that's happened more and more over the last couple of years, and I feel like the way out of that conversation is to recognise your own specificity, and build on your own voice. As opposed to having that idea in mind of what you're going to reference or copy. For me, it's important to find what's in the music that's me. So often, people come along and borrow a sound in a way that's really thoughtless, and just put their stamp on it, but in an arbitrary way. You don't really get a sense of them as an artist or as a human. (Whipple in Cliff 2015)*

This quotation by Whipple from an online interview also serves as a summary of his approach to sampling: when sampling, he seeks a personal relation to the processed material. But where or what is that "personal" when a U.S. producer living in Berlin samples battlefield sounds from Eastern Ukraine? As this analysis has revealed, it lies in the political context of the period of production. The sample in question ended up in the track first of all because Whipple was interested in—even "obsessed" with—the events in Eastern Ukraine at that time. The military conflict was one of the first that could be followed online in near-real time through live streams, live tickers, and phone videos from the battlefield. This context constituted a "mental environment," or, in other words, the producer's "own lived reality." Here, "the political" in its narrow sense (events and actions resulting from decisions and actions taken by state actors) becomes personal; the distant (events occurring 2,000 kilometers away in the Donbas, without any personal relation to the producer) becomes close. These events, mediated instantly through online channels, become part of the lived reality of everyone who is interested in following them. The personal and the private have become political.

Whipple used the production of electronic music as a vehicle to process these (political) influences and impressions. On a metaphorical level, this track is a commentary on the feeling of constant "data overload" experienced in the internet age. When producing the tracks for his album *Piteous Gate,* Whipple was obsessed by particular web content and struggling to make sense of it: what do I do with all this information? How can I process it? What do I think of it? What is true, and what can be considered propaganda or "fake news" (targeted disinformation spread through the internet)? It is this incomplete opinion-making process that supplied the framework for the production of this track. These questions are not only relevant to the producer as an individual; they have become essential issues in and beyond Western societies in the years preceding this study. The personal has become public.

This track is a commentary on the feeling of constant "data overload" experienced in the internet age.

Last but not least, my analysis has shown that Whipple uses music production in a manner similar to diary writing. Through sampling, Whipple is able to freeze his thoughts about and experiences of a particular moment in time—key functions of the old paper diary (van Dijck 2004).

(b) Aestheticization of War Sounds?

The complex ethical discussions that surround the processing of war samples made Whipple doubt his own process in retrospect. The producer mentioned that he "probably should have left the sample out or never mentioned the source." He pointed out that "a similar effect could have been achieved by blowing into a microphone." From the perspective of reception, he might be right: no semantic information from the sample's source context is required in order to perceive the sample. Its supposed function is to create a sound effect and to spatialize the track, an acoustic result which could have been achieved without the use of political material. By manipulating these contextually loaded sounds to the point of obscurity, and thus depriving them of their original context, Whipple basically aestheticizes them.[11]

However, interpreting this sampling strategy as mere aestheticization would not do justice to the artistic practice under examination. We can imagine a spectrum, at one end of which is pure "aestheticization," where the source context is irrelevant and only aesthetic judgment matters, while at the other end, a communicational intent clearly refers to particular sources. We would have to situate this strategy in between these two extremes: although we can observe a procedure of aestheticization, the source context remains crucial. A thorough analysis of reasons for sampling, as I

In this sampling strategy, semantics are not important, although they remain key.

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11   Aestheticization is understood here as the process of putting an object into a new context where it can be judged as beautiful or ugly.

have presented here, is necessary to (even approximately) answer this question. As soon as "content" can be considered one of the <u>general sampling motives</u>, we can no longer speak of a mere aestheticizing practice. This leads to a paradox: in this sampling strategy, semantics are not important, although they remain key.

(c) Prospect: An Extended Study

This analysis offers a few points of departure for potential further studies. First, the examination of alternate versions of the track intended for live contexts. I had access to such a version, made by Whipple after the release of the album *Piteous Gate*. Interestingly, in this version, the Ukrainian war sample was much more audible than on the album track. However, I decided to limit my analysis to the album track for several reasons. First, the war context of the sample is still largely concealed in the live version, meaning my final interpretation of the sampling strategy would not have been much affected. Secondly, the simple existence of the Ableton Live file does not say anything about the actual presentation of the track. An analysis would require information about the context of performance: when and how was the track played, in front of what kind of audience, and mixed with which tracks?

An extended anthropological study could take over at this point. Such a study could tackle the questions previously stated, as well the following: what is the significance of Whipple's sample archive—his stored bookmark list that he uses as a pool for later sampling? How does it affect his sampling practice, and what mechanisms of selection are at play? To what extent does "Methy Imbiß" represent only an individual instance of the producer's sampling practice? Or: to what extent can we find further traces of Whipple's "lived reality" in his other productions?

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Finally, I want to address the reasons behind the producer's participation in this study. In our conversation, Whipple responded with a well formulated answer that points to one of my core interests:

> *I appreciated that you were taking a formal/technical interest but not the classic interest in "gear," synthesis, and these types of things. Making music on a computer is a process with tens of thousands of small decisions to the point where someone making this kind of music, at a certain point, doesn't even really remember what they are doing (in that sense it is kind of painterly?), in severe contrast to how it is often explained or legitimized post-facto. I liked that you understood that, and that it wasn't so clearly definable and explainable but wrapped up in both technical and social concerns. [Note in brackets by the artist.]*

Whipple here pointed to the complexity of music-making and neatly summarized my own concern: to develop an analysis of popular music tracks (and their production) in general, and sampling in particular, that considers a broad range of aspects and perspectives.

In this case study, my own research focus and my interviewing approach were obviously an advantage: Whipple was motivated to share his thoughts and experiences with me. This case study shows that a close anthropological approach is essential if one wants to explore hidden sampling strategies. I assume that Whipple would not have shared information about his processing of the war sample in any interview. It was my impression that he first tries to ascertain how a particular issue will be treated before discussing it with an interviewer. This might not be an exceptional insight, and many producers might share this conscientious approach to interview requests. However, it is important to be aware of how such an attitude can affect one's own research. As with this sampling strategy, the most useful information is sometimes only revealed after considerable investment in fieldwork.

The most useful information is sometimes only revealed after considerable investment in fieldwork.

After these in-depth analyses of five tracks, all released between 2015 and 2017, I now want to shift perspective. The next chapter should be understood as an interlude that offers a methodological perspective. It is a report and reflection on two sessions of direct observation of music production. This interlude aims to offer further insights into the culture of sampling, by covering the intimate moment of production.

Interlude

Field
Notes

11
Inside the Factory: Observing Musical Production

This chapter follows the producer featured in the second case study, Lara Sarkissian, in the process of working on a new composition.

I have so far focused on the analysis of five released tracks and the sampling strategies behind them. Although I chose tracks which had been recently published at the time when I conducted the interviews, their actual production processes dated back between one and three years. This created a methodological challenge: it was often hard—and sometimes even impossible—to retrace aspects related to the creative process of production, such as intuition, inspiration, and the selection of sampling sources. This interlude now offers an observation and description of a sampling process in action. Here, I aim to offer a rare insight into the factory of popular music, exploring crucial questions such as: why have particular samples been processed instead of others? How were they processed, and which factors influenced this process? Unlike in the preceding case studies, I will thus not conduct an in-depth analysis of the sample in the context of the final track.[1]

See Chapter 2 for a thorough discussion of the methodological problems that arose during my research.

This chapter follows the producer featured in the second case study, Lara Sarkissian, in the process of working on a new composition. In spring 2016, Sarkissian was invited by the Berlin-based Institute for Sound & Music ISM, and the platform for music research Norient, to take part in a project called "Hexadome." The project encompassed a four-week artist residency at the Center for Art and Media (ZKM) in Karlsruhe, Germany, between March 13 and April 6,

→ Chapter 7

For a discussion of my personal involvement in the project see end of Chapter 2.

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1   Accordingly, I will not use the analytical tools FOV and SSR in this chapter. These tools require a released musical product as their analytical object.

2018. During this residency, Sarkissian worked on her composition for the "Hexadome" installation, scheduled for presentation at Berlin's Martin Gropius Bau museum on April 13, 2018. The ISM "Hexadome" is an audiovisual installation combining six square hexagonally arranged projection screens with the "Klangdom" sound system, a configuration of 52 speakers that can be addressed via separate channels. The installation resembles the architecture of a dome and, as the organizers claim, enables an immersive audiovisual experience.[2] In Karlsruhe, Sarkissian worked on her track and learned how to use the specific software needed to operate the "Klangdom" system. The video part of the installation was developed by Jemma Woolmore, who joined Sarkissian for some days during the residency.

I followed Sarkissian in Karlsruhe for two weeks (from March 20 to April 6, 2018, with a short break in between), conducting four longer interviews (between 40 minutes and one hour) and attending two producti on sessions. This gave me the chance to observe the producer working with samples and immediately talk to her about what she was doing. My sources for this chapter are field notes, recordings of both the longer interviews and parts of our conversations during the two observation sessions, and several versions of the Ableton Live project file, which I transferred to my hard drive after each session.

These interviews also informed the analysis of "kenats" in Chapter 7.

Lara Sarkissian's artist residency in Karlsruhe gave me the opportunity to be present for the process of production of a single track in a condensed form. Usually, Sarkissian produces tracks over longer periods of time, during which intuitive and unscheduled decisions are made regarding when to actually work on them. In this case, she had to make a track in a clearly defined period, without further obligations regarding jobs or social activities. For me, this was an ideal, almost laboratory situation in which to accompany the process of production and to catch sampling moments.

Although a methodical challenge (access) had been solved, I was simultaneously confronted by new challenges, such as the intimacy and spontaneity of the process, and the technical set-up involved in producing in front of a small laptop screen. Based on the two observation sessions, I will now present a field report describing sampling processes in Lara Sarkissian's track "Thresholds," composed for the ISM "Hexadome" installation.[3] After a discussion of this report focusing on various key characteristics of the sampling process, I will close this section by illustrating how such an approach can widen the focus of the previous analyses.

I will discuss the challenges of conducting fieldwork among laptop producers in the last section of this chapter.

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2   See Kirn 2018 for a more detailed discussion of the technical aspects of the project.
3   The track was not published as an official release. There are two short excerpts of the installation accessible on the Vimeo profile of Jemma Woolmore (Woolmore 2018a, 2018b). Lara Sarkissian's debut EP *DISRUPTION*, released on her own label Club Chai in December 2018, also processes some of the material she used for the Hexadome installation.

Lara Sarkissian: Sampling in "Thresholds"

Field Report

(a) First Session: Karlsruhe, March 26, 2018, 9–11 p.m.

I met Lara Sarkissian for the first observation session at 9 p.m. at Studio 4 at the Center for Art and Media (ZKM). When I entered the room, she was sitting with Jemma Woolmore, her video partner for the project, and Tarik Barri, another artist working on a Hexadome installation. Barri had just finished introducing Sarkissian to the software. There were two large tables in the center of the room. The workspace on the right was occupied by Sarkissian and the one on the left by Woolmore. On Sarkissian's desk there was a laptop, a larger screen, and a mixing console, and two big studio speakers had been set up in front of the desk.

The three artists had just taken a break and were about to leave the studio to get something to eat in the kitchen on the upper floor. It was 9.50 p.m. when they returned (Barri was working in the studio next door). The time of day is typical for Sarkissian's workflow: during her residency, she would start work late morning and continue until midnight. Sarkissian told me that she was confident with her day so far. She had finished a first version of the track's first part and tested it at the "Minidom"—another ZKM studio containing a small version of the "Klangdom" system. Afterwards, she had continued working on the next part of the track, looking for some new samples. This was the point at which I joined her.

Sarkissan took a seat and started to work. I observed her surfing the internet on her laptop. She was typing terms into the search bars of Google and YouTube. She complained about the internet connection, which was very slow. First, she searched on YouTube for a particular video about street protests in Tehran, Iran, on the 102nd anniversary of the Armenian Genocide on April 24, 2017.[4] Sarkissian knew exactly which video she was looking for; she had seen it on the social media platform Instagram a few days before. She told me that the video showed protesters singing a particular song in the streets. I saw her scrolling through YouTube, clicking through videos, and googling other videos, before returning to YouTube. Occasionally, she commented on the clips to Woolmore. Sometimes she slid her cursor over the timeline of a particular video to check the preview images, looking for a suitable scene without clicking on the file to play it.

In between, she checked emails and accessed the social media platform Facebook. She further discussed with Woolmore an

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[4] Armenian communities around the world organize protests on this day every year, demanding that the republic of Turkey finally acknowledges the Armenian Genocide.

issue regarding the planning of the rehearsal week in Berlin follow-
ing the Karlsruhe residency. She returned to the hunt for the video
in question for another five to 10 minutes, but still without success.
She finally focused on a video that she had already accessed be-
fore I joined her. The clip, compiled and uploaded by Russian video
news agency Ruptly, bears the title "Iran: Protesters call on Turkey
to recognize Armenian Genocide," and features footage from the
protests in Tehran on April 24, 2016 (Ruptly 2016).[5] *In between street*
protest scenes, the video features interviews with protesters, such
as Karen Khanlari, an Iranian-Armenian lawmaker. Speaking in Far-
si, Khanlari discusses the protesters' main demand—the video de-
scription features an English translation: "Our demand is that Turkey
recognizes the historical truth and accepts legal responsibility for
it" (ibid.). Clearly, Sarkissian was thinking about sampling this quota-
tion in her track. Talking to Woolmore, she referred to the lawmaker:
"I don't want it to be audible what she is saying. But underlined it will
be there." Finally, Sarkissian downloaded the video from YouTube
using the website youtubemp3.to.

She then began to edit the sample. She opened a new window
in Live and dragged the audio file into it. She then roughly cropped
the file, separating the quotation from the rest of the clip. After-
wards, she copied and pasted the clip into a new audio track in the
"Thresholds" project file. She pulled up the volume of the sample
and duplicated it two or three times on separate audio tracks. At this
point, her Ableton Live 9 crashed. She mentioned that this had been
happening from time to time recently. After rebooting the program,
she manipulated the copies of the sample with various effects,
testing out different adjustments and listening repeatedly to the re-
sult. She referred to a note in her Apple Notebook app, where she
had written down a few things she thought might be of use for the
project before leaving the U.S. for Germany. In the lower section of
the note—labeled with the caption "VOC FX"—she had highlighted
some effect chains that she had already applied in a previous pro-
duction. Each line of the note represented an audio track and its re-
spective effects chain. Table 11.1 shows a comparison between the
notes (left) and the edit of the Iranian-Armenian protest sample in
"Thresholds" (right). The numbers refer to the respective audio track
in Live (right, corresponding to Figure 11.1) or lines in the note (left).

5   The video is introduced with the following information on YouTube: "Protest-
ers gathered around Tehran's St. Sarkis Cathedral to commemorate the 101th [sic]
anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, to call on Turkey to recognize the events
as genocide, and to condemn the recent escalation of conflict in the disputed
Nagorno-Karabakh region. SOT, Arpic Elbeygian, Armenian protester (Farsi): 'We
want them to recognize this [genocide] happened, and we want Western Arme-
nia's lands back, Turkey must pay reparations for the 1.5 million people who were
killed.' SOT, Karen Khanlari, Iranian-Armenian lawmaker (Farsi): 'Our demand is
that Turkey recognizes the historical truth and accepts legal responsibility for it'"
(Ruptly 2016).

	Notes from a previous project		Implementation in "Thresholds"
1	longest ping pong / bass low extender / bass low extender	63	vocal A
2	sizzle / bass low extender	64	ping pong
3	robo voice / uneven two / bass low extender	65	robo voice / uneven two / bass low extender
4	vocal A / long ambience / uneven two		

Table 11.1: Effect chains applied to the Iranian-Armenian protest sample in "Thresholds" (as of March 26, 2018; source: Lara Sarkissian)

Having applied these effects to the sample-clips, she started to cut them into pieces. From a distance it seemed as if she was doing this randomly, because she was not listening to the results. In fact, she was cutting the samples visually, focusing on the waveform display. This allowed her to make sure that one sample was playing when the other was silent. This screenshot shows the results of this session:
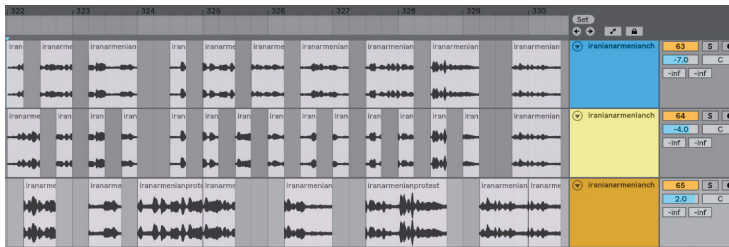
Figure 11.1: Excerpt from "Thresholds" (as of March 26, 2018; screenshot from Live)

After a while, she interrupted her work on the sample. "It's not exactly how I want it, but…" she mumbled. I did not understand everything she said, but it was something like "it's not really well-balanced yet." Instead, she continued googling videos by the Russian-Armenian filmmaker Sergei Parajanov, skipping through a 1964 film of his on YouTube. The film showed rural scenes and bible readings. The material was obviously not meeting her expectations, and she continued looking for other videos by Parajanov without digging for further potential sampling material.

Eventually, she had had enough of the slow internet connection, and decided to continue her work at home later. Until now, she had been staying in a hostel where the internet connection did not work at all, but she had just moved to an Airbnb apartment with a stable internet connection. Visibly tired from a long day of work, she said to Woolmore: "Honestly, I miss making music on my bed. This is all amazing here, but I just miss being in a cozy setting." Once again, she checked her emails, and checked the timetable for catching the last bus back to her apartment.

(b) Second Session: Karlsruhe, March 27, 2018, 3.30–5 p.m.

We scheduled another observation session for the next day. We had planned to meet at 3 p.m. in the ZKM studio, but Sarkissian postponed the meeting by half an hour. On this day, she only partially

worked on sampling, being more concerned with balancing the different parts (EQing). Moreover, she worked on headphones, so I was only able to get a visual impression of her workflow. It became apparent that the method of chopping the sampling material observed in the first session is one of her crucial sampling techniques: she repeated the same workflow with other samples. It was clear that Sarkissian was quite tired.

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This field report emphasizes both the multilevel character of the sampling process and the external and internal influences on this process, such as media, place, and habitus. The discussion of these two aspects that follows will deepen the analysis found in the <u>case study of "kenats"</u> and further sharpen our understanding of the producer's personal sampling approach.

Before continuing, I want to make a short remark on the second observation session. This session turned out not to be very productive for my purposes. There are a few possible explanations: Sarkissian's workflow (wearing headphones), her focus (EQing instead of sampling), and her condition (tired). Nevertheless, I decided to include a short paragraph on it because it illustrates the difficulty of catching the right moment for observation within the greater process of production. I will further discuss methodical challenges below.

Sampling as a Multilevel Process

The field report above illustrates the notion of sampling as a multilevel process, as introduced <u>in the beginning</u> of this book. In the present case, sampling encompasses four main stages: <u>research, selection, access, and editing</u>. The first stage, research, is of particular importance. This is also the stage neglected in procedural definitions of sampling found in the academic literature.

(a) Research

Describing and understanding the first stage—the search for suitable sampling material—requires a short discussion of the producer's motives and motivations. I can identify at least three major factors: (1) the need for vocal samples at a particular position in the track; (2) Sarkissian's tendency to sample material from Armenian culture; and (3) her personal interests prior to the production session.

In our conversations, Sarkissian repeatedly emphasized her preference for vocal samples. Referring to another vocal sample used in the same project, she recalled that she needed "to have a voice in there" and that this was the "initial thing"—meaning the

initial thought that led to her search for the sample in question. I would suggest similar motives in the case of the sample that Sarkissian was looking for during my observation session. There were not yet vocals at the moment in "Thresholds" where Sarkissian inserted the protest sample, though I could identify vocal samples at crucial other positions in the track. It is thus likely that Sarkissian felt the need to include a vocal sample at that particular point. (In the SSR, this reason would be categorized under the material approach.)

Another reason for sampling is contextual, and combines at least the active, neutral, and personal perspectives from the SSR. As I have shown in the analysis of "kenats," the connection of her sampling material to Armenian culture is fundamental to Sarkissian's sampling. In this case, Sarkissian was looking for sampling material from protests that occurred in the context of Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day.

The third component to our reasons for sampling is again contextual, and concerns the producer's personal interests immediately prior to the production session (neutral perspective of the SSR). Sarkissian takes subjects she is concerned with as sources of inspiration. If she does not sample material directly connected to these interests, she takes them as starting points to search for potential new material. During the research stage, Sarkissian connects to previous experiences of reception. In my first observation session, this was shown by her search for a particular video that she had previously seen on Instagram. This process took up a substantial part of the session. Sarkissian later told me that, during her Karlsruhe residency, she sometimes went to the museum bookstore in the same building to get inspiration for further sampling material. In this stage of the sampling process she reads a lot, googles, and looks for video material to sample from. This is a first indication of the considerable influence of her environment on the sampling process.

Though aesthetic characteristics played a role, Sarkissian's primary attention at this stage was on the content of the sampling material.

However, the subject of the Armenian Genocide, which forms the background to the sampling process in question, was not only a concern of Sarkissian's in the days and weeks prior to her residency; it is a topic she deals with constantly. This can be understood with reference to my previous introduction of the Armenian Genocide and the ongoing struggle for official recognition as a persistent trauma among Armenian diaspora communities.

In conclusion, the first stage of this sampling process was shaped by intensive research on suitable sampling material, substantially motivated by the need for a vocal sample. Moreover, Sarkissian engaged with a topic that she had already been concerned with for a long time. Though aesthetic characteristics played a role (how does the material sound?), Sarkissian's primary attention at this stage was on the content of the sampling material (what do

these protesters say or sing?). Connecting to the general field of sampling motives <u>introduced earlier</u>, this stage was shaped by the fields of inspiration and content, but not by communicational aims.

(b) Selection

The second stage is the selection of sampling material. Sarkissian failed to find the Instagram video. Instead, she chose another clip that she had bookmarked while browsing YouTube. At this point in the sampling process, Sarkissian set some guidelines for the upcoming editing stage. She mentioned to her video partner, Jemma Woolmore, that she did not want the sample to be audible in the track. I interpret this as another hint that the primary function of the sample is to bring vocal texture to the composition. It is nevertheless clear that the specific content of the sample remains important. Why otherwise would she conduct such a thorough search for the sampling material? I asked Sarkissian whether, in general, the meaning of her vocal samples plays a role:

> *It's important. But I don't necessarily always want to make the vocal sample audible. But it's more for me and myself, it's kind of knowing that that message is there, but kind of having fun with like manipulating the sound, the pitch of it.*

Hence, the significance of the meaning of these vocal samples operates on a personal level. Sarkissian wanted to have that sample with that particular content in the track, but only "for herself," and not as a visible or audible layer. This explains the absence of the general field of communication from our analysis of this sampling strategy.

Finally, it is important to note that the first (research) stage and the second (selection) stage are intertwined: Sarkissian found the YouTube video earlier on the day of the first observation session, put it aside, continued looking for the Instagram video, then eventually returned to the initial clip. It was only then that she finally selected it as working material.

(c) Access

The third stage is the conversion of the sample material. Sarkissian downloaded the video from YouTube with the help of a web-based plugin. The case studies of <u>Eomac and M.E.S.H.</u> have shown that, in some cases, there is a substantial interval between the download of the sample material and the editing stage. Here, the stages occurred in quick succession, and the storing stage was skipped over. (I will briefly discuss a minor aspect of storing in the concluding section of this chapter below.) This has to do with personal producing habits, but it might also be affected by the circumstances of the artist residency: Sarkissian had to finish the track by the end of the residency and therefore was forced to move on.

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The researcher might also have accelerated this process. Sarkissian invited me to this session because she was planning to work with sampling material, knowing that I was particularly interested in this part of the production process. I never had the impression that she had substantially changed her workflow due to my presence. Still, she might have felt that abruptly ending the process, or going back to the first or second stage, was not an option simply because I was there—she wanted to show me "something."[6]

(d) Editing

Sarkissian finally continued by editing the sample. This stage began with preprocessing. Following the field report, Sarkissian prepared the sample in a separate Live file, before copying the excerpt with the interview quote into the main project.[7] The subsequent editing process was substantially shaped by visual strategies.

After having prepared the sample, Sarkissian duplicated the clip two times and applied some effects to the different layers. She subsequently cut all three samples into smaller segments.[8] It was surprising to see how she cut the samples without listening to the results—a strategy the producer had already mentioned in our discussion of "kenats": "Sometimes, visually things make sense to me before the sound does." Sarkissian described this step of editing as almost "randomly" executed. Beyond this aspect of randomness, her strategy was to cut the samples according to the visual appearance of the waveform. While the first two audio tracks in Live (nos. 63 and 64) are mostly cut at similar positions, the third audio track (no. 65) is cut to bridge several fragments of the other audio tracks (nos. 63 and 64). As a result, the three audio tracks containing the protest sample superpose each other, and there is almost no moment where no sample fragment is playing. The addition of an extended delay effect on audio track 65 further intensifies this impression, and lowers the comprehensibility of the original vocals. What remains in the audible sound is its vocal-derived character.

Sarkissian did not develop this playful strategy from scratch for the present production. Instead, she took one of her earlier tracks as a model. In fact, cutting and layering vocal samples is one of the producer's frequently deployed sampling strategies. The field notes on the second production session above show this, as do other vocal samples in "Thresholds" that were processed in a similar way.

These strategies are similar to those mentioned in Chapter 7. for "kenats".
See personal note in Table 11.1.

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→ Figure 11.1

Cutting and layering vocal samples is one of the producer's frequently deployed sampling strategies.

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6 To address this methodical challenge, the researcher would have to take part in all producing sessions of a given project. However, this would raise further challenges relating to access (keyword: intimacy of music production), as discussed below in this chapter.
7 This approach makes it impossible to trace all editing steps later by analyzing the Live file.
8 Unlike in the editing process for "kenats" (Chapter 7), it is not appropriate to use the term "sample chopping" here, since Sarkissian did not change the order of the clipped bits.

(e) Aspects Between and Across Stages

Having illustrated four stages of sampling—research, selection, access, and editing—I want to continue by emphasizing two further aspects concerning the interaction between and across stages. The first acknowledges that the process is not necessarily linear, but can be interrupted and altered from the start. The second links the question of reasons for sampling with the stages introduced above, showing that not all sampling reasons must necessarily be clear at the moment of sample selection.

Not all sampling reasons must necessarily be clear at the moment of sample selection.

When finishing her work towards the end of the first observation session, Sarkissian mumbled that the edit of the sample was not exactly how she wanted it. After the session, we chatted informally for a while, and I asked her if she was planning to continue editing the sample later. She answered that she had not decided if she would use the sample or not. After the case studies of Eomac and M.E.S.H., this is the third example of a collection of sampling tactics that have been described by Justin Morey (2017, 291) as "start with a sample, then discard it," or by Paul Harkins (2010a, 9) as the "additive approach."

Furthermore, the processing of the protest sample in "Thresholds" shows the possibility of a shift in sampling intentions, or the emergence of new sampling motivations, at various stages of the process. As stated above, the main sampling motivations in the earlier stages were the vocal texture of the clip and the subject of the Armenian Genocide. However, just one week after the observation sessions, Sarkissian mentioned that she had suddenly recognized a particular meaning in the sample that she had not previously been aware of. Sarkissian and Woolmore conceptualized "Thresholds" as a cycle "very much based on Armenian narratives," discharging into a "new, unfamiliar place" or "feeling" towards the end of the piece. According to their concept, the last part of the track should indicate "a new place that people are going into."[9] To create this sense of a new place, Sarkissian reintroduced sounds from the beginning of the track, but in a distorted way. When I started my first observation session, the producer was working on this part of the track, and she positioned the protest sample at the beginning of it. Regarding the meaning of the sample, she mentioned that it suddenly felt like "an announcement of a new stage, a new world." It was especially the moment of "gathering" that made her connect the concept of a new place with the sample being processed: the Armenian protesters in Tehran had, on the date on which the source video was recorded, been gathering for 100 years. For Sarkissian, these gatherings symbolize the beginning of something new, announcing a new stage, a new world. In summary, the sample's

9   These quotes stem from a draft paper by Sarkissian and Woolmore outlining the concept of "Thresholds."

function shifted, from that of bringing in a vocal texture at a crucial point in the track while conveying (at least subliminally) the political topic of genocide awareness, to a literal announcement of the "new place" or "new world." The previous uncertainty as to whether Sarkissian would use the sample or not had finally been resolved.

The field report above not only illustrates the various stages of the sampling process. Among other aspects, direct or participant observations can also reveal various external and internal influences on the sampling process. The next section will pinpoint some of them.

The sample's function shifted, from that of bringing in a vocal texture at a crucial point in the track to a literal announcement of the "new place" or "new world."

Influences: Media, Place, and Habitus

It is not my aim here to provide an exhaustive list of all factors influencing and shaping this process of musical production. Such an endeavor would go substantially beyond the bounds of this study.[10] Other significant influencing factors have not been addressed here, such as that of economics. I want to highlight three fields that offer substantial insights: the influence of various media technologies and products, of place and space, and of habitus.

(a) Media

When using the concept of "media," I follow the "compound concept" of "medium" ("Medienkompaktbegriff") proposed by Siegfried J. Schmidt (2008). He distinguishes between four categories of media: instruments of communication (such as language), technologies (used to produce, distribute, and receive media products), institutions and organizations (that make use of media technologies), and products (such as books, journals, movies, and emails). The phenomenon of sampling touches all of these conceptual categories. Sampling processes sounds that can act as instruments of communication; it is itself a media technology; the process of sampling can be shaped by media institutions and organizations; and, with its ability to incorporate any sound wave, sampling potentially combines various media products.

The field report above first of all shows the involvement of various forms of media on different levels. Sarkissian researched her sampling material via Google and YouTube; the selected sample is a video from an online news channel (Ruptly); and the destination of the sample is a piece of electronic music. The transfer between the source medium (video) and the destination medium (music track) inevitably involves the loss of the source's visual information. But this information was crucial for the selection of the track, as

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10   Such an enlarged study could apply theories such as Actor-Network Theory (ANT) from sociology, or the systems approach to creativity outlined by the psychologist Mihály Csikszentmihalyi.

the field report has shown. During the research stage, Sarkissian virtuosically switched between various internet platforms and—beyond what was captured in my observation—also analog media products such as books (see her mention of the museum bookstore). In short, the producer draws inspiration from all kinds of media products that she has at hand at the time of production.

This virtuosic use of different media products also applies to other activities during the sampling process in particular and music production in general. We saw Sarkissian interrupt her work from time to time to check and answer emails or to access Facebook. She constantly switches between music production, reading, researching, and digital communication.

The processing of the protest sample in "Thresholds" touches on a question posed in the other case studies featuring sampling material taken from YouTube (Lara Sarkissian, Eomac, and M.E.S.H.). This is the question of how online platforms' algorithms influence—if not determine—the production of popular music. The search results prompted by our sampling producers' queries are dependent on algorithms (media technologies) that are, in turn, dependent on the users' search habits. This means that anything Sarkissian has done through her Google and YouTube account might influence what she finds when searching for new sampling material in the future.

This perspective on the use of media products in the process of sampling reveals the significance of technological infrastructure. A fast and stable internet connection was more important to the process than any particular studio gear. Several times during the observation sessions Sarkissian complained about the slow, interruption-prone internet. This did not substantially affect her sampling practice, as she always found a way to work with the samples that she wanted. Nevertheless, she had to stop the process several times in order to continue later.

A perspective on various forms of media has been widely neglected in previous research on sampling. In fact, media products and technologies determine *what* is sampled and *how fast* the process is. Media also shapes much of the immediate environment surrounding the process of musical production. Such a perspective can raise awareness of the influence of media products on music production in the digital age and the ensuing consequences, thus stimulating further research. I will continue this discussion in the concluding chapter.

Sarkissian constantly switches between music production, reading, researching, and digital communication.

(b) Place and Space

I have so far mentioned two ways in which the immediate production environment (place) can both positively and negatively influence the production process: the poor internet connection, and Sarkissian's trips to the museum bookstore in search of sampling inspiration. There is another aspect to emphasize here that is related not so much to a particular geographical place, but to space in general.

Towards the end of the first session, tired after a long day of production, Sarkissian mentioned to her video partner that she missed making music on her own bed. When we talked about this a few days later, Sarkissian underlined the importance of her own private space:

How important is your bedroom for making music?
Pretty important.

Because the other day you said that you need your bedroom back.
[laughs out loud] **Yeah, we are literally in this studio surrounded by eight of the top monitors and I had it. I don't know. It's like what I'm used to at home. My room, being a bedroom producer** *[laughs]*. **That's what I'm good at. I've been reminded of production approaches that I was doing well there. (...)**

Is it important that it is your own bedroom, your home, or could this happen in a bedroom anywhere, could it be in a hotel room as well for example?
It's whatever my space is. Like even if it's a place where I'm staying, in a hotel or whatever as long as if it's my own space. Even the Airbnb: I like dimming the light exactly as I dim it at my house. *[laughs]* **These environments sometimes feel very sterile and very academic, you know the fluorescent light.**

These quotations show that Sarkissian considers a cozy and comfortable environment important for a successful production process. Her aim is to create a space where she can feel safe and confident. She knows that she is good at producing music in her own bedroom, and thus tried to replicate this situation at her residency abroad, even though she had access to a well-equipped studio.

(c) Habitus

When observing and analyzing the creative actions of human beings, the importance of the concept of "habitus," as coined by Pierre Bourdieu, cannot be denied. Defined as "a set of dispositions

which generates practices and perceptions" (Johnson 1993, 5), the habitus provides the framework in which the creative action of the producer takes place. A whole range of basic habits and principles of operation could be addressed in this context, such as *how* the producer produces music, *how* they listen to sound, and *what* they hear in it.

At this point, I want to underline the habitual influence on the sampling process, using the example of Sarkissian's use of model tracks. In preparation for the artist residency, Sarkissian took notes on production processes she had undertaken in previous (or model) tracks. These notes helped her to later draw on her own music production experiences; experiences that are clearly a part of the habitus. Hence, the practice of taking notes can be seen as a crutch for accessing habitus later. For the analyst, this is a helpful tool that makes the influence of the habitus manifest. Further (anthropological) research could analyze more aspects of habitus in relation to the sampling process.

> ## The habitus provides the framework in which the creative action of the producer takes place.
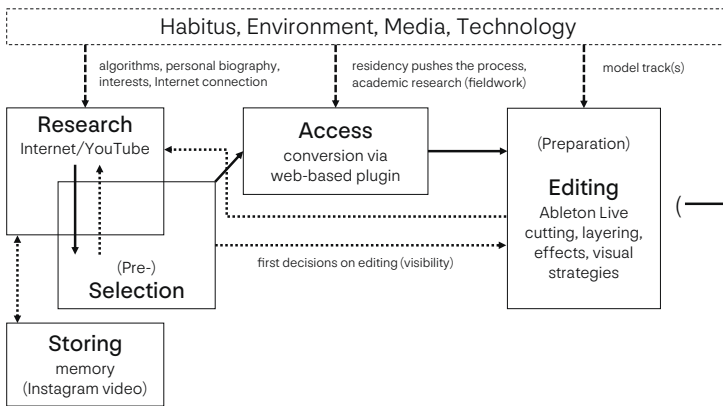
Figure 11.2: Sampling process in "Thresholds"

After a short summary of the sampling process observed in Lara Sarkissian's "Thresholds," I want to close this section by discussing two concluding thoughts. The first is the notion of interruption as a productive lens through which the musical practice of laptop producers can be analyzed, and the second regards the double functionality of sampling: the simultaneous emphasis on contextual and material aspects. Both sections will illustrate the potential of the methodical approach presented in this interlude to substantially expand the analysis of sample-based tracks. Based on the diagram developed in the beginning of this book, Figure 11.2 above summarizes the process of sampling observed.

All steps from the basic model are included. The storing stage is, however, only of marginal importance. It played a role when Sarkissian tried, without success, to access a video from her memory as potential sampling material. The continuous arrows indicate the linear succession of the stages in the process, while the dotted arrows show other, nonlinear connections. At the beginning of the process, the research and preselection stages were intertwined.

Sarkissian jumped back to research after having preselected sampling material, in order to look for other clips that would fit even better. Having finally selected the protest sample, Sarkissian made some initial decisions relating to the upcoming editing stage and the sample's visibility (for instance that the voice should not be comprehensible to listeners). At the end of the observation session, Sarkissian indicated that she might return to the first stage at home where she had a better and more stable internet connection. This is indicated by the long dotted line connecting the editing stage with the research stage. This did not lead to the selection of new sampling material, as I was able to find out later. Finally, the two observation sessions and my fieldwork could only cover a part of the entire production process. This is indicated by the arrow on the right margin pointing into emptiness.

This figure not only shows the multilevel nature of the sampling process, but also indicates the prominent involvement of (media) technology and media products such as the internet, the online platforms YouTube and Instagram, the web-based plugin for video conversion, and the DAW Ableton Live.

(a) Interruption

During the direct observation sessions, I noticed that the process of music production was repeatedly interrupted. As opposed to the image of a highly focused producer engaged in a continuous workflow—which might be a myth in any case—Sarkissian was interrupted not only by (digital) communication, but also by interference-prone technology (slow internet and crashing software). I thus conceive of the moment of interruption as constitutive for the sampling process in question. More than that: it might even be a key characteristic of Sarkissian's style of music production.

Interruption can be both productive and destructive. It is productive in cases where the process of production has stalled due to a lack of inspiration or energy. In these cases, interruption diverts from the production process and has the potential to act as a source of inspiration. Interruption is destructive when a fluent production process is interrupted. In these cases, interruption poses the risk of losing ideas and inspiration. On a metaphorical level, the idea of interruption could also be applied to two of the previous case studies: in "kenats", Lara Sarkissian interrupts male dominance through sampling, and in "STABILIZED, YES!," Vika Kirchenbauer aims to interrupt colonial power relations. The idea of interruption further corresponds to sampling in general, as a sample, by definition, is an excerpt from a greater source.

Interruption can be both productive and destructive.

→ Chapter 7

→ Chapter 6

The metaphor of interruption could potentially serve as a productive lens through which to interpret sampling processes in particular and production processes in general. Interruption might be

a characteristic feature of music production by laptop producers in the 21st century. These upcoming generations of artists have been raised with the possibilities and technologies of electronic communication. They are so-called "digital natives." Classical composer and performer Stefan Prins has described the compositional reality of "digital natives" as involving collecting materials and shaping ideas no longer in the conventional library, but on the internet (quoted after Großmann 2018, 8). Prins' description precisely characterizes the practice of the producers covered in this study. Moreover, with sampling, actions such as browsing the internet or exploring YouTube have become a crucial part of musical production, as this chapter has shown.

With sampling, actions such as browsing the internet or exploring YouTube have become a crucial part of musical production.

A thorough ethnography of the everyday musical practice of laptop producers remains to be conducted. This study only provides some initial insights and explorative questions. Further research could, for example, investigate the role and influence of an interruptive workflow on the production of music. It could examine whether there has been an increase in interruptive processes since the rise of electronic communication in the early 2000s, or if such processes were significant before. In terms of sampling, it would be interesting to compare the presumably "interruptive" practice of sampling artists with that of other music producers who do not rely on sampling in the same manner.

(b) Double Functionality of Sampling

The track examined here contained highly political sound material, in the form of a protest sample from Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day. In the first observation session, the producer decided to keep the sample unrecognizable for the listener. The reasons for this creative and strategic decision might have been diverse, and have a substantial influence on how the track will later be received. A thorough examination of this issue is beyond the scope of this chapter.

However, focusing on the process of production makes it clear that samples are often charged with at least two equal functions. As I have illustrated in the preceding case studies—with the exception of COOL FOR YOU's "STABILIZED, YES!"—sampling artists do not select their materials exclusively for either contextual (focus on layers of meaning of the source context) or material reasons (focus on aesthetic parameters). Often, the decision to sample a particular sound combines both approaches.

In the current example, the sample has an aesthetic function (bringing in vocal texture) on the one hand, and a topical and structural function (the announcement of the new world) on the other. The producer has carefully defined the degrees of visibility of each function: the first is perceivable while the second is almost completely hidden. From the producer's point of view, both functions

are crucial, and both are needed to successfully complete the sampling process. Moreover, as this chapter has shown, the second of the two functions only evolved during the production process and was not set from the beginning. A thorough analysis of sampling processes must thus reveal various layers of functionality by discussing the different degrees of visibility and the varying reasons behind them.

In relation to the case studies featured in this book, we can draw the following conclusions from this interlude: (1) the hidden sampling of political messages is significant. It is important for the producer to know that a particular message is part of the track, though it is not necessarily important to make this message obvious to the listener. (2) Reasons for sampling can change, shift, or expand during the process of production. When analyzing sampling processes only on the basis of released tracks, it is difficult—often perhaps impossible—to differentiate between initial motivations or functions and those that emerged later. It is also hard to trace motivations and functions that were lost during the process of production.

A thorough analysis of sampling processes must reveal various layers of functionality by discussing the different degrees of visibility and the varying reasons behind them.

This chapter has so far offered a close insight into the factory of music production. In the second part of this chapter, I will critically discuss methodical challenges and opportunities arising from this experiment.

Methodological Considerations

The methodological approach proposed in this chapter has resolved one of the main problems faced in the previous chapters' retrospective analyses: it allowed access to the sampling process in the moment of action. It also raised new questions and challenges: what can I really observe in such sessions (usability of data)? When am I allowed to take part (intimacy of the observed situation)? How can I catch the crucial moments (spontaneity of the observed processes)? Of course, these questions are not exceptional, and touch on core issues relating to conducting fieldwork in cultural anthropology. However, they are particularly relevant to the subjects studied here: laptop producers.

In this section, I will critically discuss the challenges and limitations of conducting anthropological fieldwork among laptop producers. This discussion will directly connect to Chapter 2, where I reflected on the challenges and limitations of a focus on sampling practices. I will finally end with a call for the increased study of laptop producers in popular music. The section is structured according to two central phases of the research process: gaining access and conducting fieldwork.

Phase I: Gaining Access to Fieldwork

I enquired about the possibility of conducting fieldwork with the producer Lara Sarkissian early on in my research. Initially, I wanted to visit Sarkissian in her private surroundings (San Francisco, U.S.). I was hoping to get insights into her musical and social environment. I wanted to witness the place where the track "kenats" was produced, and hoped to attend production sessions of one or several new tracks. From the beginning, Sarkissian principally supported my idea. However, the logistics were complicated. The end of the story is known: I finally conducted limited fieldwork during Sarkissian's artist residency in Germany.

There were various reasons why I could not realize my initial plan. Sarkissian later told me that she had been experiencing private issues at that time. After the death of a close family member, she and her family were forced to move. Moving house in the highly gentrified area in and around San Francisco is not easy, to say the least. Beyond these familial issues, she had concerns about generating income. She had taken jobs in the film industry in San Francisco, along with other freelance work, while pursuing musical projects simultaneously. These jobs not only impeded the long-term scheduling of musical activities but also influenced the spontaneous artistic process. In interviews, she described her lack of motivation to produce music after having spent the day working in front of a screen. In this way, Sarkissian's work directly affected her musical production process. A third and perhaps crucial factor making it impossible for her to commit to the planned fieldwork were her musical activities:

> *There is just a lot happening at the moment and decisions I am making currently with work and music projects that just make it very unpredictable to know where I will be at even in the summertime (big chance I won't be in the States then) and contracts I am signing/making decisions on. Can be shifting things in where I will be at. This makes it very hard to confirm/commit in advance.*

> *What makes things most difficult is how I co-run a label with my collaborator and have had a lot of requests for projects and collaborations and a lot of traveling, administrative/organizing type work is what consumes most of my times in periods like that, so it's very hard to tell if I'll be able to work on music during those times.*

Sarkissian invested increasing effort into her label and network Club Chai. This translated into increased requests for DJ sets, compilation projects, and collaboration tracks, as well as into a growing

interest from music journalists in covering her work.[11]

Due to all these developments, Sarkissian was not able to confirm a concrete date for my fieldwork. In the end, the growing interest in her music nevertheless offered me a chance to conduct limited fieldwork. The ISM Hexadome project in Germany was attractive enough to Sarkissian in terms of artistic possibilities, public outreach (that might stimulate her musical career), and financial compensation.

I presume that many laptop producers similarly find themselves juggling private issues, day jobs, and musical activities. Their plans may change with little notice, and opportunities to expand on their musical projects might entail an increase in travel and costs. This, in turn, has inevitable implications for the researcher wishing to investigate the producer's musical practice. Long-term scheduling is difficult, if not impossible, and when fieldwork does finally happen, it is never clear when the artist will be working on music.

Phase II: Conducting Fieldwork

The first challenge faced by a researcher who finally gains access is the problem of intimacy. For most artists, music production is a highly intimate process, meaning they are often not comfortable being observed. While this might be valid for artists in general, I assume that it is particularly the case for laptop producers. They usually produce in private spaces, often their own bedrooms. Observing a production session might therefore mean literally entering the producer's bedroom. A careful approach to the situation is thus required from the researcher. This challenge might become even greater in the case of young producers who are inexperienced in sharing moments of production with outsiders or other musical collaborators.

Observing a production session might mean literally entering the producer's bedroom.

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In my own case, I understood that Sarkissian did not want me to be constantly present in the background. Hence, we initially agreed on periodical interviews and a small number of limited observation sessions. She postponed meetings several times during my fieldwork, either because she was not available or because she was not focusing on sampling at the time.

The second challenge involves catching the crucial moments of production. This became especially pronounced due to my narrow focus on sampling, as opposed to an open interest in music production in general. As shown above, I was lucky with my first observation session, though the "luck" was not accidental, as Sarkissian had invited me to the session for a reason. "You came at the right time," she remarked at the end of the session. "I wanted you to come in when I was actually sampling or going through things."

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11 During my research (2016–2018), online music blogs such as FACT magazine, Resident Advisor, and Tiny Mix Tapes increasingly reported on Club Chai and Lara Sarkissian's activities.

However, the situation was completely different in the second session. By including the notes from this session, I wanted to show the range of possible experiences a researcher can encounter in the field.

I also faced difficulties in accessing different moments in Sarkissian's sampling processes because of the very nature of her workflow. As we saw, the producer jumped back and forth between the stages, even working on some of them in her hotel room or Airbnb apartment. The spontaneity of the production process exceeds every setting of observational fieldwork and requires regular interviews and the immediate recapitulation of the production stages in question.

The field notes from the second session also point to a third challenge, regarding the usability of data: what can we really draw from such a session? Sarkissian's laptop had only one output, so she could either use headphones or an external computer screen, but never both at the same time. When she worked with the studio speakers and the laptop screen (as in the first session) I could follow what she was doing acoustically, but had to be very close to her to be able to see what she was doing on the screen. This raised the risk of disturbing her production process through my presence. Conversely, when she worked with headphones and on the external screen (as in the second session), I could not hear what she was working on but had a good visual impression of the process. The researcher thus needs the appropriate technical equipment to be able to create the ideal setting for both him/herself and the artist.

What helped—at least during the first observation session—was the presence of Sarkissian's project partner, Jemma Woolmore. From time to time, Sarkissian explained to her what she was doing—for example, describing the sample material she was exploring. These immediate comments on her activities were valuable for my research. She did not direct them to me, which led me to further infer that she was able to ignore my presence to a certain degree.

Outlook: Fieldwork among Laptop Producers

The researcher faces various challenges when planning fieldwork among laptop producers. The producer's often semi-professional or precarious music-making conditions and/or increased traveling activities substantially impede access to fieldwork. The intimate production setting, and the spontaneity of the processes being examined, further challenge conventional fieldwork.

I see two possible solutions to these problems. The first would be to conduct conventional long-term anthropological fieldwork. This would allow the establishment of a reliable network, and would potentially create a range of opportunities to witness crucial moments of musical production. However, I do not consider this

method ideal for a focus as specialized as the one I have taken here. Long-term fieldwork only reveals its full strength if larger groups and networks, instead of individual actors, are observed.[12]

Based on the experience of my own research, I would instead suggest another method. I want to encourage the creation of laboratory-like production settings that can be of substantial benefit for both researcher and artist. Similar to the artist residency in Karlsruhe, we could establish collaborations between universities and art and music schools, or other institutions such as the ZKM. These collaborations could design artistic projects for laptop producers resulting in releases or performances, and combine them with academic observation. These projects could take place in multiple locations, even within the producer's usual producing environment. The crucial point is that these projects would be financed, thereby enabling artists to focus on musical production in a condensed period. Of course, such a laboratory-like method would also require a critical reflection on its limitations.

I want to encourage the creation of laboratory-like production settings that can be of substantial benefit for both researcher and artist.

In general, I see three major areas to investigate through further research on laptop producers: (1) such research affords insights into processes of creative decision-making. Due to problems of access, this field is notoriously understudied. (2) We can learn more about the lived realities of a considerable number of actors in the contemporary musical landscape. Since the rise of digital production tools, along with the means of electronic communication, the profile of the laptop producer has risen steadily. And (3), I presume that the profile of a laptop producer is more attractive to certain groups of people than to others—a hypothesis that must still be proven. Some laptop producers manage to jump from semi-professional to professional status, while others do not, or do not want to. Neglecting research on laptop producers would mean overlooking the significance of this group of people in music.

12 In the area of sampling studies, Joseph Schloss's (2014 [2004]) seminal study on hip hop producers in the U.S. serves as an example of long-term fieldwork.

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Conclusions and Outlook

From an overview on the findings of my research to a call for a multi-perspective ethnography of sampling practices.

This book has approached the culture of musical sampling in experimental electronica from multiple angles. The combination of a literature review and data from fieldwork brought us to an extended definition of sampling. This definition understands sampling as a multi-layered process encompassing the stages of research/ listening, selection, access, storing, and editing. I have developed two tools that facilitate the analysis of sample-based music: the fader of visibility FOV and the spider of sampling reasons SSR. A thorough analysis of five sample-based tracks, all released between 2015 and 2017, conceptualized a range of strategies behind the sampling of political material and the processing of non-contextual material with political intentions. Finally, a short interlude emphasized and characterized the stages of sampling as being part of the wider process of music production.

    This final chapter is divided into two sections. The first concludes the findings of my research by establishing distinctions between the sampling strategies I have analyzed. In particular, I have identified three modes of the political and three styles of transformation. This part also offers three perspectives that act as important tools when applied to several of the case studies presented. The second section provides an outlook and calls for a multi-perspective ethnography of sampling practices. It suggests possible ways of working with the tools developed here and offers insights relating to future research.

The Culture of Sampling in Experimental Electronica

Why do musicians sample? There is, of course, no simple answer to this simple question. Indeed, I have shown that this question represents one of the most significant gaps in sampling research. With this book, I aim to expand on previous attempts to answer it, at least with regard to the field of experimental electronica. The following table summarizes the results of my five case studies:

	COOL FOR YOU "STABILIZED, YES!" (2017)	Lara Sarkissian "kenats" (2016)	Moro "Libres" (2016)
Fields of Contextual Sampling Motives			
Spider of ampling Reasons SSR			
Fader of Visibility FOV			
Source	musical	musical	environmental
Mode	political	driven	political
Style	constructive	constructive	constructive (politicizing)
Functions	communication conceptualization limitation recontextualization	appropriation archiving inclusion of lived reality recontextualization reviving memories simulation	aesthetic expression communication inclusion of lived reality reviving memories
Key Interpretations	commentary on post-colonial power relations expressing a tension of distance	political commentary on conventional gender roles expressing tensions of distance and musical taste creating a canon of Armenian culture	political commentary on slave trade and migration combining different and complex levels of meaning
Seismographic Substance	inclusion and exclusion in subcultural communities harmonies as colonizing force political implications and power relations in a musical tradition (Sacred Harp singing) sampling as a "democratic" tool of music production	gender roles in musical practices/traditions traces of lived experience: hybrid condition of the diaspora pressure vs. desire: the reflection of identity significance of online media for musical practice	combining past (transatlantic slave trade) and present (refugee "crisis," minorities in Argentina) challenging Eurocentric narratives traces of lived experience: reperforming soundscape of protest, migration
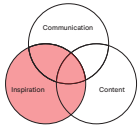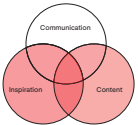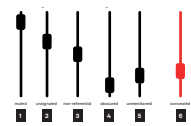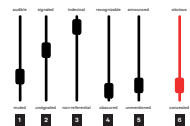
	Eomac "Perversas" (2017)	M.E.S.H. "Methy Imbiβ" (2015)
Fields of Contextual Sampling Motives		
Spider of Sampling Reasons SSR		
Fader of Visibility FOV		
Source	media	media
Mode	non-political	driven
Style	aesthetic (depoliticizing)	hidden (aesthetic)
Functions	aesthetic expression limitation	aesthetic expression inclusion of lived reality limitation simulation
Key Inter-preta-tions	threefold process of concealment (sampling process, track, artistic biography) borrowing an abstract feeling	commentary on a feeling of data overload electronic music as a vehicle for the processing of (political) influences and impressions
Seismo-graphic Substance	treatment of social taboos voyeurism circulating media material as culture-making significance of online media for musical practice	contemporary document of a military conflict in summer 2014 (Donbas) traces of lived experience: reception of military conflicts in 21st century (practice of media use) significance of online media for musical practice

Table 12.1: Overview of the five case studies

The analytical tool SSR allows for the flexible analysis and display of various, overlapping reasons for sampling. It covers four main approaches to musical sampling: contextual (red), material (yellow), accidental (blue), and procedural (green). Producers mostly favor either a meaning-driven (contextual) or a sound-driven (material) approach. In practice, these approaches are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, my analyses have shown that each sampling strategy combines several or all of them. The contextual approach was key not least because of the focus of this study on political sampling material; a different focus would most likely lead to different results. While the contextual approach can rarely occur without the material (since aesthetic factors almost always play a role), the material can be taken in the absence of the contextual.

The combination of contextual and material reasons for sampling results in what I have theorized as the double functionality of sampling. Sampling is not necessarily an either-or choice: a sample can simultaneously fulfill various functions in a composition. It can

substantially serve aesthetic ends *and* bring contextual information into music. The case study of "Methy Imbiß" (including a political reality vs. spatializing sound) and the interlude on Lara Sarkissian's "Thresholds" (announcing a new world vs. vocal sound) exemplify this double functionality.

Sampling fulfills different functions in each case study, ranging from appropriation, recontextualization, and the inclusion of lived reality to limitation, simulation, and aesthetic expression. This book has thus shown that a definition of sampling limited to one or a few functions (such as recontextualization) does not do justice to the complexities and possibilities of sampling. An analysis of sample-based music must map the multiple functions relevant to each case as precisely as possible.

Beyond the contextual and material approaches I have introduced two complementary categories, the accidental and the procedural. They emphasize, respectively, the significance of chance in sampling processes and the existence of superordinate reasons explaining why producers sample in general (such as sampling as a compositional crutch, or the limitation of compositional possibilities). Procedural reasons, however, rarely serve as direct explanations for why a particular sample has been processed.

Due to my focus on political sampling material, I have proposed further categorizations to describe contextual sampling. On a general level, I divided producers' reasons for processing contextual external sound material into three fields: inspiration (a particular sound is selected because it inspires the producer), communication (a particular sound is processed because the producer wants to communicate something), and content (a particular sound is processed because the producer is interested in the sample and/or its source context). At least two fields were relevant to each case study; in the case of "kenats," all of them were. The absence of the field of communication in the strategy behind "Methy Imbiß" shows that sampling political sound material does not necessarily imply a communicational intent.

I further subdivided the contextual approach into five perspectives (active, narrative, neutral, personal, and strategic) and one sub-perspective (the solidary perspective, as a form of the active perspective). With the exception of the strategic, all of these perspectives were primary in shaping one of the case studies presented: the active perspective in "STABILIZED, YES!," the narrative in "Perversas," the neutral in "Methy Imbiß," the personal in "kenats," and the solidary in "Libres."

This book has not only asked *why* particular sounds are sampled in experimental electronica, but also *how* these sounds are processed. With the second analytical tool, the FOV, I have emphasized the aspect of visibility. The FOV allows for the display of five

An analysis of sample-based music must map the multiple functions relevant to each case as precisely as possible.

See discussion in Chapter 5 on the reasons why the strategic perspective was not included in this study. I do however discuss a potential strategic aspect below.

different parameters relating to the overall degree of visibility of a processed sample in the final musical product. The case studies offered examples across the whole range of visibility in sampling, from obvious ("STABILIZED, YES!") and in-between ("kenats" and "Libres") to almost ("Perversas") or fully concealed ("Methy Imbiß"). Configurations of the individual faders also show a great variety of different approaches. Only the third fader (referentiality) is never positioned in the lower part of its range, which can be explained by the focus of this study on referential sampling tactics.

The tools and terminologies introduced here enable the precise analysis of sampling strategies. A (contextual) sampling strategy can be described by one or several general fields of reasons for sampling (inspiration, communication, content), two or more approaches (contextual, material, accidental, procedural), and, within the contextual approach, by one or several perspectives (active, narrative, neutral, personal, or strategic). An analyzed strategy can also be distinguished according to its level of visibility and its distinctive application of the parameters of audibility, signalization, referentiality, recognizability, and extra-musical signalization.

A core interest of this book was to examine the sampling of political material and sampling with a political intention (aspects [a] and [b] of the socio-political potential of sampling, introduced <u>in the introduction of this book</u>). The political was thereby understood as <u>a signifier of the social</u>. The analyses in our case studies have shown the strategies deployed by individual producers in dealing with this issue. Through comparing them, it is possible to distinguish between three idealized modes of the political and three styles of transformation. These terminologies can further sharpen the description and analysis of sampling strategies.

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Modes of the Political and Styles of Transformation

(a) Modes of the Political: Political, Driven, and Non-Political

This spectrum ranges from the *political* mode at one end to the *non-political* mode on the other. Between these poles is the *driven* mode.

The *political* mode is represented by the case studies of "STABILIZED, YES!" and "Libres." These strategies use sampling as a tool for the communication of political ideas, thoughts, and concepts. They either process political sampling material ("STABILIZED, YES!") or use sampling as a modular construction system for political messages ("Libres"). When sampling in this mode, the producers share a distinct political attitude. The political mode is significantly shaped by the active contextual perspective (the strategic perspective might also be an indicator of this mode). Moreover, the

general field of communication is always relevant here.[1] In terms of visibility, these strategies are either fully obvious ("STABILIZED, YES!") or between the fader's two extremes ("Libres").

The second mode applies to the tracks "kenats," "Methy Imbiß," and "Thresholds." Here, overt communication of a political idea is not essential. Rather, the sampling strategy reflects that the producer is considerably influenced, shaped, or—as I label this mode—*driven* by politics. In any case, the producer shows great interest in the content of the processed sample or its source context. Hence, the general field of content is always important here. Any of the contextual perspectives, except for the active and the strategic, could be of primary importance, while the visibility of the sampling process could range from obvious to concealed.

The third mode is characterized by a *non-political* approach to the sampled material. As the case study of "Perversas" has shown, political sampling material can be processed without there being a political intention behind it. Hence, these sampling strategies consistently avoid the political. The general field of inspiration is essential in this mode. As in the *driven* mode, all contextual perspectives except for the active and the strategic could be primary, and visibility can cover the whole spectrum.

(b) Styles of Transformation: Constructive, Aesthetic, and Hidden

Beyond their approach to the political, the sampling strategies examined also differ in how their sampled material is transformed. I therefore propose three styles of transformation. This analytical category summarizes the relation between meaning and musical production.

A first style transforms the source material in a *constructive* way: in "kenats," "STABILIZED, YES!" and "Libres," the producers construct new meanings by using and thus transforming the meanings contained in the source material. In all three cases, the producers used the samples to construct (political) messages. It is important to note that constructive transformation is not congruent with the political mode, as this transformation does not, by definition, have to be political. In the case of "Libres," the act of transformation could be further described as the politicization of non-contextual sound material.

In "Perversas," the producer ignored the sample's original meanings to a great extent. The style of transformation is thus *aesthetic*. Where political sound material is used, this transformation always comes with an element of depoliticization.

The third style of transformation can be described as *hidden*. Here, the transformation is not obvious to the listener. In comparison to aesthetic transformation, the original meanings of the sampling

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1   The connection between the act of communication and political music was also emphasized by Dunaway (1997).

material do play a crucial role here. This style is represented by the tracks "Thresholds" and "Methy Imbiß." The latter also contains an aspect of aesthetic transformation (spatializing of sound through the processing of the war sample). This shows that more than one mode of transformation can be at play in a given sampling strategy.

■

In addition to the general fields of reasons for sampling, the SSR, and the FOV, these modes of the political and styles of transformation can help achieve a precise and detailed analysis of sampling strategies. The continuous scales used in most of these categorizations allow for the description of complex nuances of artistic expression. These tools and terminologies must be understood as an addition to the terminologies and taxonomies already established by sampling researchers, <u>as examined and summarized in this book</u>. With its focus on political modes of sampling, this book has, in particular, responded to Tara Rodgers' (2003, 313) call to examine the "musical and political goals" of sampling artists.

In Table 12.1 above, I have also included some key interpretations of the tracks revealed by my analyses, as well as the tracks' seismographic substance. This overview not least illustrates the potential of the analysis of sample-based popular music. The tracks analyzed can serve as an explorative entry point into a different perspective on our world, revealing the lived experience or realities of their producers, pointing to social processes and phenomena, and challenging established worldviews. In short: the analysis of sample-based music unfolds individual narratives of this world.

The analysis of sample-based music unfolds individual narratives of this world.

Qualitative Conclusions

The following sub-chapters will now offer three qualitative conclusions that combine insights from all five case studies and the interlude. They theorize sampling as a substitute for voice, as exploration of the self, and as greatly influenced by online media.

The Lost Voice

When trying to find commonalities between the heterogeneous sampling approaches encountered in this study, I was repeatedly struck by the connection between sampling and the voice, beyond the mere sampling of voice samples (which is indeed often done; see "STABILIZED, YES!" "Perversas," and "Thresholds"). Hence, this first perspective describes sampling as a substitute for voice in electronic popular music, showing the manifold relations between sampling and the voice.

Sampling replaces lyrics. "STABILIZED, YES!," "kenats," and "Libres" have shown that producers communicate (more or less obvious) messages through sampling. Whether the deconstruction of colonizer harmonies, the questioning of conventional gender roles, or a confrontation with Afro-Argentinian history, it is the processing of external sound material that constructs the producer's message. Similarly, Matthew Herbert considers sampling "storytelling," and electronic industrial artist Ptyl explained that "the sample [can] (…) serve as part of the message of the song and sometimes even replace lyrics. Instead of saying something, I can put the sound there" (Liechti 2016b). In other cases, sampling also acts as a direct functional substitute for lyrics. Where in other genres of popular music one might find lyrics, in the tracks "STABILIZED, YES!" and "Perversas," there is a processed sample.

Sampling thus replaces voice. The producer Bonaventure emphasized that sampling gives her the opportunity to "be part of conversations." She explained that it is not her "style" to discuss particular subjects using her own voice or other lyrics. Sampling allows her "to reach out to people." Similarly, Vika Kirchenbauer told me that she feels uncomfortable using her own voice, preferring to rely on the processing of voice samples. Sampling empowers artists to speak with a voice even if they do not have confidence in their own. This aspect merges seamlessly into the following:

Sampling enables voices to be heard. Among the case studies, this aspect was of particular importance for the producers Mauro Guz Bejar and Lara Sarkissian. In "Libres," Guz Bejar aimed to make visible the Afro-Argentine community and their (cultural) achievements in Argentinian society. Lara Sarkissian's sampling strategy and musical productions are shaped by the urge to make Armenian culture audible and visible. When introducing the solidary perspective of the SSR, I discussed the producers Olivia Louvel and kritzkom, both of whom contributed tracks to a compilation raising solidarity and awareness towards female fighters in the Northern Syrian region of Rojava. Here, too, sampling was used as a tool to enable voices to be heard. This aspect can also be understood on a symbolic level. Katie Gately applied a similar intention to non-human sounds: "So often I'll take sounds that are not human, not at all human, and I try to make them speak, to give them a voice."

However, sampling is also used to mute voices. The case study of "Perversas" serves as an example here. The voice of the woman speaking about her sexual relationship with horses is concealed to a high degree. The voices of the Sacred Harp singers in "STABILIZED, YES!" are obscured too, and the lyrics are no longer comprehensible. In other examples beyond this study, this aspect touches on what I have described previously as the problematization of sampling strategies (see section [d] of the socio-political potential of sampling). Scholars have criticized the imbalanced power relations between sampling artists and the actors in the sources they

sample. In this way, cultural appropriation or the exoticizing use of samples can also result in the muting of particular voices.

Why is sampling so popular in electronic music today? Beyond the banal statement that sampling has become a ubiquitous and unavoidable tool in the factory of musical production, a qualitative answer must be found anew in each individual case. This book has shown that sampling can assume many different functions and cannot be reduced to one or a few of them. However, this short overview of the relation between sampling and the voice points to one major strength of sampling: many artists see it as a useful tool to bring the extra-musical, and thus the world, into their music. Sampling could be regarded as bringing the lost voice back into electronic music, with its distinctively "instrumental focus" (Butler 2006, 34).

Sampling could be regarded as bringing the lost voice back into electronic music.

The huge importance of the technique of sampling in electronic music production finally leads me to a methodological claim. I would argue that the analysis of samples must be part of the analytical toolbox for any musicological analysis, just as with the well-established analysis of lyrics.

The Exploration of the Self

The previous perspective focused on sampling as a tool to communicate with an audience. However, my analyses have also shown that sampling is often understood as a distinctly personal project with no primary communicational intent. In these cases, the other general fields of reasons for sampling—content and inspiration—are essential. Personal sampling strategies can be identified with reference to the SSR diagram: while the active and strategic perspectives are more oriented towards an external audience, the neutral and personal perspectives are mostly inward-looking. (The narrative perspective can contribute to both orientations.) However, what does the conception of sampling as a personal strategy mean? A few observations and conclusions will help illustrate this idea.

First of all, I have observed that recognition has become secondary. Sampling practices in hip hop—that is, before the decline of sampling in the genre—often concerned themselves with recognizable sources. Joseph Schloss' (2014 [2004]) anthropological study on sampling producers in the U.S., for example, examined practices that depend at least to a certain degree on recognizability. In contrast, recognition is not the primary concern of the sampling artists featured in my study—with the exception of Vika Kirchenbauer's "STABILIZED, YES!" In "Methy Imbiß," "Perversas," and "Thresholds," this even leads to a partial or complete concealment of the sample.

Recognition has become secondary.

The samples in "kenats" and "Libres" are recognizable, but without providing sufficient information to clearly trace them.

In these cases, the key criterion is not whether a certain sample can be recognized or not. This does not mean, however, that the source context is not important. As I have shown, the sampling material in these cases is carefully chosen for multiple reasons. The processed sampling material is highly significant, at least on a personal level. In the interlude chapter on "Thresholds," Lara Sarkissian emphasized that the inclusion of the protest sample was primarily "for herself." Due to these inward-looking approaches, many sampling processes remain hidden.

The sampling strategies analyzed in this book touched on various personal aspects regarding the producers in question. They range from incorporating one's own lived reality into the music (James Whipple and Mauro Guz Bejar) and reviving memories (Lara Sarkissian and Mauro Guz Bejar) to the negotiation of issues of inclusion and exclusion in subcultural communities (Vika Kirchenbauer).

The latter particularly points to processes of othering. As the taking of external material is at the core of sampling, it enables a productive confrontation with the question of what is one's own and what is external. Among the case studies, I encountered three different approaches:

(1) Hybridization. The processed material is perceived as external and one's own at the same time. This tension of distance is a significant feature of these sampling processes. The keyboard sounds in Lara Sarkissian's "kenats" are her own (they belong to Armenian culture) and external (they are performed by a man from another generation in a distant musical style; producer and musician potentially belong to different social classes). The footage from the battlefield in James Whipple's "Methy Imbiß" is his own (political events mediated in Whipple's lived reality) and external (taking place in Eastern Ukraine), and Vika Kirchenbauer's Sacred Harp sample-clips in "STABILIZED, YES!" are her own (Christian culture) and external (American and religious context).

(2) Appropriation. The material is external and becomes one's own. This process can only be observed in Lara Sarkissian's "kenats." Here, the producer takes the "masculine" keyboard sounds and appropriates them as a woman. The example of "kenats" shows that the approaches identified here can be mixed or combined.

(3) Exoticization. In this third approach, the material is presented as the other, the strange, the eerie. The example here is Ian McDonnell's "Perversas."

The use of sampling as a production method allows for the creative negotiation of the boundaries between the self and the other. This process is an integral part of identity formation and thus distinctively personal. The strategies of hybridization and appropriation listed

above are also used as a tactic of legitimation when producers explain why they have sampled particular sounds. Lara Sarkissian legitimated the sampling of the keyboard sounds in "kenats" by emphasizing it as her "own material," Vika Kirchenbauer mentioned that her samples belong to a context similar to her own, and James Whipple pointed to the material as part of his "own lived reality."

This aspect of legitimation leads to a final point. Hidden sampling often serves the goal of self-legitimation on a more general level. The analyses of "kenats," "Thresholds," "Methy Imbiß," and (to a lesser extent) "Libres" showed concealed sampling strategies that rely on highly political sound material or political ideas and messages. This raises questions about the reasons for sampling: why have these materials been processed if they are not intended to be accessible to listeners, and if they could potentially be replaced by other sounds with the same aesthetic results?

The use of sampling as a production method allows for the creative negotiation of the boundaries between the self and the other.

In addition to our previous analyses of the reasons for sampling behind these practices, they can perhaps be explained by a further function of the samples: they contribute to the producer's self-legitimation. It is important for these artists to negotiate socio-political topics in their art, and thus crucial that these sampling materials are part of their productions. The inclusion of the samples legitimates their own artistic practice to themselves as politically aware individuals. However, the artists do not want to make these sources obvious, as this would not correspond with their aesthetic goals (James Whipple: "I think music is just something strange and from a different planet"), or else they simply want to avoid being "cheesy." Perhaps such artists are also seeking to avoid controversial debates in public, or trying to remain accessible to a broader audience.

This is mere speculation, and I do not wish to condemn any producer for their sampling strategies. Nevertheless, conceptualizing (political) sampling as the (personal) exploration of the self and as a potential strategy of self-legitimation contributes to a more nuanced understanding of hidden sampling practices. In fact, this would finally bring the so far absent strategic perspective of the SSR into play.

Justin Morey (2017, 294) also observed a tendency towards "a more cautious approach to sampling" among his interviewees. He explains this with reference to tightening copyright regulations. However, as this study has focused on non-copyrighted sampling material, it is clear that this does not fully explain hidden sampling practices. Further studies could now ask whether these strategies are indicative of sampling artists' aversion towards articulating controversial political thoughts or ideas. We might also critically examine whether sampling has intensified processes of singularization in music production, and whether these practices are part of greater

ongoing societal processes. We might also further examine the collective potentials of sampling, as I have indicated earlier.

Surf–Sample–Manipulate

The third and final aspect directly connects to the discussion of Lara Sarkissian's track "Thresholds." This interlude chapter showed the considerable influence of online media products and media technologies on the sampling process. This was the case for most of the case studies.

All producers featured in the case studies accessed their sampling material on the internet. During the research stage, they browsed various platforms and channels in search of sampling material. Lara Sarkissian looked for her samples via Google, YouTube, and Instagram; James Whipple followed video platforms such as LiveLeak and YouTube to access information on the military conflict in Eastern Ukraine; and Ian McDonnell was browsing YouTube when he stumbled across the video on zoophiles. Mauro Guz Bejar, finally, searched for chain sounds on an online sound database, and regularly uses YouTube as a source of sampling material for other productions.

Here we see a new generation of music producers heavily reliant on online media for sources of musical production. These online channels determine what they consume, and these media products shape the thoughts of the sampling artists. Hence, online media affects musical practice. Mark Amerika described this approach in 1997 as "surf–sample–manipulate." In his own words, this translates into the following imperative: "Surf the web, collect data, and manipulate it until it fits into your own artistic environment" (Amerika 1997). This might summarize the production workflow behind all of the case studies in this book. Even regarding Vika Kirchenbauer's "STABILIZED, YES!," it is questionable whether the producer would have adopted her conceptual strategy of sampling Sacred Harp tunes without access to the internet's open archives.

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Online media affects musical practice.

Finally, sampling is all about availability. Sampling artists process the materials that are available around them. With the explosion of the internet, potential sources have become endless. For the producers featured in this study, the practice of "digging for samples" in a record store (as witnessed, for example, by Schloss 2014 [2004], 79–100) has been replaced by the act of browsing the internet. These more or less conscious or targeted search queries follow their own principles and criteria, as this study has shown. As argued previously, actions such as browsing the internet or consuming YouTube videos have become a crucial part of musical production. The inclusion of the research stage in the definition of sampling underlines this observation.

The producer awe IX likewise emphasized the importance of

availability. I explained to him my approach to analyzing sampling practice through the two axes of reasons for sampling (SSR) and visibility (FOV). In response, he suggested an addition:

> *I suppose another axis would be availability, which samples are nearest to hand, what you are able to sample, or what is suggested by the media/programs you use, that is quite a wide choice given the internet and increasing ubiquity of media, but still plays a role.*

The issue of availability once again touches on the influence of algorithms on musical production. As I have emphasized in the case studies on "kenats," "Perversas," and "Methy Imbiß," as well as in the interlude on "Thresholds," the algorithms powering search engines and video platforms define the availability of sampling sources. They determine what sampling artists consume and, ultimately, what they process in their music. Algorithms further bring the element of chance into the process of sampling. How algorithms order search results is, of course, not accidental. However, from the perspective of the user, they enable accidental encounters with media material.

This study has shown how online media products and technologies greatly influence and shape the production of popular music in the 21st century. However, a lot of research remains to be done in this area. Further studies could, for example, ask if this is a new phenomenon, or if musicians have always relied on the media of their times to a similar extent. Such studies would need to examine the ramifications of online media and related habits of media use for popular music.

After these topical conclusions, I want to shift focus to offer an outlook. This final part of this book asks about the benefit of the methods applied and tools developed.

Towards a Multi-Perspective Ethnography of Sampling Practices

Earlier in this book, I outlined trackology as a multi-sited ethnography of popular music which follows the traces of individual tracks. As Susanne Binas-Preisendörfer writes, such small-scale studies are an important tool for the "scientific exploration of the musical phenomena in a modern globalized and mediated world" (Binas-Preisendörfer in Burkhalter 2016, 176). By examining five tracks of experimental electronica, I have not only revealed strategies, aims, and purposes behind the sampling of external sound material. I have also offered an insight into the "black box pop," and thus into some of the creative questions and decisions at stake in the production of popular music in the 21st century. This book was shaped by a strong anthropological interest. I investigated the question of what music-making means for the producers under

analysis, and explored the reasons why artists produce music and how they make sense of it.

One central methodological premise of this book was to combine musicological (musical/textual analysis) and anthropological (fieldwork) methods. The case studies have shown that both approaches are needed to attain a precise and in-depth description and interpretation of the culture of sampling. In both the political and non-political modes outlined above, musical analysis alone could probably access many of the desired results and conclusions. In these two modes of the political, producers leave considerable signs allowing us to trace the track on a neutral analytical level (see analytical levels introduced by Nattiez 1990).

However, the second, driven mode requires anthropological investigation, as the analyzed content is not intended to be public. In these cases (and also, in fact, in all others), musical analysis fulfills two functions: it both verifies and demonstrates the argument being made. Such analysis can also offer starting points for a broader encounter with popular music. What musical analysis in many cases cannot do, or not satisfactorily, is unravel the seismographic substance of the track under examination. To trace lived realities, political motivations and attitudes, and cultural and social processes, an anthropological perspective is required.

This book is a first step toward a multi-perspective ethnography of sampling practices. Such an ethnography ideally maps the complex connections behind the processing of external sound material in popular music. Numerous further questions emerged in the course of the book, revealing its character to be at least partially explorative. Beyond these questions, I see various ways in which the project could be enlarged, and other track-based studies on musical borrowing practices conducted. By briefly outlining four main areas of further investigation below, I will simultaneously readdress the methodological problems I encountered in my study. These four perspectives for future research could all make their contributions to tackling the problems of recognizability, access, memory, articulation, validity, and density.

A multi-perspective ethnography of sampling practices ideally maps the complex connections behind the processing of external sound material in popular music.

(a) Conducting Extended Fieldwork

One approach would involve conducting further and extended anthropological fieldwork. While this study took place largely online, further studies would need to go back to the multi-sited places under study. Methods of direct and participant observation could enable deepened insights into the habitus and general production methods of these and further artists. Extended anthropological fieldwork could simultaneously tackle the problems of access

(more time on site enables more and closer contacts), validity (closer contacts allow for broader insights), density (higher quantity of observed producers), and recognizability (closer insights into processes of musical production raise the chance of identifying hidden strategies).

In spite of its challenges and limitations, the interlude has shown the great potential of direct observation for enlarging my analytical approach towards a full analysis of musical production. Barbara Volkwein describes production analysis as one of several analytical approaches to the analysis of electronic club music. According to Volkwein (2016, 180), production analysis focuses on the "context of the producer (origin, creative intentions, etc.) and methods of production." While my study has primarily engaged with the former, extended research could further pursue the latter. This would additionally address the problem of memory, as the direct observation of production processes can potentially capture spontaneous moments of intuition and flow. Moreover, anthropological fieldwork could be directed towards the presentation of these tracks in live contexts, and thereby also include an aspect of esthesic analysis (see below).

Such an approach would help to intensify the research on the particular case studies in question, though it would not allow for a broad view of many different sites, as is offered in this book. The current high concentration of producers in the field of experimental electronica in the German capital, Berlin, could nevertheless offer a unique possibility for successful fieldwork in a single place. Such a study could take the questions, terminologies, and analytical tools found in this book as a fruitful point of departure.

(b) Expanding Authorship

A second approach would involve expanding authorship to enable multi-perspective research on sample-based music. Taking the case studies found in this book as examples, the backgrounds of the sampling materials could be discussed and analyzed by experts from their respective fields. Experts of the Sacred Harp tradition, Armenian rabiz music, the history of the Afro-Argentine community, zoophilia and social taboos, and the military conflict in Eastern Ukraine could add further perspectives and interpretations to my own analysis.

I consider it essential for research, especially in the humanities, to engage increasingly in cross-border and cross-continent collaborations. Further studies on sample-based music should, in particular, be conducted by female, non-white, and non-European researchers. These projects should rely on other knowledge, tracks, and sources. This book is one perspective on the culture of sampling. Now we need others that attack, verify, enlarge,

I consider it essential for research, especially in the humanities, to engage increasingly in cross-border and cross-continent collaborations.

or update it. This could tackle problems of access (more perspectives will mean access to more and different participants), articulation (researchers with different backgrounds will be able to speak differently with the researched producers), and validity (more perspectives can further validate interviewees' statements).

Future research projects could even combine conducting extended anthropological studies (perspective [a] above) with an expansion of authorship, by merging several (single-sited) research projects into a multi-sited meta study. To do this, appropriate funding programs are needed.

(c) Enlargement of the Corpus of Analyzed Tracks

The main outcome of this book is a corpus of applicable terminology for the description and analysis of sample-based music, along with two analytical tools, the SSR and FOV. These outcomes offer a promising toolbox for the analysis of a greater corpus of sample-based tracks. They could not only be used qualitatively to display and deconstruct individual, complex analyses of sample-based music. They could also be used quantitatively for a broader comparison of various sampling strategies. This could reveal recurring patterns and identify yet further, more nuanced strategies, thus tackling the problem of density. More analytical data could help verify, revise, and expand on the tools and terminologies developed in this book.

(d) Analyzing the Esthesic Level

While the previous approaches could—though they of course do not have to—focus on the poietic (production) and neutral (traces left by the musical objects) levels of analysis (Nattiez 1990), further studies could finally expand the analysis to the esthesic level (reception). Such an approach is needed for a complete analysis of popular music. It could map various hearings of the tracks in different contexts, and show how their meanings differ. Moreover, it could expose potential discrepancies when compared with intentions on the poietic level.

The tools and terminologies proposed in this book might be of only limited help here. Indeed, additional basic work would be required.

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Future research, whether or not it follows the above suggestions, is finally invited to further develop the project of trackology. This book has offered a first attempt in this endeavor. By following the traces of a track, I believe we are less tempted to limit our view according to boundaries of genre, border, or method, or by following

the most influential and well-known (mostly male) protagonists. Trackology thus shifts away from master narratives towards more individual narratives that would not otherwise be accessible to research.

Let us take popular music seriously. Let us look behind popular music, to see how it is formed, how it emerges, and what kind of attitudes and positions are concealed behind it. Let us be curious about what popular music contains, be it politics, individual experiences, or new knowledge about this world. In doing so, we come closer to answering questions such as: what is the meaning of music for us as humans?

I hope to have shown that examining the culture of sampling is fruitful in this matter because sampling—perhaps even more so than other methods of musical production—can bring the extra-musical into musical compositions. Let us now continue to listen to popular music and the manifold, individual, and meaningful narratives behind it.

Trackology thus shifts away from master narratives towards more individual narratives that would not otherwise be accessible to research.

Appendix

Glossary

Bedroom producer. Widespread label for musicians who produce their music independently in private surroundings such as bedrooms. They have full sovereignty over the production process of their music. The label is criticized as derogatory and a racial cliché. In this book, the term → **laptop producer** is used instead.
Literature: Hepworth-Sawyer and Golding 2011; Sinnreich 2010, 122; Whelan 2008, 20.

Borrowing, musical. Academic field that studies the uses of existing music in new musical compositions. Beyond sampling, this could encompass allusion, copy, parody, → **quotation**, remix, reworking, transcription, variation, versioning, and other techniques.
Literature: Burkholder 2001a.

bpm. Beats per minute. Measure of the speed of a musical piece.

Chopping. Used by hip hop producers and fans to describe the technique of slicing a → **sample** into smaller pieces and reordering them.
Literature: Schloss 2014 [2004], 106; Kajikawa 2015, 164.

Collage. Mostly associated with haptic processes and with the combination of external material from various contexts. The term is used in various historical contexts, or at least in relation to analogue phenomena. In relation to sound, *collage* has particularly been used to describe the techniques of musique concrète. Often used interchangeably with → **montage**.
Literature: Burkholder 2001b; Großmann 2005, 329–30; Tollmann 2004, 292.

DAW. Digital Audio Workstation. Music production software such as → **Live** by Ableton.

Direct observation. Method of anthropological fieldwork where the researcher does not actively participate. Following Bernard, there are two forms of *direct observation*: in a *reactive* observation the researcher is "blatant" about the research; "people know that you are watching them." A *nonreactive* observation is conducted "unobtrusive[ly]."
Literature: Bernard 2011, 306.

Electronic dance music EDM. Used as a neutral catchall term encompassing a broad range of → **popular music** genres and styles such as techno, house, garage, drum and bass, dubstep, trance, and their respective subgenres. Not primarily dance-oriented genres can be subsumed within *EDM* as well (academic understanding). Or, a label for highly commercial electronic music, mostly applied by journalists and fans (public understanding). In this book the term is used in the first sense.
Literature: Butler 2012, xii; Demers 2010; Feser and Pasdzierny 2016; Morey 2017, 268.

Experimental. Used in this book, in a popular understanding, to describe the innovative character of electronic →**popular music**. In contrast to this understanding, in the tradition of art music, *experimental* is conceived as being outside a tradition (the European art music tradition), while the "avant-garde" is characterized as an "extreme position within the tradition."
Literature: Nicholls 2008 [1998], 518.

Experimental electronica. Heterogeneous and multi-sited field of research of this study; not an existing, coherent scene or genre. The mostly unconventional and → **experimental** tracks are heavily → **sample**-based, rooted in one or various → **EDM** genres and beyond, and distributed online. The sound aesthetic is often abrasive, shaped by cuts, disruptions, noises, and dissonances. The music is made by → **laptop producers** from niche scenes and often from marginalized communities. The protagonists are close to club culture, but the music is not primarily produced for the club. Political themes

such as diversity, gender, queer identity, racism, social justice, and colonialism are often addressed. Other terms used by fans and music journalists are "deconstructed club music," "post-club," "experimental club," "club-not-club," and "avant-club." A phenomenon that arose during the 2010s.
  Literature: RYM 2019.

External/internal sound material.
External sound material has been produced or recorded by someone other than the sampling artist. *Internal sound material* is self-recorded or self-produced using → **synthesis**. → **field recordings** are treated as *external sound*.
  Literature: Théberge 1997, 213.

Field recordings. An audio recording that has been produced outside a traditional setting of musical production (e.g. professional recording studio, home studio, or rehearsal room). This can encompass both environmental and human-produced sounds.

Intention. The concrete aim of an actor behind a particular action. Setiya describes the form of *intention* referred to here as the *intention* with which someone acts. In this book, → **motivations** and *intentions* are used as the vocabulary to describe more concrete → **reasons** explaining why a particular action has been carried out.
  Literature: Setiya 2018.

Intertextuality. A relation between two texts, more specifically "practices that aim at including some elements of a previous text within the present text."
  Literature: Lacasse 2007, 37–38.

Laptop producer. Musicians that compose and produce their music on their own, often in private surroundings such as the bedroom, and with the laptop as their main musical instrument. Used instead of → **bedroom producer**.
  Literature: Prior 2008.

Listening, active and passive. When *listening* actively, listening is the primary action. When *listening* passively, music or sounds are played/occur in the background, and another activity is performed as the primary action.
  Literature: DeSantis 2018, 30–33; Clayton 2016, 256–72; Wegerle 2019b.

Live. Software launched in 2001 by Ableton. Today, *Live* is the most influential and widely used → **DAW** in → **electronic dance music**. It has substantially facilitated and stimulated the processing of → **samples**.
  Literature: Brett 2019; Butler 2014, 19; Goldman 2015, 23; Ismaiel-Wendt 2016, 119–53.

Material. Working sources of the → **sampling** artist. Although samples consist of digital code, the editing steps in a → **DAW** resemble the treatment of physical material. A → **sample**-based track consists of several building blocks (=samples). These building blocks are considered the sampling *material*. In a second sense, the term is used to describe a particular approach to sampling where samples are selected because of their *material nature*, such as pitch, timbre, or rhythm.

Meaning. "An object of any kind takes on meaning for an individual apprehending that object, as soon as the individual places the object in relation to areas of his lived experience – that is, in relation to a collection of other objects that belong to his or her experience of the world. (…) *Meaning* exists when an object is situated in relation to a horizon." *Meaning* is thus always "extra-musical," and when the expression "(extra-musical) *meaning*" is used in this book, this particular quality of the term shall be underlined.
  Literature: Nattiez 1990, 8.

Montage. Often used interchangeably with → **collage**. Mostly applied to collaging techniques in film and photography and refers to the combination and recombination of media material of a similar nature.
  Literature: Großmann 2005, 329–93.

Motivation. What produces the desire to perform an act. In this book, *motivations* and → **intentions** are used as the

vocabulary to describe more concrete → **reasons** explaining why a particular action has been performed.

Literature: Hoffman 1984, 389.

Motive. "The state of mind which makes a particular result attractive enough to the agent for him to effect it," or "a propensity to act one way rather than another in situations of particular sort." In this book, *motives* are understood as general → **reasons** explaining the context of a particular action.

Literature: Hoffman 1984, 389.

Multi-sited ethnography. Introduced by Marcus to describe an approach in cultural anthropology that focuses on "multiple sites of observation and participation that cross-cut dichotomies such as the 'local' and the 'global,' the 'lifeworld' and the 'system.'"

Literature: Marcus 1995, 95.

Political, the. A signifier of the social. Music or musical elements such as → **samples** can be perceived as *political* if they discuss socially relevant issues, or if they at least point to them.

Literature: Canaris 2005; Hay 2007; Heister 2016; Rösing 2004; Street 2012.

Popular Music. This book follows a wide understanding of this term as a "discourse rather than a fixed representation of a particular music" (Wicke). A negative definition conceives of *popular music* as everything that cannot be included in other general categories such as art music, folk, and jazz. A second definitional approach compiles a range of features which locate the → **tracks** covered by this book in the area of *popular music*. These tracks are *popular music* because they circulate through networks that exist for *popular music*, and because their producers live and act in social contexts and structures that are shaped and defined by *popular music* (e.g. club culture). The actual popularity of this music in terms of clicks, views, and likes, is thus not decisive in terms of understanding this music as popular.

Literature: Wicke 2004, 119.

Quotation. According to Lacasse, a *quotation* "is characterized by the actual insertion of an excerpt from a given text within another." Bricknell theorized the musical *quotation* as "an intentional re-use: one intended to be heard as a reference to other music." Sinnreich emphasizes that, in contrast to *quotation*, → **sampling** is "the mediated expression itself, not merely the ideas behind it."

Literature: Bricknell 2001, 190; Lacasse 2007, 38; Sinnreich 2010, 124.

Reasons for sampling. A catchall term to describe → **intentions**, → **motivations**, and → **motives** leading to the selection and processing of a particular → **sample**.

Remix. A result of one or more processes of → **sampling**. In this book, remix is only distinguished from the term sampling and is not defined further. This would be an endeavor even more complex than the definition of sampling.

Literature: Gallagher 2018a, 261; Gunkel 2016, 9; Navas 2012, 12.

Resampling. The process by which a sample is first edited and manipulated, and then recorded within the → **DAW** for a second time. The term is not used in this book, as I conceive of → **sampling** in general as a multilevel process that could encompass multiple cycles of recording.

Literature: Wegerle 2019a.

Sample. A single clip of sound used to produce a new composition.

Sampling. The (digital) use of → **external** sound → **material** to produce new music. The processing of internal material can be conceived of as *sampling* if it has not been newly produced (→ **self-sampling**).

Self-Sampling. → **Sampling** of sound → **material** that is internal and has been produced and/or recorded by the artist themselves.

Synthesis. The technique of generating sound from scratch using electronic software or hardware (synthesizers).

Track. An artifact of electronically produced music that can be distinguished as much as possible from the song. I also use the term "audio *track*" in this book to refer to a single textural layer within a → **DAW**.
Literature: Binas 2010, 62; Butler 2006, 328; Eshun 2000, 78.

Trackology. A new field of study that calls for the seeking out of traces of → **popular music**, taking its key artifact—be it a → **track** or a song—at its center.

Transtextuality. "Any type of relation, explicit or not, that may link a text with others."
Literature: Lacasse 2007, 36.

Interviews and Personal Communication

I. Artists

Requests with Little or No Success (52)

Acid Arab, AGF, Andrew Pekler, Ara, Angel-Ho, Ash Koosha, bauchamp, Celyn June, Clerk, Cummi Flu, Cuthead, Den Sorte Skole, Dominowe, Eaves, Endeguena Mulu, FAKA, Filastine, Forest Swords, Gazawat, Grayscale Sound, Guzz, Howie Lee, Isis Scott, Jlin, Juliana Huxtable, Kablam, Keiska, Klara Lewis, Klein, Lao (NAAFI), Lotic, Makam, MHYSA, Muqata'a, Mya Gomez, Nkisi, Oxhy, Pan Daijing, Parrish Smith, Petit Singe, Raz Ohara, Romare, Saam Schlamminger, Salviatek, Sam Kidel, Sandunes, Terribillis, The Movement Trust, Tzusing, Valesuchi, Via App, WWWINGS, Ziúr

Interviews with Exploitable Data via Email and/or Social Media (46)

Abu AMA, Arash Azadi, bod [包家巷], Brood Ma, BZGRL, Chino Amobi, COOL FOR YOU, Dapper Dan, Dasychira, DJ Kala, DJ Raph, Dr. Das, Dubokaj, Empty Taxi, Eomac, Future Daughter, Gan Gah, Genetics & Windsurfing, Ital, J(ay).A.D., J.G. Biberkopf, kaisernappy, Kalab, Katie Gately, kritzkom, Lara Sarkissian, LXV, M.E.S.H., Meta, Moro, Muqata'a, Naked, Nicolas Gaunin, Oaktree, Olivia Louvel, Peder Mannerfeldt, Ratkiller, Roly Porter, San Ignacio, Seekersinternational, Sufyvn, Thoom, Tomutonttu, Yearning Kru, Young Palace, ZULI

Skype Interviews (14)

Bassene, Stephen (Ibaaku).
  June 24, 2016.
Daniel, Drew and Martin C. Schmidt
  (Matmos). March 8, 2018.
Drouan, Marine (kritzkom).
  November 24, 2017.
Guz Bejar, Mauro (Moro).
  January 25, 2017.
Herbert, Matthew. November 27, 2017.
Kirchenbauer, Vika (COOL FOR YOU).
  February 22, 2017.
Louvel, Olivia. November 15, 2017.
Lutangu, Soraya (Bonaventure).
  May 31, 2017.
McDonnell, Ian (Eomac).
  December 21, 2018.
Ptyl. August 26, 2016.
Riot, Samuel (Young Palace/Wildlife).
  September 20, 2016.
Sarkissian, Lara. September 9, 2016.
Whipple, James (M.E.S.H.).
  January 25, 2017.
Zoker, Yatta (YATTA).
  September 6, 2017.

Personal Interviews (5)

Drouan, Marine (kritzkom).
  April 11, 2018. Berlin, Germany.
Jakob, Daniel (Dubokaj).
  August 19, 2016. Bern, Switzerland.
Lutangu, Soraya (Bonaventure).
  July 14, 2017. TU Berlin, Germany.
Stringer, James B. (Brood Ma).
  February 16, 2018. Haus der elektronischen Künste Basel, Switzerland.

Zavoloka, Kateryna (Zavoloka).
September 8, 2016. Bad Bonn
Düdingen, Switzerland.

**Personal Interviews (Case Studies)
(13)**

Guz Bejar, Mauro (Moro).
January 28, 2018. Berlin, Germany.
Kirchenbauer, Vika (COOL FOR YOU).
January 24; April 9, 2018. Berlin,
Germany.
McDonnell, Ian (Eomac).
January 24, 2018. Berlin, Germany.
Sarkissian, Lara. March 22, 25, 26, 27;
April 3, 4, 2018. Zentrum für Kunst
und Medientechnologie ZKM
Karlsruhe, Germany.
Sarkissian, Lara.
April 6, 14, 2018. Berlin, Germany.
Whipple, James (M.E.S.H.).
January 25, 2018. Berlin, Germany.

II. Scholars

Personal Interviews (1)

Navas, Eduardo.
November 4, 2017.
Bern, Switzerland.A

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Born, Georgina, and David Hesmond-

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Sampling Definitions

The following list of definitions of the term "sampling" (or more rarely of related terms such as "to sample") stems from the academic literature considered in the writing of this book. The list is not exhaustive. The definitions are ordered by the year of publication.

I. General Definitions

– "A small part of anything or one of a number, intended to show the quality, style, or nature of the whole; specimen." (Random House Dictionary after Navas 2012, 12)

– "sample, v.

1. To be or find a match or parallel to; to parallel; to intend as a match for. Also, to put in comparison with.

2. (a) To set an example to. (b) To set an example of.

3. To illustrate, to explain by examples or analogies; to symbolize.

4. To imitate, to copy.

5. (a) To take a sample or samples of; to judge the quality of (a thing) by a sample or specimen; to obtain a representative experience of. (b) To present samples or specimens of. Also, to serve as a sample of. (c)

6. To provide with samples.

7. sample-and-hold. Applied to a circuit or technique in which a varying voltage is sampled periodically and the sampled voltage is retained in the interval until the next sampling.

8. (a) To ascertain the momentary value of (an analogue signal) many times a second so that these values may be represented digitally (effectively converting the original analogue signal to a digital one). (b) [see below]" (Oxford 2018b)

– "The action or process of taking samples of something for analysis." (Oxford 2019c)

II. Audio-Related Definitions

(a) Technical Definitions I: The Conversion of an Analogue Sound Signal

– "Digital sampling is a purely electronic digital recording system which takes samples or 'vertical slices' of sound and converts them into binary information, into data, which tells a sound producing system how to reconstruct, rather than reproduce it—instantly. (…) It is stored rather as discrete data, which act as instructions for the eventual reconstruction of a sound (as a visual object when electronically scanned is translated only into a

binary code)." (Cutler 1994, 101)

– "Sample. Probe, die beim Digitalisieren einer analogen Schwingung von einem -> A/D-Wandler entnommen wird." (Supper 1997, 164)

– "Im Kontext der digitalen Klangverarbeitung bezeichnet Sampling die technische Umwandlung eines analogen Signals in digitale Werte." (Binas 2004, 244–45)

– "Extending the possibilities of tape music is the more recent practice of digital sampling, a method in which sound is converted into highly manipulable data. (…) Digital sampling is a type of computer synthesis in which sound is rendered into data, data that in turn comprise instructions for reconstructing that sound." (Katz 2005, 46, 138)

– "(…) das, was man als Sampling bezeichnete, nichts anderes war als das digitale Verfahren der Musikaufnahme, und vom Begriff her Sampling im physikalischen Sinne sogar noch viel allgemeiner benutzt wurde – nämlich generell als ein Verfahren, so viele Daten eines Kontinuums zu sammeln, die so wenig Speicherplatz wie möglich benötigten und doch das Kontinuum für menschliche Sinne oder andere Rezeptoren so täuschend naturgetreu wie möglich erscheinen zu lassen." (Diederichsen 2006, 399)

– "Die Sampling-Funktion dieser Geräte [Sampler] ermöglichte es, Ausschnitte von analogen Schallwellen in digitale Kopien ('Samples') umzuwandeln. Diese Kopien konnten dann beliebig in Tonhöhe, Länge oder Arrangement variiert werden." (Djordevic 2014, 73)

– "Sampling: das Einfangen von Klang von der analogen auf die digitale Ebene." (Brockhaus 2017, 446)

(b) Technical Definitions II: Additional Emphasis on the Digital Storage of Digital Sound

– "Die Produktion elektronischer Tanzmusik über Musikstudio-Software basiert auf zwei zentralen Techniken: Dem Sampling und der synthetischen Klangerzeugung (Synthesizer, Effekte). Beim Sampling werden analoge Signale, z.B. ein Klopfen oder Vogelzwitschern per Mikrofon oder speziellen Digitalisierungs-Abspielgeräten aufgenommen und in digitale Signale umgewandelt bzw. bereits als digitalisiertes Signal in Form eines Musik-Files eingespielt." (Kühn 2009, 57–58)

– "In Bezug auf die elektronische Klangsynthese bezeichnet der Begriff des Samplings die digitale Speicherung von natürlichen oder künstlichen Klangstrukturen in einem Computer bzw. Sampler, so dass dieses Material für die nachträgliche Bearbeitung zur Verfügung steht." (Binas 2010, 35)

(c) Technical Definitions III: Additional Emphasis on the Sampling of Instruments

– "Sampling is like magnetic tape recording in that both technologies involve the capturing, storing and recreating of audio (sound) waves. In fact, many of the standard terms associated with this technique (e.g. loop, splice, crossfade, etc.) have been borrowed directly from the world of magnetic tape recording. Sampling is the digital equivalent of music concrete, wherein common sounds are manipulated (and sometimes integrated with traditional instruments) to produce musical compositions. Sampling allows the musician to record sounds from other instruments, nature, or even non-musical sources, and transpose and play them chromatically on a standard piano or organ keyboard. This new and emerging technology greatly expands the creative horizons of the modern composer." (Tully 1968, 27–30 after Schloss 2004, 34)

– "Since the late 1970s the term 'sampling' has been applied in music to the method by which special musical instruments or apparatus digitally 'record' external sounds for subsequent resynthesis." (Davies 1996, 3)

– "In short, digital sampling is the conversion of sound from an analogue signal into a digital one and is

the basis of how all digital computer music instruments are used to process sounds. (Harkins 2016, 9)

(d) Procedural Definitions I: Emphasizing the Transfer of Pre-Existing Sound Material into New Compositions

- "(…) and the samples of rap which create their 'cuts' on two levels: the ostinatos formed from the samples and the intertextual repetition of previously recorded and circulated material." (Brackett 1995, 118)
- "The transfer of sounds from one recording to another." (Hesmondhalgh 2000, 280)
- "A process in which a sound is taken directly from a recorded medium and transposed onto a new recording." (Fulford-Jones 2001)
- "A digital process in which pre-recorded sounds are incorporated into the sonic fabric of a new song." (Demers 2003, 41)
- "Sampling ist die Verwendung der identischen Kopie eines Fremdmaterials, das technologisch vermittelt in eine Komposition gelangt." (Fuchs 2004, 303)
- "Prerecorded sonic performances that are subsequently used in new songs." (Lena 2004, 298)
- "Sampling is typically regarded as a type of musical quotation, usually of one pop song by another, but it encompasses the digital incorporation of any prerecorded sound into a new recorded work." (Katz 2005, 138–39)
- "A soundbite is lifted from an existing recording." (Moorefield 2005, 6)
- "The use of elements from other performers' recordings, for example, funk records, to make hip-hop beats." (Marshall 2006, 1)
- "Sampling (phrases and sections from records used for color and melody as well as rhythm)." (Dyer 2007, 14)
- "Schon hier ist von 'Sampling' zu sprechen, als Prinzip der Aneignung von (medial-) gespeicherten akustischen Versatzstücken. " (Pelleter and Lepa 2007, 201)
- "Ein Sample ist immer ein Teil eines konservierten Klangs, der durch

verschiedenste Aspekte individuell geprägt wird." (Klammt 2010, 5)
- "Mit dem ersten Aspekt ist das Prinzip des Samplens gemeint, eine medienbezogene Gestaltungsstrategie der De- und Rekontextualisierung sowohl von Werkfragmenten als auch von kulturellen Referenzen." (Großmann 2011, 116–17)
- "A technique that incorporates portions of existing sound recordings into a newly collaged composition. Sampling can be done using a variety of media and methods, including cutting up magnetic audiotape on analog equipment, physically manipulating vinyl records on a turntable, and remixing sounds using digital technologies like computers or drum machines, among other techniques." (McLeod and DiCola 2011, 1)
- "Sampling involves using recordings to make new recordings." (Reynolds 2011, 313)
- "Sampling is the practice of re-presenting a recording or portion of a recording as part of a new recorded work." (Tonelli 2011, 40, Fn. 12)
- "The concept of sampling developed in a social context that demanded for a term that encapsulated the act of taking not from the world but an archive of representation of the world. In this sense, sampling can only be conceived culturally as a meta-activity." (Navas 2012, 12)
- "At the time of this writing, sampling is commonly understood to imply copying in material form, not by capturing from the real world, but from a pre-existing recording." (Navas 2012, 14)
- "We will encounter technologies both for the recording and manipulation of pre-existing sound, and for the direct electrical generation of new sound. In one common formulation, these two options are known as sampling and synthesis; there has sometimes been tension between these two approaches, though these days we are much more comfortable with their unification as available techniques." (Collins, Schedel and Wilson 2013, 2)
- "Durch den 'Sampler' erhielten die

musikalische Praktiken nun auch einen prägnanten Namen, der explizit auf die Interaktion von Mensch, Maschine und Klang verwies: Fortan hieß das Verfahren, Klänge aus ihrem ursprünglichen Kontinuum herauszulösen und sie in ein neues einzubetten, 'Sampling'." (Fischer 2013, 90)

– "Sampling is the process of extracting recorded sound and reusing those sounds in a new sound product." (Sewell 2013, 1)
– Sampling refers to the act of digitally recording pieces of preexisting music and placing those bits in a new song. (McLeod 2015, 83)
– "The term sampling is often used to explain the use and re-use of any pre-existing sound source in a new musical context. (…) The definition of sampling that runs through this thesis is the use of digital technologies to record, store, and reproduce a sound." (Harkins 2016, 20)
– "Sampling is part of a wide range of musical practices that involve prior works, since it is almost impossible to create new music without some reference to what came before, and certainly impossible to develop a musical voice or skills in isolation. What distinguishes sampling, however, is its rootedness in the materiality of recorded music, rather than the underlying work." (Behr, Negus, and Street 2017, 2)
– "The manipulation and arrangement of pre-recorded sounds to produce new music. As a technique, sampling is practiced with a variety of technologies (tape loops, records, samplers, drum machines, etc) and source materials (found sound, vinyl records, field recordings, film/television excerpts)." (Suechting 2017)
– "Sampling. The practice of recording or taking part of a previously published work for reuse." (Gallagher 2018b, 278)
– "Sampling bezeichnet eine musikalische Kopierpraxis, bei der eine digitale Kopie eines Klangs in einen neuen musikalischen Zusammenhang gestellt wird." (Fischer 2020, 13)

(e) Procedural Definitions II: Emphasizing Aspects of Extraction and Fragmentation

– "The term 'sampling' in whatever mode it is operationalized, focuses attention on an act of cutting, extracting, citing, and/or recording." (Gunkel 2016, 7–8)
– "Sampling—that is, isolating a fragment of some media source, or quoting it, within the mixing of layers." (Borschke 2017, 59)

(f) Procedural Definitions III: Emphasizing Aspects of Manipulation and Editing

– "Eine Kulturtechnik des Medienzugriffs, die mit Bruchstücken dieser Strukturen spielt und diese dem gesellschaftlichen und ästhetischen Diskurs zuführt." (Binas 2010, 208)
– "Sampling als ästhetisches Verfahren betrifft die Gestaltung von Samples und nicht von aufgezeichneter Musik." (Großmann 2005, 321–22)
– "Sampling ist kurz gesprochen eine Methode, bei der aus vorhandenem Klangmaterial Ausschnitte ('Samples') extrahiert, diese nach eigenen Kriterien verändert und eventuell mit anderen Samples kombiniert werden, um auf diese Weise neue Musikstücke zu kreieren. (…) Als Grundlage für ein Baukasten ähnliches Kompositionsprinzip hat Sampling in der Musikproduktion eine enorme Relevanz erlangt." (Fischer 2013, 3, 106)
– "The digital recording and manipulation of sound that forms the foundation of hip-hop production— requires source material. In order to sample, there must be something to sample from." (Schloss 2004, 79)

(g) Procedural Definitions IV: Emphasizing Various Stages or Aspects

– "Sampling is a means of recording, storing, and manipulating sounds." (Metzer 2003, 163)
– "In the production of electronic music, the sampling process encompasses selecting, recording, editing

and processing sound pieces to be incorporated into a larger musical work." (Rodgers 2003, 313)

– "The phenomenon of sampling in popular music, that is, the reuse of quotations extracted from previously recorded materials. (…) the term sampling has acquired the more specialized meaning of the recording, storage, manipulation, and retrieval of musical sounds using digital tools." (Leydon 2010, 194)

– "Damon Albarn, der gemeinsam mit dem Zeichner Jamie Hewlett die Band Gorillaz erfunden hat, beschrieb die Arbeit an dieser Comic-Band so: 'Ich verstehe das Songwriting als eine Art Sampling ohne digitales Sampling. Ich nehme alles, was ich höre, filtere es und schaffe was Neues. Wir machen Musik und Kunst als Produkt all der Einflüsse, die auf uns einwirken.'" (von Gehlen 2011, 220–21)

– "Sampling constitutes a continuum of activity, sometimes distinct from other musical practices but very often merged into them. (…) The sampling continuum, instead, refers to a musical field in which listening practices, creative habits and habitus are informed by and realised through a technical and musical sphere to which sampling is integral." (Behr, Negus, and Street 2017, 12, 15).

– "The use of digital technologies to record, store, and reproduce any sound." (Harkins 2020, 4)

(h) Combining Definitions: Emphasizing Technical and Procedural Aspects

– "Sampling kann auf verschiedene Weise definiert werden. Signale werden identisch repliziert mit dem Ziel einer nachfolgenden Umwandlung und Neugenerierung. Sampling fordert die Kontrolle dieses Umwandlungsprozesses und ist deshalb (1) zu definieren als Digitalisierung von Signalen, wobei analoge Schwingungen in digitale Daten unter der entscheidenden Hinsicht umgewandelt werden, dass innerhalb der Abtastung von Signalen das abzutastende Signal jederzeit aus den abgespeicherten Daten rekonstruiert werden können muss. Sampling ist weiter (2) eine Auswahl und Re-Kombination bestehender Elemente, egal welcher Herkunft, Form, Beschaffenheit und Koexistenz. Formal ist Sampling im Unterschied zu Variation, Kopie etc. eine technisch vermittelte identische Replikation, die mittels Elementarisierung des Datenmaterials hergestellt wird und, analog zu den linguistischen Grundeinheiten Lexem, Morphem und Phonem, syntagmatische wie paradigmatische Manipulationen ermöglicht. Insbesondere erlaubt Sampling die Erarbeitung von Strategien, die das bisher bekannte Hacking als Manipulation der visualisierten Programme auf eine subversive und illegitime Umformung nicht-visueller Programmatiken ausdehnt (4). Eng gefasst ist Sampling jeweils nicht nur eine Strategie der Appropriation – replizierbaren Materials –, sondern immer auch eine der Erweiterung (5). Sampling ist demnach nicht nur eine Technik, sondern auch ein Kulturmodell, dass die Exemplarik der Produktionsformen und des Zeichenmaterials der Künste ebenso verändert, wie es die Rolle der Autorschaft transformiert und einen transdisziplinären Horizont der Symbolproduktion eröffnet (6)." (Reck 1995, 6)

– "Sound-Sampling, oder kurz Sampling, ist ein digitales Verfahren zur Speicherung von Klängen. In der Praxis ist Sampling als Kombination mit digital oder analog vorgenommenen Klangmanipulationen bereits eine eigenständige Klangsynthesetechnik geworden, obwohl es sich im Prinzip nur um die Wiedergabe zuvor aufgezeichneter, also bereits vorhandener Klänge handelt." (Ruschkowski 1998, 336)

– "(1) Medientechnisch: Vorgang der Digitalisierung von Audiosignalen, (2) musikalisch: Verwendung digital gespeicherter Klänge und Klangstrukturen in der musikalischen Produktion." (Großmann 2002, 320)

– "In diesem Sinne lässt sich der Begriff Sampling nicht auf einzelne Gebiete einschränken, wo er in sehr

unterschiedlichen Funktionszu-sammenhängen steht. Er beinhaltet mehr als die Digitalisierung von analogen Signalen und ihre Über-führung und Speicherung in numeri-scher Form." (Feuerstein 2004, 252)

– "Sampling, however, is largely a digital phenomenon, involving the conversion of an analog sound to digital information through periodic 'snapshots' of its electrical signal (and the reversal of this process when sound is generated). In the context of electronic dance music, a 'sample' is a recording of any sound captured through this tech-nique, and 'sampling' refers more generally to the process of obtain-ing sounds in this manner." (Butler 2006, 60–61)

– "First of all, the concept of sampling is used to describe the core technology of contemporary sound production, that is, how sound is converted from the analogue to the digital domain. Here, 'analogue' simply means 'continuous,' and 'digital' means 'discrete.' (…) Each such measurement is called 'a sample.' The list of measurements is a digital representation of the sound, and may be processed in a number of ways [(sampling1)]. (…) A second meaning of sampling (sampling2) is used in connection with instruments called samplers that use recorded sounds to emu-late or mimic the sounds of other instruments. (…) A third way to use the concept of sampling—sam-pling3—is to describe the process whereby a musician/ composer includes part of an earlier recording in his/her own music, as a more or less recognisable citation. Here, 'a sample' is a continuous part of an earlier recording and may be very short (like a «sound» used in a sam-pler instrument), several seconds, or even minutes long. (…) Sampling2 and sampling3 are possible with both digital and analogue technolo-gies, and are not in any way intrinsi-cally digital phenomena, even if digital technology is the basis for almost all sampling tools today. (…) While sampling3 is supposed to be recognised, the opposite is true

here—an edit is successful only if it is not noticed at all by the listener. Let us call this technique sampling4. (…) the repair technique of sam-pling3 is fully possible with both analogue and digital means. (…) These examples are meant to show that there is no simple connection between digital technology and the practice of sampling. With the ex-ception of sampling1, all described versions of sampling may be carried out by either analogue or digital technology, and, on the other hand, the use of digital recording tech-nology does not necessarily imply sampling as an aesthetic or artistic technique." (Kvifte 2007, 106–111)

– "In signal processing, the process by which a continuous signal is converted to a discrete signal. In music, sampling refers to the act of replaying preexisting recordings in new works. The term applies to digital sampling as well (but with less precision) to turntablist and splicing techniques that interject old recorded material into a new context. Hip-hop in the 1980s and 1990s relied heavily on sampling of unlicensed material. A number of high-profile lawsuits created today's environment in which it is highly risky to sample without permission." (Demers 2010, 173)

– Expansion of Kvifte's definition (see above): "Found are more likely to use the sampler to retain and experiment with 'mistakes' rather than erase them, as I will go on to discuss, and it seems that their work, and that of producers who operate in a similar way, does not fit neatly into any of Kvifte's four categories. It adheres to processes related to the first, second and third definitions of sampling, although not without a slight reconfiguration. Their approach develops out of a clearly defined aesthetic of ap-propriation and evolves into using the sampler to create new musical instruments rather than imitate existing ones." (Harkins 2010a, 8)

– "It is worth noting that the term 'sampling' has at least three distinct meanings in music technology, each at a different timescale. The

first meaning, given above, is the periodic measuring of an analog waveform's amplitude. In this sense, an individual sample represents an imperceptibly small amount of time. The second meaning is the act of recording single notes of musical instruments to be triggered later by MIDI messages. These are the samples forming sample libraries that are commonly used by composers to mimic the timbres of real instruments (…). The third meaning is drawn from hip-hop, in which a recognizable portion of an existing recording, such as several measures of music or a characteristic vocal sound, is used in the creation of a new song." (Hosken 2014, 73)

– "(1) Bezeichnung für die Umwandlung analoger in digitale Signale, die im Computer bzw. mit Sampling-Geräten weiter bearbeitet werden können. (2) Musikalische Gestaltungsweise mit Hilfe von digitalisierten Klangzitaten ('Samples')." (Von Appen 2014, 262)

– "Many authors who have considered sampling in their work acknowledge the fundamental stages of remix, which include: (1) the appropriation of an extant recorded artifact as source material; (2) the manipulation or editing of a sample from the source; and (3) the repurposing and recombining of the sampled element with other elements as part of a new remixed work." (Gallagher 2018a, 260)

– "To record (sound) digitally for subsequent electronic processing; to store (an excerpt of recorded sound) in digital form, esp. in order to reuse it, often modified, in a subsequent recording or performance. Also: to obtain an excerpt of (a musician, instrument, or piece of music) in this way." (Oxford 2018b)

– "The technique of digitally encoding music or sound and reusing it as part of a composition or recording." (Oxford 2019c)

III. Delimitation from Other Terms

(a) Remix

– "Der Begriff [Remix] dient ihm [Ma-

novich] – wie auch einem weiteren Verkünder der Remix-Culture Lawrence Lessig (s.u.) – eher als naives Etikett, um zwei Prinzipien zusammenzufassen: Erstens geht es um das Zusammenführen von Material aus unterschiedlichen Quellen, zweitens um die neue Option, dieses Material programmgesteuert zu bearbeiten. Mit dem ersten Aspekt ist das Prinzip des Samplens gemeint." (Großmann 2011, 116–17)

– "Sampling is the key element that makes the act of remixing possible. In order for Remix to take effect, an originating source must be sampled in part or in whole." (Navas 2012, 12)

– "Because of this attention to the activity or process of extraction, sampling has been distinguished from and situated as the antecedent to remixing, which is then characterized as the subsequent process of recombining these sampled fragments." (Gunkel 2016, 9)

– "Sampling plays a fundamental role in the creation of any remix; however, there are important distinctions between the two activities. Sampling is a precursor to remixing. It is an essential stage in the process towards producing a remix." (Gallagher 2018a, 261)

(b) Quotation, Collage, etc.

– "Traditional musical quotations typically cite works; samples cite performances." (Katz 2005, 141)

– "Obgleich Sampling keinen einheitlichen oder verbindlichen Begriff darstellt, ist er von Formen des Zitats, der Kopie, Replik, Appropriation oder Collage abzugrenzen." (Feuerstein 2004, 256)

– "Sampling bezeichnet ursprünglich die analoge und digitale Montage von Sound-, Text- und Bildeinheiten. Im gleichen Methodenfeld angesiedelt ist die Collage, die eher im historischen, oder zumindest im analogen Zusammenhang gebraucht wird und die mit einer haptischen Assoziation verknüpft ist. Der amerikanische Medientheoretiker und -künstler Mark Amerika bezeichnete Sampling als 'das digitale Äquivalent zur Collage'. Sampling

wird aber durch die Verbreitung von Computern Ende der Achtzigerjahre in vielen Editierprogramme nüchtern auf eine bestimmte Anwendung der Funktionen von 'cut und paste' reduziert und hat sich als etablierte technische Produktionsstrategie durchgesetzt." (Tollmann 2004, 292)

– "Wenn man das Zitat darüber bestimmt, dass an ihm immer schon etwas verstanden wird, dass es grundsätzlich verständlich, lesbar ist, lässt sich als Grundzug des Samples deshalb eine fundamentale Fremdheit annehmen. Das Sample ist fundamental etwas anderes, das hinzukommt." (Bonz 2006, 338)

– "Während Samples (…) erst mal eine Wiederholung des Signifikanten darstellen, sind Zitate der Versuch einer Wiederholung des Signifikats." (Sascha Kösch after Bonz 2008, 81)

– "[Sampling is] not 'quoting,' because (a) it's the mediated expression itself, not merely the ideas behind it, that's being used, and (b) the output often bears little or no resemblance to the input." (Sinnreich 2010, 124)

– "Sampling, as Mark Katz has noted, is a performative quotation because it 'recreates all the details of timbre and timing that evoke and identify a unique sound event.'" (Sewell 2013, 13)

– "Abgrenzung Sampling gegenüber Begriffen wie Zitat, Analogie, Adaption, Allusion, Fusion, Collage, Pastiche, Parodie durch eine 'doppelte Fremdreferenzialität'." (Döhl 2016, 14)

– "The term 'sampling,' in whatever mode it is operationalized, focuses attention on an act of cutting, extracting, citing, and/or recording. For this reason, it is this word, more so than 'collage,' for example, that has become the privileged term in discussions and debates about intellectual property law and ethics." (Gunkel 2016, 8–9)

(c) Recording

– "According to the basic definition of capturing material (which can then be re-sampled, re-recorded, dubbed and re-dubbed), sampling and recording are synonymous following their formal signification. (…) Recording is a form of sampling because it derives from the concept of cutting a piece from a bigger whole." (Navas 2012, 12)

– "Any piece of music that is recorded in a DAW, unless done so in one take with no overdubbing, is constructed from a collection of samples of varying length." (Morey 2017, 292)

– "Navas problematically equates the term «sampling» with «recording,» claiming that the two are synonymous, but associated with different time periods. The problem with this analogy is that Navas considers recording to be sampling 'from the world.' (…) The distinction between 'original recording' and 'sampling' is obvious, as they are two very different acts, the first being additive, that is, producing a new recording that did not exist before and the second being subtractive, taking a sample from something previously recorded." (Gallagher 2018b, 29)

IV. Alternative Terms and Terminological Critique

(a) Alternative I: Copy/Cut & Paste

– "Here I will concentrate upon means of exposing one's use of the digital cut-and-paste tool, and how this act in turn shapes music." (Brøvig-Hanssen 2010, 159–60) Brøvig-Hanssen only refers to the terminology of "sampling" when talking about the technical process of sampling: "The voice is sampled from…" (164)

– "To sample means to copy/cut & paste." (Navas 2012, 15)

– "Cut and paste becomes one of the fundamental organizing principles of how a musician engages with the interface of a DAW." (Strachan 2017, 102–21)

(b) Alternative II: Phonographic Work

– "Aufgezeichnete Klänge und – bereits gespielte – Musik auf der Medienebene neu zu gruppieren,

zu collagieren, zu neuen Strukturen mittels Schleifen und Überlagerungen zu verbinden, also das, was ich – mit Referenz auf die motivisch-thematische Arbeit der haydnschen Tradition – phonographische Arbeit nennen möchte, ist in der Mitte des 20. Jahrhunderts nicht nur neu, sondern bricht auf den ersten Blick mit Fundamenten westlicher Kunstmusik wie Autorschaft, Originalität, Autonomie und der Trennung von Werkidee, Notation und Ausführung." (Großmann 2015, 208)

(c) Critique I: "Digital" Sampling

– "These examples are meant to show that there is no simple connection between digital technology and the practice of sampling. With the exception of sampling1, all described versions of sampling may be carried out by either analogue or digital technology, and, on the other hand, the use of digital recording technology does not necessarily imply sampling as an aesthetic or artistic technique." (Kvifte 2007, 111)
– "Sampling is a somewhat slippery concept, and confusion is also caused by the assumption that it is a specifically digital process." (Harkins 2010b, 179)
– "I have chosen to use sampler and sampling rather than digital sampler and digital sampling because the latter terms appear to exist solely within academic writing on the subject and appear to be attempting to make an unnecessary distinction, because virtually all sampling is digital; where sampling has been achieved via a non-digital hardware or software medium, for example a tape machine, this will be identified." (Morey 2017, 107)

(d) Critique II: Collocating Verbs in Sampling Definitions

– "Sampling isn't 'taking,' because the source material is still available, intact, in its original form. It's not 'borrowing,' because the sampler doesn't ever return the work, except in a holistic sense. It's not 'quoting,' because (a) it's the mediated ex-

pression itself, not merely the ideas behind it, that's being used, and (b) the output often bears little or no resemblance to the input. Even the term 'expression,' which I use throughout this book, is something of a misnomer; etymologically, the word suggests the process of squeezing out something internal. Instead, sampling would more appropriately be termed 'respiration' – the absorption, alteration, and exhalation of something external and ubiquitous." (Sinnreich 2010, 124)

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This Track Contains Politics

The Culture of Sampling in Experimental Electonica

Hannes Liechti

What does it mean to process field recordings from the Ukrainian war in an electronic music track? How can the sampling of an Armenian keyboard melody be read as a critique of traditional gender roles? And what does it say about voyeurism in our culture when a techno producer uses viral YouTube videos as the basic material of his compositions?

Across five detailed case studies, Hannes Liechti discusses the culture and politics of musical sampling from a new perspective. Giving particular attention to the reasons behind sampling processes, Liechti's in-depth analysis of sampling strategies by artists such as COOL FOR YOU and Lara Sarkissian shows that sampling political material, and sampling with political intentions reveals a complex net of contexts, meanings, and often deeply personal choices and creative decisions.

Offering tangible tools and concepts for further exploration of sample-based music, the book illustrates the potential of popular music to tell stories about the world, and it describes the habits, thoughts, and realities of the laptop producer, one of the core actors in 21st century music-making.

Hannes Liechti
is a popular music scholar and lecturer living in Bern, Switzerland. He works as a curator and producer for the platform for music research Norient.

Liechti's careful study is a welcome and needed contribution to our understanding of sampling as a central practice in the production of music – and of meaning. Grounded in ethnographic fieldwork and focusing on poetics rather than reception, this book steers clear of interpretive speculation about what certain samples might mean. With analytical rigor and nuance, and a laudable focus on non-commercial productions spanning various styles, Liechti foregrounds producers' perspectives as he examines a range of approaches to "political" sampling. Going beyond questions of what is being sampled and how it has been processed, Liechti's work crucially addresses why certain producers deliberately link sampling to politics.

Wayne Marshall,
Berklee College of Music

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