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.
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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Style</th>
<th>Functions</th>
<th>Key Interpretations</th>
<th>Seismographic Substance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COOL FOR YOU “STABILIZED, YES!” (2017)</td>
<td>musical</td>
<td>constructive</td>
<td>communication conceptualization limitation recontextualization</td>
<td>commentary on post-colonial power relations expressing a tension of distance</td>
<td>inclusion and exclusion in subcultural communities harmonies as colonizing force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lara Sarkissian “kenats” (2016)</td>
<td>political</td>
<td>constructive</td>
<td>appropriation archiving inclusion of lived reality recontextualization simulation</td>
<td>political commentary on conventional gender roles expressing tensions of distance and musical taste creating a canon of Armenian culture</td>
<td>political implications and power relations in a musical tradition (Sacred Harp singing) sampling as a “democratic” tool of music production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moro “Libres” (2016)</td>
<td>environmental</td>
<td>constructive</td>
<td>aesthetic expression communication inclusion of lived reality recontextualization</td>
<td>political commentary on slave trade and migration combining different and complex levels of meaning</td>
<td>traces of lived experience: reperforming soundscape of protest, migration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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

### Table 12.1: Overview of the five case studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>media</th>
<th>media</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mode</td>
<td>non-political</td>
<td>driven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Style</td>
<td>aesthetic</td>
<td>hidden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(depoliticizing)</td>
<td>(aesthetic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functions</td>
<td>aesthetic expression limitation</td>
<td>aesthetic expression inclusion of lived reality limitation simulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretations</td>
<td>threefold process of concealment (sampling process, track, artistic biography) borrowing an abstract feeling</td>
<td>commentary on a feeling of data overload electronic music as a vehicle for the processing of (political) influences and impressions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seismographic Substance</td>
<td>treatment of social taboos voyeurism circulating media material as culture-making significance of online media for musical practice</td>
<td>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</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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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 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.”

An analysis of sample-based music must map the multiple functions relevant to each case as precisely as possible.
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 in the introduction of this book). The political was thereby understood as a signifier of the social. 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.

**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
The general field of communication is always relevant here. 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 Im-biß,” 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, as examined and summarized in this book. 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.

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
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).

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.

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?

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.

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
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) 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 esthetic 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,
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 Esthetic 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 esthetic 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.

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.