

SESSION 2 (Papers)

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The Crisis of Representation in Ethnomusicological Minority Studies

Over the past decade, debates on decolonizing ethnomusicology and related initiatives around equality, diversity and inclusion in academia at large have attempted to address the issue of representation of minority or marginalized communities. In music and dance research, discussion emerged as a result, led to affirmative actions, restructuring of funding, and inclusion initiatives with the Black Lives Matter movement, and further responses were publicized in the form of statements of condemnation/support, special formats and thematic foci at symposia. The efficacy of these responses, however, is debatable given that representation does not guarantee justice or fair practices.

Representation becomes not only a remedy to include everyone in an already dysfunctional system, but also a measure to replace a body with another body within the same exploitative structures. Given this situation, how are we, as music and dance scholars to ensure fairness and justice generally, and for the marginalized communities we work with in particular? How are we speaking and writing about others, how about ourselves? The paper addresses the contradictions implicated in working as academics with marginalized and exploited groups. Given the growing number of minority members in academic spaces, we question the binary between academia and “the field” and ask for alternatives to established practices of representation.

In this paper, the two authors reflect on their academic experiences working with minority communities such as the Burgenland Croats in Austria, asylum seekers in Austria and Dalits in India, aiming to further the theoretical and methodological discussions in ethnomusicological minority studies.

Bios

Marko Kölbl is Assistant Professor and Head of the Department of Folk Music Research and Ethnomusicology at the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna. He is specialized in music and dance of minorities and migrant communities, in particular Burgenland Croats and Afghan refugees in Vienna, with a focus on intersectional, queer-feminist and decolonizing perspectives. He serves as Chair of the ICTMD Study Group of Music, Gender and Sexuality.

Rasika Ajotikar is Junior Professor of Ethnomusicology at the Institute for Music and Musicology and the Center for World Music at the University of Hildesheim, Germany. Her research is on the musical landscape of anti-caste thought in modern western India. She is currently working on a monograph about anti-caste spheres to examine hereditary artisanship and its links with labour, art and emancipatory politics and issues surrounding censorship, state repression and incarceration of musicians. Rasika is also a singer trained in the North Indian classical music tradition.