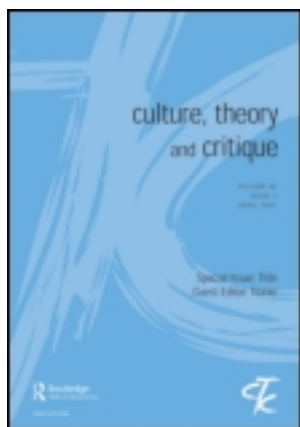


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Fields, Genres, Brands

Timothy D. Taylor

Abstract *Despite the music industry's attempts to genericise world music, it is not a genre, though it is nonetheless possible to talk about world music as a field of cultural production. There are identifiable forms of capital, such as the types of authenticities musicians are expected to sound and exhibit; and there are identifiable positions available to be taken, concerning the proximity of the musician's sound to western popular music, and, most prominently, the position of whether or not to sing in English or another major European language. This essay takes up the theoretical problem of genres and fields: What is the relationship between an industry-imposed genre and a field? How do forms of capital congeal in fields? In today's neoliberal capitalism, it is clear that the fields of power and economics are increasingly encroaching on all fields of cultural production, to the extent that some genres of music have become brands.*

Introduction

This essay continues my longstanding interest in 'world music', that body of disparate musics so named, at least popularly, in the late 1980s as retailers and DJs attempted to come to grips with the increasing amount of popular musics entering Europe and North America that sounded like western popular musics but weren't sung in English (see Taylor 1997). Beginning with that historical moment, the music industry has attempted to genericise world music so that it could be easily found in retail establishments (including digital ones such as iTunes), in music streaming applications such as Spotify, RDIO, and Google Play, in radio formats, and so that it could be mimicked by composers and studio musicians for use in broadcasting and advertising. The term 'world music' has caught on, even though many musicians have resisted it, finding it to be marginalising, even ghettoising (see Taylor n.d.a).

I have written at some length about the process of the genrification of world music (i.e. Taylor 2012 and Taylor n.d.b), but it wasn't until I attempted to write a detailed study of a particular musician's career in world music – Angélique Kidjo (Taylor n.d.a) – that I came to realise that, however messy world music might be as a genre (if one considers it to be a genre at all, which I do not), those who are relegated to it are faced with a number of positions, as in a Bourdieusian field of cultural production (Bourdieu 1993). And, clearly, there are forms of capital at play in the world music field. Can we

consider world music to be a field of cultural production if its generic qualities are not the result of the social and aesthetic debates and processes of musicians, but the profit-seeking imposition of a category on them by the music industry?¹

With this question, several more emerge: What is the relationship between an industry-imposed generic category and a field of cultural production? Where do forms of capital come from in such a field? Do forms of capital exist before there is a field for them in which to operate? If so, do they play a role in the formation of a field? The aim of this essay is to meditate on and attempt to address these questions and related issues of cultural production. Today's neoliberal capitalism has witnessed the increasingly sophisticated and pervasive encroachment of the economic field into various fields of cultural production (see Taylor n.d.a), so that there are different organisational logics at work, two 'emic', which relates to musicians and their practices and conceptions of genre and scene (though sometimes genre, as in the case of world music, is a category imposed by the music industry on musicians); the 'field', which is analytical, but captures the social logics at play; and, finally, the logic of the economic field, which in today's neoliberal capitalism is best represented by the complex processes of branding.² These logics can compete, even within the realm of the cultural industries. The music industry is increasingly seeking to profit from representing certain musicians and bands as brands, but at the same time, other cultural industries, particularly advertising, broadcasting, and film, exert pressures of genrefication, so that musics and musicians can be managed and placed wherever these latter industries want – in particular radio formats, for example.

Field theory and music

Bourdieu mainly considered fields of cultural production in two books (Bourdieu 1993 and 1996), though the concept of the field was common in his work and he used it to interrogate other realms such as politics, journalism, and education. According to Bourdieu, 'a field is a separate social universe having its own laws of functioning independent of those of politics and the economy' (1993: 162). Bourdieu refines and extends this point, using the literary field as an example (1993: 163), but then hastens to clarify that his conception of field is not the same as an artistic milieu, but, rather, 'the place of entirely specific struggles, notably concerning the question of knowing who is part of the universe' (1993: 163–164). Bourdieu never used the idea of the field to attempt to understand popular cultural production of any sort, instead focusing mainly on literature and the visual arts. Nonetheless, field theory has proven to be a powerful tool for understanding fields of cultural production, including large-scale fields.

¹For more on music and genre, see Brackett (2002 and 2005), Fabbri (1982), Frith (1996), Holt (2007), and Lena (2012).

²The scene (see Straw 1991 most importantly) encompasses musical production and other forms of production such as style, but will not be a focus of my investigation here.

For what follows, it is also important to remember that a field, whether or not of cultural production, needs to be thought of as a kind of force field that makes available some positions and not others and that it imposes them on those who enter it. It is also a battlefield on which social actors compete over what counts as capital and its distribution (Wacquant 1998). These struggles are important in constituting a field. These struggles mean that fields, like genres, have histories and are not fixed, though they can come to seem so. Fields emerge, disappear, wax and wane over time. Thus, an important aspect of the field is its degree of autonomy from the field of power, and the necessity of protecting itself from the incursions of other fields.

One issue, however, concerns the question of culture. Bourdieu was writing more from the perspective of a sociologist than an anthropologist (or ethnomusicologist), and his concern was more about the nature of individuals and society than individuals and culture. It is thus necessary to culturalise Bourdieusian practice theory, as Sherry B. Ortner (1996 and 2006) and William Sewell (2005) have been working toward. Ortner, for example, draws on a Geertzian conception of culture but updates it with practice theory. For her, culture is '(politically inflected) schemas through which people see and act upon the world and the (politically inflected) subjectivities through which people feel – emotionally, viscerally, sometimes violently – about themselves and the world' (Ortner 2006: 18). My concerns here are much the same.

Those students of music who have drawn on Bourdieu on the field have also offered useful critiques and updates, especially helping to make field theory more useful to those who study large-scale or mass fields of cultural production (Hesmondhalgh 2006). Notably, Jason Toynbee's contribution theorises creativity by updating Bourdieu on the question of the space of possibles, or the array of positions available to be taken, by adding another consideration, the likelihood of the selection of possibles. Prominent in this space, Bourdieu writes, is '[t]he hierarchy of genres, and within them the relative legitimacy of styles and authors' (1996: 89). Toynbee offers the notion of the 'radius of creativity', in which social actors hear possibles 'according to a) the perceptual schema of her/his habitus and b) its point of intersection with the creative field' (2000: 40). Toynbee believes that most possibles are clustered near the centre of the radius, and that they decrease in number as one moves out. Toynbee's main point is that not all possibles are equally likely to be chosen by musicians, that musicians' habitus, position-takings will point them in one creative direction rather than another.

Also relevant is sociologist Motti Regev's *Pop-Rock Music: Aesthetic Cosmopolitanism in Late Modernity* (2013), which employs a Bourdieusian framework to theorise what he calls 'aesthetic cosmopolitanism'. His term captures the complex processes today in which certain pop-rock musics (his first examples are Argentinean rock and Cantopop) are caught up in projects of nationhood and signification of the nation to its subjects (Regev 2013: 13). Regev makes it clear that he is not talking about 'cultural globalisation' or world music, but rather is concerned with pop-rock music around the world as a single field (2013: 23–24). However, his use of field theory in understanding the globalisation of popular musics is useful and I shall rely on it below.

Positions and forms of capital in the rock field

Before proceeding to a discussion of world music as a field, I want first to consider rock music. Here certain positions and forms of capital become salient, and become available to be deployed in the world music field, even though the rock field was more 'organic' than the world music field. By this I mean that, the rock field was the result of the workings of musicians with and against each other, and with and against the fields of power and economics as represented in certain quarters of the music industry, which itself contains people whose primary motivation is profit and others whose primary concern is artistic.

I begin at what might not to appear to be the most illuminating place, the rise of literature as art in the nineteenth century, which Bourdieu discusses in detail. In his examination of the 'conquest of autonomy' of the literary field in France in the nineteenth century, Bourdieu identifies historical phenomena such as the development of the press, Bohemianism, the invention of a new way of living, and the rupture with the bourgeoisie, as assisting the achievement of autonomy of the literary field. Bourdieu argues that the creation of a new position in a field can result in a new subject position more generally. For example, the rise of 'the pure aesthetic', the notion of art-for-art's sake, 'is inseparable from the invention of a new social personality', the great artist, a professional who is liberated from bourgeois norms (Bourdieu 1996: 111). The creation of the bohemian, anti-establishment, countercultural figure (to use later and perhaps more familiar terms) has resonated throughout western history and beyond since the nineteenth century, with members of subsequent generations finding their own way to live, their own social personality in their fields of cultural production. Since the nineteenth century, there have been structural oppositions to what was considered to be mainstream bourgeois culture in both Europe and the United States. An important and immediate precursor to rock musicians was the jazz musicians in the 1950s, some of whom viewed themselves as hip and their audiences as square (Becker 1982). Rock music ideologies emerged from this anti-bourgeois movement, associated with the Beats in the 1950s and continuing through baby boom counterculture in the following decade. Rock music, like literature in the nineteenth century, opposed itself to what was thought to be bourgeois, the Broadway and Tin Pan Alley composers of the day.

What counts as capital in the rock field as well as in the world music field is various forms of authenticity – though authenticity is a concept with many dimensions and something of a moving target. A variety of authenticities broadly understood can coalesce in a particular form in a particular field where they can become adapted and deployed as forms of capital. Authenticity is thus a kind of floating ideology that has congealed in various ways, in various fields, for decades.

Musicians in the rock field have historically deployed various authenticities as a way of demonstrating their autonomy from the broader field of popular music, in a manner similar to the restricted fields studied by Bourdieu. But if rock couldn't be made to appear to be separate from the market, it could at least be made to appear apart from that music that was the most transparent in its pursuit of financial success – pop. And rock could claim

to be anti-establishment, even as its (successful) musicians cashed large checks issued by the mainstream music industry. Rock's pretensions to being anti-establishment was accomplished through long and concerted attempts to establish a variety of authenticities, for they are several, usually conceptualised as binary oppositions against pop: rock is 'true', whereas pop is fabricated; rock is sincere, pop is, well, fabricated; rock singers believe in what they sing, whereas pop singers are merely performing for money; rock songs come from the heart, pop songs come from the desire to profit. Doubtless one could go on but the point, I hope, is made: rock in various ways attempted, as it continues to do, to distance itself from pop by relying on a number of ideologies of authenticity, authenticities that are familiar from students of the Beats, or earlier European bohemians.

Distancing itself from pop meant cosyng up to art. Rock musicians attempted, as many still do, to ally themselves with art – and, therefore, perceptions of its autonomy from commercial concerns – by tackling great themes, which they borrowed from folk musicians such as Pete Seeger (Frith 1983: 30); and by distancing themselves from their musical roots in various African American musics – utilising the familiar mind/body split to characterise African American musics as distinct from the artiness of rock, the former is danceable but not reflective enough to be considered art (Frith 1983: 20–21). Frith writes of the move toward individuality in rock music, spearheaded by Bob Dylan and Paul Simon, which meant that listeners were to focus not on emotional effects but literary ones (1983: 21). Rock lyrics increasingly became seen as poetry and, following the success of the Beatles and the Rolling Stones in the 1960s, other bands began to recognise the importance of writing their own songs. Originality became another important aspect of the rock music field, just as it had been for the previous couple of centuries in the various artistic fields. By the 1970s, the status of rock music was increasingly explained not as folk music, or countercultural music of youth, but as art. Today, it is clear that ideologies of art have taken hold quite strongly in the rock field. The language used to describe what many popular musicians do is a language of art: not just artist, but genius, masterpiece, and songwriting as creation. One can find these ideologies all over popular music but they occur in their most exalted – and protected – form in rock music.

As in most fields of cultural production, influential critics played an important role in helping to define and delimit the field, as well as its forms of capital. In the case of rock, critics interpreted the authenticities of rock and promulgated various ideologies of authenticity to their readers. Steve Jones and Kevin Featherly write of the different notions of authenticity in rock as articulated by Nat Hentoff, Robert Christgau, and Lester Bangs. For Hentoff, rock was about expression, it was 'fundamentally a release of feelings' (Jones and Featherly 2002: 33); for Christgau, rock's authenticity was located in its vitality and in its rejection of the values of other contemporary musics; and for Bangs, it was the brutally honest and grittiness of some rock that made it real, and important (2002: 34).³ Thus, the rock field, as Regev

³For more on the role of criticism and the ideologies of rock, see Atton (2009) and McLeod (2001). I am indebted to Eric Schmidt for these references.

points out, essentially created its own ways of interpreting and evaluating its products (2013: 61), in other words, creating its own field drawing on certain means of conferring prestige from the artistic fields. Influential publications, sections in weeklies such as *The Village Voice*, and knowledgeable and influential critics, all contributed not only to the establishment of the rock field as a field, but also to its mechanisms of the generation of prestige akin to that of art. The rock field devised its own ways of interpreting and evaluating its products, or, stated differently, it contributed to its constitution as a field by drawing on certain means of conferring prestige based upon the artistic fields.

The main axis of authenticity in rock music thus concerns assumptions about the music's autonomy from commercial concerns. These assumptions can only be held and maintained if rock musicians, critics, and fans work to authenticise rock music in the same way as art in a field of restricted production. Rock music is obviously commercial music, capitalist music, which means that authenticities and commonalities with restricted (artistic) cultural production are paramount. Regev identifies several means by which pop-rock musicians have attempted to claim autonomy: by ignoring the industrial nature of the production of the music and focusing on the music itself; by emphasising musicians and groups who work in the avant-garde sector of the field; and by playing with pop-rock conventions as a way of demonstrating creativity (Regev 2013: 72–75).

I would characterise the varieties of authenticity – which serve as the most important forms of capital – circulating in the rock field thus: authenticity as authorship (the musician really wrote his/her own songs) and authenticity of autonomy (the music/musician works against perceptions of being commercial, which seems to be less important in the post-grunge era). But it is not my aim here simply to offer a taxonomy of authenticities in the popular music field; such a list would always be incomplete and out of date, since, as I am arguing, not only are conceptions of authenticity always in flux, positions in a field are neither fixed nor stable, either. Rather, I want to argue that authenticities constitute some forms of capital in the rock (and world music) fields. But, as authenticity is, as I have said, a floating ideology, conceptions of authenticity can be illusory, can transform and be transformed endlessly. And different forms can combine or disarticulate.

Rock musicians, critics, and fans did not invent these authenticities. What congeals in a field as a form of capital is already circulating in the wider culture. It is a particular ideology, concept, idea, bias, that is captured for deployment in a particular field. That is, social actors in a field do not necessarily create the forms of capital that are available to them in a field, though they certainly inflect, shape, and interpret them. But these processes are directed at ideologies that are already known and circulating, finding specific uses in particular fields.

Some rethinking of Bourdieu's position on the question of the autonomy of the fields of cultural production is necessary at this point, since it is clear that a restricted field is not just an artistic one; forms of expression that make use of popular styles and genres can exist in restricted fields as well. One of the most important observations about the cultural industries in the last couple of decades is the trend toward production in small batches (see Harvey 1989), even at the same time as the major players pursue blockbusters.

Thus, it is important not simply to equate restricted fields with artistic production and large-scale with 'popular'.

There are also degrees of autonomy in any field. While it has been frequently noted that Bourdieu failed to pay much attention to mass-produced forms of culture, it needs to be pointed out that he similarly paid scant attention to the economic field as it relates to the fields of large-scale production. If, for him, the field of restricted production was 'the economic world reversed', the field of large-scale production was, by inference, simply the opposite. A restricted field is not automatically autonomous from the fields of power and economics, and individual actors in large-scale fields can experience different relationships from the fields of power and economics. There are many strategies, or, rather, positions and position-takings to be found in the economic field of large-scale production; there is a dynamism in both the restricted and large-scale fields between degrees of autonomy and degrees of encroachment of the economic field. In the large-scale fields, one can seek mass success, or success in a niche market, or engage in multiple projects over time that have variable relationships to the fields of power and economics, as do some film directors who move between the fields of Hollywood and independent film (see Ortner 2013). And there are many well-known examples of individual musicians or bands achieving great financial success and then using that success to negotiate a greater level of independence from their record label and thus, the fields of economics and power. Some stars in the rock field, because of their success in the economic field, can become less mindful of it, and they can produce music that is stylistically more adventurous, more like what is heard in restricted fields.

Thus, while Bourdieu defines the fields of restricted and large-scale production by their degree of autonomy from the economic field, it is necessary to point out that some sectors of the field of large-scale production have historically had some degree of autonomy from the economic field, depending in part on the genre (the pop field is believed to be more about making money than the rock field, as I have said), and on the status of the individual musician or band. What is clear today, however, is that this variable degree of autonomy is diminishing as the realms of 'commerce and content' (as they are increasingly characterised) come closer together (see Taylor 2009).

It is also the case that fields are not immune from external pressures. The music (or other culture) industry can exert powerful forces on listeners' perceptions of music. The music industry enforces the rock category as an overwhelmingly white and male 'genre'. For example, even though there are plenty of women and people of colour who aspire to be included in it (see Mahon 2004), the music industry has engaged in racist practices of segregating sound (Miller 2010) for nearly a century. Additionally, fans' discourses and expectations can motivate or prohibit particular behaviours by musicians that can affect perceptions of a musician's claim to authenticity, and fans' perceptions of it. Fans want to see musicians exerting themselves onstage, working, not indifferent, which can contribute to impressions of a musician's authenticity and thus, possession of a form of capital.

World music as a field of cultural production

According to Bourdieu, genres are created in fields. But what if a 'genre' is an invention of a cultural industry that is imposed on cultural producers? All music genres – at least, all those that the music industry pays attention to – are managed by that industry through a system of media (Negus 1999: 29), as well as critics and retailers, whether bricks-and-mortar or online. World music is such an invented, imposed, 'genre', which, in this case, led to the creation of a field. While I don't believe that world music is a genre (like the classical music non-'genre', it is composed of many disparate musics), we can nonetheless observe its constitution as a field, and we can examine this process to ask questions about the role played by musicians, the music industry, and fans and critics, as well as raising questions about how 'possibles' may circulate in a space that is still under construction. I am also interested in what role forms of capital may play in the formation of a field. All of these are complex questions, however. A musician who chooses to attempt to be placed in the world music field instead of a different field has taken a position. But it is more often the case that a world music artist attempts to place him- or herself in a field other than the world music field but the music industry nonetheless consigns them to it.

In the world music field, autonomy continues to matter, perhaps more so than in the rock field, which was more organic and not imposed from above; the rock authenticities at play in the world music field are also forms of capital (see Frith 1991). In the world music field, as in, I would argue, any field, there can be frequent complications and confusions over just what is a form of capital and what is a position and position-taking. A musician who is seen to possess a certain type of authenticity can augment or undermine it with a position-taking (I shall discuss this more below). In the world music field, authenticities and positions are mainly about language and sound.

Even though authenticities in the world music field matter greatly, perhaps the most important position concerns the choice of language. Record labels and radio stations in the early days of world music were leery of non-English lyrics. The language question is frequently a difficult one for musicians, who don't want to alienate their original audiences, but who often want to attract and cultivate bigger ones. Youssou N'Dour said early in his career, 'We've printed the lyrics to some of the songs on the album covers, and if people are interested, maybe I can add some English words later' (Hudson 1988: 25). Today, some musicians project translations on screens at their live shows.

Most world music artists must grapple with the question of what language to sing throughout their performing lives. Angélique Kidjo, for example, has taken a number of positions in her career. Early on, she said,

I talked about the idea of having English lyrics with a few people but we didn't think my music could take it. Take the words out and put in English lyrics and it won't sound the same. It will be completely new. My voice is very rhythmic, like an instrument. Take it away and you're losing an important part. (Sutton 1994)

A couple of years later, when discussing her album *Fifa* (1996), her position was more indulgent. 'I do what pleases me. I do the music I like. I don't know if it's going to be English or French or some African dialect. Music is music, it's all about communication' (Brand 1996: 10). A couple of years later, her position had altered again: 'Music is about expression. It doesn't ask for color or language. I perform music that speaks to me and that is in my heart. Most music critics have never set foot in Africa. How would they know what African music is really like?' (Oppelt 1998: 1). Kidjo articulated what is her current position in 2006, when asked about how she decides which language to sing in:

Most of the time, it is the music itself. If I wake up in the morning and the music that I have is still in my head, I have to sing it. When I started singing in Benin, I sang music in the indigenous language, of course. But I also sang in Cameroonian and Zairian languages, and many other languages from Africa but I copy them phonetically. And then you have English too, and Spanish and Portuguese, and many different languages. The thing that matters to me is the beauty of the song, how it makes me feel happy and how I can give it back to people. (Baah 2006)

I chronicle these shifting position-takings not to make Kidjo appear fickle about language or incapable of adhering to a single position, but to show, rather, just how complex and changing the world music field is – as are all fields of cultural production, which by definition are constantly in flux – and how the world music field can change as the market changes, and as the musician's fame, and thus, clout in the industry, changes. Kidjo's position-takings demonstrate how she negotiates the shifting field of cultural production of world music.

In *Global Pop* (Taylor 1997), I identified and discussed three forms of authenticity I believed were circulating around world music at that time: authenticity of positionality, emotionality, and primality. The first refers to western expectations that a world music artist come from poverty, oppression, or a pre-modern life or hardship in general. The second, emotionality, refers to expectations that world music artists articulate their supposed hard life experiences in their music: it is supposed to be raw, real. And authenticity of primality refers to western expectations that world music artists were closer to nature, closer to the earth. To a certain degree, these authenticities have waned since the rise of the 'world music' term in the music industry in the late 1980s – waned, or became more closely affiliated with authenticities in the field of rock music. Most musicians in the world music field still need to demonstrate their autonomy, real or not, from popular music and the fields of power and economics, and they thus employ different forms of authenticity to accomplish this. World music artists need to include enough (but not too much) sounds of otherness to make it audibly clear that they are Others in the world music category. If they sound too 'Other', too exotic, they won't find an international audience, which many seek. If they sound too American or European, they run the risk of accusations of seeming to have sold out to commercial interests and betraying their heritage.

Authenticity as sound is therefore really a set of authenticities. Musicians can derive substantial amounts of capital from various kinds of authenticities-as-sound they are seen to possess. A musician from a region known for music possesses capital; a musician from a well-known family of musicians can possess capital; in some kinds of music, a musician who has won a prize, as in the All-Ireland competitions on various Irish traditional instruments, possesses capital; a musician who sings or plays in a particularly notable local or regional style possesses capital; a musician who is from a remote village can possess capital as a result of others' assumptions of her distance from the modern world. 'Traditional' can also be signified by the use of non-western instruments, or even instruments that are unusual in western popular musics. Musicians can take positions to sound 'traditional', in whatever sense that may be for her own background (but, perhaps more importantly, western expectations of what traditional is), and how much to sound like western popular music. And musicians can also take a position to employ a producer who could add sounds or manipulate sounds to render musician's work more or less 'traditional', or more or less popular. High production values can signify a greater level of westernisation. Forms of capital and the variety of positions available in a field thus exist in a complex and occasionally volatile dynamic.

What generally changes only rarely is the musician's singing style, which is the main sonic signifier of his/her otherness, his/her non-poppiness. To alter one's singing style would be the surest sign that the singer is attempting to jettison some form of authenticity. The sound of the singing voice is the single most important sonic signifier of a world music artist's authenticity as a non-western Other – it is not altered, even if the singer sings in English.

Lastly, there is also politics. While western audiences no longer expect rock musicians to articulate anti-establishment themes as a matter of routine, it is still the case that rock is assumed to be anti-establishment; rock musicians no longer have to articulate a politics in their music to be thought of as rebellious. Non-western musicians, however, seem to be taken more seriously if they sing about politics in their work (Taylor 2004). In a sense, this is part of the 'authenticity of positionality' I discussed in *Global Pop* (Taylor 1997): the musician is a 'real' postcolonial subject, a real victim of apartheid, a real neocolonial subject, a real victim of sexism or misogyny, a real victim of neoliberal economic policies, or a subaltern or even a victim in some other sense.

Brands

So far I have been attempting to sort out the relationships between genres and Bourdieusian fields of cultural production, particularly with respect to world music. In the rock and world music fields of cultural production, various ideologies of authenticity are constantly circulating and can be captured for use in a particular field. Positions can be created by actors in fields, or imported from other, pre-existing fields. Fields of cultural production in Bourdieu's sense are becoming increasingly influenced, even dominated, by the economic field in the neoliberal capitalism of the last few decades. Fields are made in complex social systems in which a number of fields operate – the

fields of power and economics most importantly; fields of cultural production operate in and sometimes against these fields. Fields, possibles, positions, forms of capital, and more, emerge from a complex dynamic in which these fields interact with others. But what if the fields of power and economics begin to become so dominant that the dynamic shifts in their favour? What if a field is decreasingly, or no longer, 'a separate social universe having its own laws of functioning independent of those of politics and the economy' (Bourdieu 1993: 162)?

In today's neoliberal capitalism, I would argue that the rising hegemony of the economic field has led to the growing dominance of the strategy of branding, which is a process participated in by both musicians and those who represent them. The organising and organisational logic of the field is sometimes infiltrated not merely by the economic field, but by that field's most culturalised and affect-laden expression, the brand. The function and importance of brands has changed throughout the history of manufacturing, packaging, and marketing (see Moor 2007), moving from simple identifying packaging and logos to what we have in neoliberal capitalism today: the brand as the symbol that encapsulates everything positive that its manufacturer wants consumers to think, and as something that not only possesses value, but is capable of generating value. The ideology of the brand introduces new possibles, new positions that are concerned with the economic more than anything else.

Sarah Banet-Weiser observes that branding today isn't simply a business model, but an ideology that both draws on and produces social and cultural relations (Banet-Weiser 2012: 4). Thus, the ideology, discourse, and language of branding have become so commonplace that they shape considerations of a particular musician's sound and image. Conformity to conceptions of a musician's brand can be more important than that of sound or genre. Musicians still care about genres and fields, of course, but their desires might not survive the aspirations of those who represent them, their record labels, and even the musician's own quest for success in a crowded commercial marketplace. Competing for recognition today increasingly requires a strategy of branding. Questions of brand(ing) have been important for a long time, but I believe that they may be beginning to become dominant, superseding all other organisational logics in neoliberal capitalism.

Not surprisingly, there is a vast literature on branding in the advertising and marketing literature, a literature that offers advice on how to add value to one's product through branding. Alina Wheeler, for example, refers to 'brand' without a definite or indefinite article (a common practice in the advertising and marketing industries when a particular concept or phenomenon is given importance and its own agency). She begins her book on the brand with a consideration of 'What is brand?':

As competition creates infinite choices, companies look for ways to connect emotionally with customers, become irreplaceable, and create lifelong relationships. A strong brand stands out in a densely crowded marketplace. People fall in love with brands, trust them, and believe in their superiority. How a brand is perceived affects its

success, regardless of whether it's a start-up, a nonprofit, or a product. (Wheeler 2009: 2)

Wheeler argues that brands have three main functions: helping consumers navigate in a crowded marketplace, reassuring them of the quality of the product and the correctness of their purchase choice, and engaging consumers with 'distinctive imagery, language, and associations to encourage customers to identify with the brand' (2009: 2). Wheeler contrasts 'brand' with 'brand identity', which, she says, is related to the question of engagement:

Brand identity is tangible and appeals to the senses. You can see it, touch it, hold it, hear it, watch it move. Brand identity fuels recognition, amplifies differentiation, and makes big ideas and meaning accessible. Brand identity takes disparate elements and unifies them into whole systems. (2009: 4)

In a very real sense, then, the creation of a brand and the branding process are ways of personalising a product in the sense that a brand can become almost a friend with its own characteristics and qualities.

Nowhere in the ethno/musicological literature is the process of the creation of a brand and brand identity clearer than in Louise Meintjes's illuminating book (2003) on the production of mbaqanga music in South Africa, where studio decisions are made based on conceptions of the South African musical brand more than anything else. Music produced in the South African studio she studied was clearly conceptualised as a commodity – something made to be exchanged in an international market – but, as Meintjes shows, producers and musicians work diligently to produce an identifiable set of sounds that signify the South African musical brand. Meintjes writes of the studio as a space of 'creative elaboration' and 'commodity standardization', which augments and thins out mbaqanga style. This, she writes, results in a unique authenticity: 'on the one hand, mbaqanga is black music made within the context of a power-contested (white) state; on the other, it is a circulateable, repeatable, sensuously flowing icon of blackness, embodied in voices, languages, and grooves and in their concomitant material signs' (Meintjes 2003: 105). The I would like to emphasise here is that this process produces mbaqanga as a music that is not just made by real people with their own politics and interpersonal relations in a real place, but as a South African musical brand.

But brands do not supplant commodities (see Lash and Lury 2007), or ideas that musicians themselves have about their music as a style or genre. They co-exist, and not always in an easy relationship. Meintjes writes,

In composing and recording music in the studio, the music-makers are self-consciously fashioning a particular image of themselves for a domestic and world music market. In terms of the desired international market, they are fashioning an image in sound and visual presentation of an African Other. It is an African Other emplaced in South Africa. For the domestic market, they are carving out a regional and ethnically specific niche . . . (2003: 161)

What Meintjes is describing is still a field of cultural production – and a fairly restricted one at that – but it is a field that produces musical brands, at least for the international market. Positions in the field of mbaqanga become positions about the making (or unmaking) of the South African mbaqanga brand.

This is an example of how musicians and producers in studios can conceptualise their labour and sound as a brand. Record labels have a great influence on branding processes as well. Early recordings of world music, and books about it, tended to feature crazy fonts, many bright colours, and occasionally ‘primitive’ art styles, all as a way of emphasising what was thought to be the fun and playful aspect of world music. The many releases by Putumayo provide the best example of this iconographic strategy of the construction of the celebratory aspects of world music (see Feld 2000).

Branding for musicians and types of music has thus become important in neoliberal capitalism in a number of ways. Musicians can also take advantage of efforts made by their home countries by participating in country branding (one of Wheeler’s types of branding). Countries are increasingly branding themselves as a way to increase tourism, lure businesses, and more. Miriam Makeba might have been the Voice of South Africa during the apartheid era, but today, as South Africa continues to attempt to improve its international reputation after apartheid by, for example, hosting the World Cup as it did in 2010, the Voice of South Africa is much more likely to be the branded sound produced in studios such as that studied by Meintjes. Critics can play a role in the branding process as well, championing one musician over another, one sound over another, proclaiming a particular musician’s sound or style to be better or more authentic than another, commenting on musicians’ popularity or record sales as a way of demonstrating his or her discernment in order to generate capital for themselves in the world music field (see Taylor n.d.c). As some musics are genericised, they can increasingly become viewed as brands; and some particularly capacious ‘genres’ such as world music can become what I shall call brand warehouses. ‘World music’ is a brand warehouse that contains other brands such as ‘Gypsy’ or ‘Celtic’ music. The latter is signified through displays of green, Celtic crosses, and faux-‘Gaelic’ fonts.

Once a musician or music or genre is branded, different conceptions of authenticity can come into play, thus changing the forms of capital operating in a field. Musicians aren’t necessarily held to those standards of authenticity as discussed above, but to the expectations listeners have to a brand image of a music or sound or place or ethnicity. It matters not if what is labelled ‘Celtic’, for example, has any real connection to Ireland, Wales, Brittany, the Isle of Man, or Cornwall (the ancient Celtic nations), only that sound and image correspond to what consumers expect the Celtic brand to be. Music is increasingly produced for market expectations of brand conformity more than musical or generic expectations. I am not arguing here that the logic of the brand has replaced the logic of the genre as conceived by musicians or the field as theorised by Bourdieu in some wholesale, across-the-board fashion, or that musicians’ own beliefs about genre no longer matter. But it is clear that all cultural production in neoliberal capitalism is increasingly implicated in, and subservient to, the workings of capital, and this development cannot be

without profound ramifications, in which the making of fields and genres on the ground face growing pressures of genrefication and branding from above.⁴

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⁴Bourdieu himself was concerned with the threats to the autonomy of the artwork (see the postscript in Bourdieu 1996 and 2001).

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