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## **Vienna Street Heroes – Black Music in Parks**

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### **Introduction**

All young people need to be with their peers. They seek to meet, and it is most important to see and be seen (scene). Special and very visible groups are adolescents who spend most of their time in parks and public space and places. These teenagers are regarded here as marginalised by society due to several reasons, belonging to low-income families and non-access to costly leisure time activities included. Most come from 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generations after working migration which started roughly 40 years ago, when officially recruited people came to Austria from Yugoslavia and Turkey.

Adolescents in parks are either still enrolled at school<sup>1</sup> (15ys), or in unskilled or low-skilled jobs, often at society's margins, or unemployed, and are faced with increasing economic pressure due to a deteriorating employment situation, putting many of them into precarious jobs and unemployment. Their situation is also dependent from their families': migrant communities and groups are in diversification processes, and thus are found in a much wider range of economic positions, from deprived/broken to new middle classes, mainly entrepreneurs.

These young people, while inevitably feeling the economic pressure, act according to their means: they leave their often small homes and acquire considerable social and cultural skills by using public space and places for meeting, playing, sports, dancing, and sexual activities.

### **Parks**

The old working-class districts (2, 3, 5, 10, 11, parts of 12, 14 and 15, 16, 17, and 20) are crowded, due to cheap old private housing and also many old public housing buildings which have very small and therefore cheap apartments, and are main neighbourhoods of former guestworkers and the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generations after migration. The parks are, although often small and not very attractive, important spaces for meeting and enjoying the open; while often deserted during days and also in winter, on summer evenings it gets really crowded, many people from the neighbourhood spending their leisure time outside.

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<sup>1</sup> Compulsory up to 15 ys; many go to schools for special demands, where they are sent due to language deficits; school attendance among park kids is low, and decreases with age, many quit going soon, also due to lacking motivation and lacking perspectives; however, school usually ends at noon.

Adolescents meet in the parks and smaller greens, many spend most of their time outside. Groups are mostly mixed, mainly boys and young men; bigger groups split in smaller units, depending on the occasion. There are no park kids on their own, all are known and socialised in one or the other group. Girls are in smaller, more often changing groups, at the margins, sometimes more intensively, then again they do not come at all.

Fenced-in playgrounds and football-cages, around 500 in Vienna, were erected in parks since the 1970s. Cages are male adolescents' main areas of congregation, due to street soccer and streetball facilities. Basketball superstars Michael Jordan and Magic Johnson impressed youth in Vienna by the middle of the nineties and sparked a Basketball hype in the parks which resulted in the installation of baskets in most cages, and basketball or streetball competitions accompanied by HipHop beats played by DJs in the park.

Parks and cages as meeting places became increasingly important with growing numbers of teenagers from migrant families, roughly around the end of the 1980s. The first larger congregation, coming into existence as self-defense against politically right-wing oriented 'original' Austrian youngsters, were the Red Brothers whose numbers exceeded one hundred mainly congregating at the Reumannplatz. Park and cage attendance further got stronger, and by 1997, could be termed a movement, including many various groups and approaches. Parks/cages increasingly served as spatial placement, and stayed so for people socialised in the park, many still meeting in 'their' park or cage up to their twenties<sup>2</sup>.

The most contested spaces are the soccer cages, as various groups might fight for dominance there (age, nationality, sex, open or closed groups, sports interests). Cages are jealously guarded by their users. While younger groups might eventually be granted one or the other hour of football, foreign groups are perceived as intruders and quickly forces are joined to throw them out. Exclusion, fission, fusion and transformation processes take place. But always among already park-socialised groups who might eventually leave the cage and park and move to another park, or go on fighting, or manage to build up new groups from the old ones who then share the space. Fighting periods do not last very long, although they might result in serious injuries and also frustration among kids. Established groups can co-exist while maintaining their space, e.g. basketball groups are tolerated by soccer groups.

Contested spaces are also the parks and cages *as such*; complaints from the neighbourhood and from hassled and/or blackmailed or robbed children and teenagers; groups who lay claim on certain parks, for example the newer rap groups who heavily rely on 'their' space, bringing these images into media and producing strange and unreal estimations transported via community tv, youtube, cd covers, and newspaper articles. But also re-buildings and building of subterranean garages under them; worsening park equipment; cages locked at night by security companies, often resulting in fights and quarrels; police raids, enemy groups 'visiting', and the special ways of concurring for youth-work-free space, especially where petty criminal and drug user and pusher structures are building up: parks are also intersections with crime and areas of recruitment into illegal activities.

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<sup>2</sup> See e.g. short film "Der Freund" by Muzaffer Hasaltay, showing two men's fatal meeting in 'their' former cage, Vienna 2007

Groups from parks and cages also appear in the media, in recent years especially following news on revolts in French Suburbia. Reporters like to make use of publicly funded youth work to find deviant/criminal/rioting groups; Stuart Hall's remarks on "Black Men, White Media"<sup>3</sup> are quite accurate here: Male adolescents screaming 'we want weapons and sex' into the tv cameras (= no adequate articulation, no middle class values<sup>4</sup>), or nice, 'good' teenagers who speak of their luck of being here in Austria (=representing their communities<sup>5</sup>).

## **Musical Youth**

Adolescents in Viennese parks are acquainted with music, have their main singers, bands, groups, favoured musical styles, as consumers and dancers, many also start to produce music, and there are many who wish to make a living out of that interest and talent.

Szatmary<sup>6</sup> analyses how, in the USA, 'by the mid-1950s, the baby boomers had become an army of youngsters who demanded their own music', (Szatmary:xiv), how technological advances have "provided the teens the opportunity to listen to their favorite songs in the privacy of their rooms, at school, or on the streets" and the entwining with development of the music industry, while at the same time, "rock music has been rebellious" (Szatmary:xv).

From these days on, popular music takes on a prominent position for most adolescents regarding identification possibilities and socialisation. Rhythm and words, special chords and refrains get analysed in detail and accepted or rejected quite clearly. Occupation with music is done alone or in the (peer) group.

As for park kids, there is a wide range of music which is consumed and produced; depending on the general approach to life (e.g. closed or open groups, cosmopolitan or nationalist attitudes). Most kids are also listening to, or are at least acquainted with, music and styles of their and their families' (former) homelands (Turkish and Balkan folklore, Bangra, Arabesk and R'nBesk, Balkan and Turk pop, Rock, love songs, etc.).

Raza came from Karachi when he was 12. He goes to the park to play basketball. His feelings, attitudes towards living in Vienna are: 'me, with a different culture' ... 'would have to adapt' ... 'feel like a Paki' ... 'Austrian parents would not accept him because he is Muslim, they're not acquainted with that' ... His music: Bangra with hip-hop beats; he frequents bangra parties in Vienna, also in the USA where he stayed for one year. And: Hip-Hop. Raza likes to DJ at parties in the park, although he thinks that the other kids are 'Tschuschn' (degrading word for 'work migrant', mainly from Jugoslavia) and don't understand the music he plays<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Hall, Stuart, 'Black Men, White Media', in Savacou, Journal of the Caribbean Artists Movement, vol 9/10, 1974

<sup>4</sup> „The media favour the articulate – whereas blacks are relatively un-articulate, and their anger and frustration often out-runs the terms of polite debate” Hall 1974

<sup>5</sup> „When the debate does surface, it is virtually impossible to hear any but a handful of middle class blacks – like me- and spokesmen for the black community (...) speaking for the rest.“ Hall 1974

<sup>6</sup> Szatmary, David P., Rockin' In Time. A Social History of Rock-and-Roll, 1991. Preface, pp xiii-xvii

<sup>7</sup> Interview, June 2003

Kemal came from Turkey when he was two or three years old. His home, he thinks, is Vienna rather than Turkey, but he feels like a foreigner. He visited Turkey in 2002 and again felt like a foreigner there. He speaks Turkish with his family, but also German with his younger sister. His music: Hip-Hop, but he does not listen to the words, he is not interested in the texts. Also Turkish music, mixed. Arabesk and Türk pop. Most important for him: BreakDance, he has a crew (with Sumal, Slobo, Sasa, the bionic b-boys). He frequents several youth centers, and parks, also apartments of friends<sup>8</sup>.

Several DJs from the park crowd started DJing in youth centers, playing charts r'n'b and mtv hiphop to the attending teenagers, and eventually moved on to 'ethnic' clubs (Serbian *Jedinstvo* for very young teenagers, followed-up for older adolescents and adults by Serbian *Nachtwerk* with money-shower, own parking-lot and striptease; Turkish *Bodrum* nights), a quickly developing scene also fostered by and bringing about cultural and economic diversification of migrant populations (new middle classes, ethnic entrepreneurship, culture production) and which are segregated from older Viennese HipHop scenes and even more from mainstream student-middle class party and concert scenes into which the formerly independent and lively Viennese popular and underground musical universe has developed.

Many park kids share the wish to become a musician, 'normal' grown-ups who they are acquainted with seem dull and frustrated. A career as a musician is attractive as chances to find a 'regular' job are on the wane. It seems, and most probably also is, a lot easier to become a singer or musician than, e.g., to attend high school.

Various accesses to music, occasions and chances for gigs are taken on full-heartedly by many, in smaller and even larger settings: rap- and beatboxing battles, singing (alone or with a group), karaoke, bands, folklore dances. Some adolescents are trained musicians (clarinette, drums, keyboards, saz), sometimes engaged to play, especially at life-cycle festivities of their communities (wedding parties, community festivals).

Adrian Gaspar is a wunderkind from Bulgaria who moved to Vienna to attend the Musikgymnasium, an important institution as many children of the Wiener Philharmoniker and other famous orchestras go there and it is a step into a career as a musician.

Adrian, then 18, has put together the orchestra from school colleagues and friends from the park, all of them Roma, most from Macedonia and, in Vienna, home-based in Hundsturm Park in Margareten. There are about 50 musicians, and they play a mix from various musical styles in a very professional and also lively way which might be described as Balkan Big Band sound with Bossa Nova, Tango, Jazz, also classical and Rock elements. The park-based musicians learned their instruments on their own. Erhan's father is a clarinet player as well, who trained him. Erhan had park gigs since 1999 with his friends, they called themselves Die kleinen Talente (the little talents). Their formation was part and parcel of their self-organised Hundsturmpark-Fest which took place yearly from 2002 onwards and which was a

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<sup>8</sup> Interview, June 2003

community-oriented neighbourhood party mainly attracting Macedonian Roma and most park kids from Margareten<sup>9</sup>.

Sumal Fernando came from Sri Lanka as a 12-year old with his father; his grandfather was a famous musician in Sri Lanka, his father plays guitar, and Sumal is a drummer. Sumal found friends in the park, and they later formed a breakdance crew (bioninc b-boys). Their approach to life is an open one, their park group was large, up to fifty adolescents gathered, all sharing an open view and economic pressure as well. Sumal plays with his father in a reggae band in Austria, the Jayasiri. Reggae is also famous in Sri Lanka in the touristic villages such as Hikkaduwa. Sumal goes on tour with the band, they have been to Canada, Paris, Italy, and all over Austria. They play at Reggae festivals and large parties. Not much money comes in though, and Sumal is dependent on other jobs. He is 22 and still meets his friends in their park, although he (and the others) have moved to live somewhere else. His jobs are precarious and never for long; he needs to leave if the band has a gig somewhere, and he does not want to miss that or leave the band<sup>10</sup>.

Music from 'back-home-countries', be it Balkan folklore and pop, be it Turkish Arabesk, Rock, and pop has always been there as well; for the Turkish cage boys especially Arabesk (very sad and pessimistic songs; the texts used to deplore the people's suffering in a more political way, in the Sixties and Seventies, but have been substituted by solely addressing matters of hopeless love which might also, traditionally and ceremonially, include cutting one's skin with knives or razorblades, mostly across the breast). Cage boys might have been, until today, the ones least interested in black music and its many forms, especially Turkish boys, probably due to the special and important position music and text has in Turkey's culture, enclosing Sufi poetry and mystic and philosophical questions. But in the last years, Rap has been produced in Istanbul, especially Ceza is very well known in Vienna, he has also played a gig in a large cage in 2006 (Into the City, produced by high-culture festival Wiener Festwochen).

But music is hardly only a teenage pastime. The huge domain of popular music is business, profession, money, production, entertainment; most people involved are adults. Youth culture which is connected to a special music might serve as entry ticket for some, and popular music culture becomes home, and stays so, for life.

Experiences connected to music may become experiences which change someone profoundly<sup>11</sup>, especially if they include resistance. These are identity-forming processes, as Gupta/Ferguson (p18-20) argue with Foucault<sup>12</sup>, and especially so, I want to add, if people become creative themselves in one or the other way.

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<sup>9</sup> Interview; concert Adrian Gaspar Orchestra, opening night of Balkan Fever Festival, April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2006

<sup>10</sup> acquaintance since 1999

<sup>11</sup> see Gupta, Akhil and Ferguson, James (Eds), Culture Power Place. Explorations in Critical Anthropology, 1997. 'Culture, Power, Place: Ethnography at the End of an Era,' pp 1-29, Resistance pp 17-25

<sup>12</sup> Gupta, Akhil and Ferguson, James (Eds), Culture Power Place. Explorations in Critical Anthropology. Foucault, Michel, Der Wille zum Wissen. Sexualität und Wahrheit 1, 1983. Gupta/Ferguson cite from The History of Sexuality. Vol. 1, An Introduction, 1978.

## Black Music

Brian Ward, in his book 'Its Just My Soul Responding' (which analyses Rhythm and Blues, comprising r'n'b, pop, soul, funk and disco among others)<sup>13</sup> gives us a model for placing popular music – and thus, music important for park kids – between affirmation and challenging of mainstream culture, and helps us to explain the countering implications.

Stuart Hall tells us, in his article 'Was ist "schwarz" an der populären schwarzen Kultur?'<sup>14</sup>, how black popular culture has – even in mainstream-culture – brought to surface elements of a differing discourse, other ways of life, other traditions of representation. Style itself has become subject, and people of the black diaspora have found in music the 'Tiefenstruktur ihres kulturellen Lebens' – the deep structure of their cultural life in opposition to logocentric world (where they have been excluded). As a third feature Hall puts 'how these cultures treat the body – as if it was the only cultural capital (which it often was)'. Hall closes by reminding us how popular culture, 'being commodity-like and stereotyped (...), is not the field where we find out who we really are, but rather a mythical field, a theater of popular desire and popular fantasies. It is the place where we discover our identifications and play with them, where we become imaginised, pictured, not for the public outside who do not understand the message, but for ourselves for the first time.' (p 110, translated from German by dm).

David Szatmary, in 'Rockin' in Time'<sup>15</sup>, 'shows the importance of African-American culture in the stylistic development of rock music', and how 'the new rock styles many times coincided with and reflected the struggle of the African-Americans for equality' (p xiii).

Ben Sidran in his book 'Black Talk'<sup>16</sup>, speaks about black music as oral communication which is crucial to black culture. He suggests that 'music is not only a reflection of the values of black culture but, to some extent, the basis upon which it is built.' xxi. As music 'is one of the more legitimate outlets for black actionality – indeed, during various periods of black history, it has been the only outlet – it follows that black musicians have traditionally been in "the vanguard group" of black culture.' (Sidran:6).

But there have always been two strains in black popular music, maybe edutainment / entertainment (Gächter:136<sup>17</sup>), or Africa Bambaataa's approach vs. Dr Dre, or commercialised / anti-commercial, yet all share being popular cultures of oppressed groups which, so Brian Ward, "usually contain within them – explicitly or implicitly – a critique of the system by which those groups are oppressed, and thus actually constitute a mode of psychological resistance to

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<sup>13</sup> Ward, Brian, Just My Soul Responding. Rhythm and Blues, Black Consciousness, and Race Relations. 1998. Introduction, Three Premises, pp 4-6

<sup>14</sup> Hall, Stuart, 'Was ist „schwarz“ an der populären schwarzen Kultur?' in Hall, Stuart, Cultural Studies, Ein politisches Theorieprojekt, Ausgewählte Schriften 3, pp 98-111

<sup>15</sup> Szatmary, David P., Rockin' In Time. A Social History of Rock-and-Roll, 1991. Preface, pp xiii-xvii

<sup>16</sup> Sidran, Ben, Black Talk. How the Music of Black America Created a Radical Alternative to the Values of Western Literary Tradition. Foreword by Archie Shepp. 1981. Introduction, pp xix-xxv; Oral Culture and Musical Tradition: Prehistory and Early History (Theory), pp 1-29

<sup>17</sup> Gächter, Martin, Rap und Hip-Hop, Geschichte und Entwicklung eines afrikanisch-amerikanischen „Widerstandsmediums“ unter besonderer Berücksichtigung seiner Rezeptionsformen in Österreich, unpubl. diploma work, 2000. 2.6. Rap vor der Jahrtausendwende: „Entertainment“ statt „Edutainment“ – Hip-Hop als Milliardengeschäft, pp 136-138

their predicament". There is antagonism between "art and commerce, politics and entertainment", and (here Ward speaks of Rhythm and Blues which he understands in a vast sense also including Funk, Soul, Disco, but we think it is equally apt for HipHop and other forms of black popular musical styles) is "also deeply inscribed with many of the social, sexual, moral, economic and even racial values of the dominant culture". He holds a position countering "romanticizations of the counter-hegemonic power of black popular culture" as well as against "Frankfurt School-style critiques of mass culture which reduce it to little more than a succession of profitable commodities whose main function is to reinforce and perpetuate existing configurations of social, sexual, political and economic power". Ward's point is that Rhythm and Blues "was a complex, often deeply paradoxical phenomenon which managed both to challenge and affirm the core values and assumptions of mainstream America" (Ward:4)<sup>18</sup>.

### **We're Doing It in the Park - Park Cultures as Movement**

The groups and cliques in Vienna's parks and cages can be understood as a movement which slowly came into existence over the last 15 years. It takes (not much different from entering a club) a certain conduct, an attitude, knowledge about the right ways in order to share park life. Often, certain superficial attributes like mother tongue and/or religion get you in, or migration background, but also bad-ness, nice-ness, skills (soccer). Throughout one district, and often far beyond, youth know each other (often from school, from neighbourhood, from family connections, cinema, and so on).

The cages are almost exclusively male adolescents' areas of congregation. Soccer, basketball, and any number of other activities especially the meeting of the groups take place there. For many, their cage stays main meeting point way into their grown-up lives.

Roughly two sub-groups can be found: 'open' and 'closed' groups<sup>19</sup>. While open groups include members of varied backgrounds and both sexes, share a 'cosmopolitan' outlook, and come together due to mutual interests, the closed groups tend to nationalist/chauvinist/religious-based approaches, and try to explain their every-day experiences in these terms. The open groups share values, the closed groups share features from which values seemingly emerge: Muzaffer told me how easy he could, after moving to Vienna, join the cage group in his neighbourhood: 'I was Turkish, male, Muslim, and I played soccer. That was all it took.'

While open groups come together following shared interests, also liking the open approach, where all topics can be discussed and new people can be met, the closed groups tend to encounter more problems with mainstream society, and find explanations in nationalistic, fundamentalistic ideologies, thus coming closer together but also enhancing their problems. While they, for example, would not be let into a club due to immanent or explicit racism of club owners and security<sup>20</sup> but also due to their lacking attire and/or violent attitudes, the next

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<sup>18</sup> Ward, Brian, *Just My Soul Responding. Rhythm and Blues, Black Consciousness, and Race Relations*. 1998. Introduction, Synchronicity, p 4.

<sup>19</sup> See Mayer, *Young Urban Migrants Between Two Cultures*, in Pardo, Italo and Prato, Giuliana, *Beyond Belonging*. Urban Anthropology series, in print

<sup>20</sup> see also Loh, Hannes and Gungör, Murat, *Fear Of A Kanak Planet*, 'auch mit diskutieren kommst du nicht durch discotüren', 'disputing does not get you into the disco', pp 91-107

time they would go and fight the door people without losing a beat, so to say. Further problems follow, and many kids face their first court appearance due to such fights.

Girls in the park are rather a minority with the tendency of staying away with later evening, colder weather, and growing age. While numbers are roughly equal among boys and girls up to 11, 12 years of age, girls' numbers decline quickly afterwards. Girls in cages are very rarely found (cage groups being made up of boys up to 95 percent), and only in open groups. Girls move a lot between parks, and are found on highstreets, around shopping facilities, and also in remoter spaces of parks (very much liked: children' playgrounds with swings). Girls might follow a brother, or deliberately avoid him, depending on his attitude towards her. Girls must find strategies for going and staying outside, as parents tend to be stricter with them. Girls are also less connected to a certain park<sup>21</sup>.

Park-based or park-socialized kids favour multiplex cinemas, mainly connected to a large shopping mall as the Millennium City or Lugner City, Gasometer, Shopping City Süd; many groups – also non-park groups - go there, and people can meet and get to know each other. These places belong to the adolescents' world; again, there tends to evolve a cleft between those admitted and those banned by security forces due to lacking manners, attire, conduct, etc.

Not all marginalised adolescents are found in the park, many cannot gain access to a group, others follow other interests, others stay at home and try not to become involved. Parks cannot be understood as a mere and more or less accidental collection of marginalised youth; and not all adolescents attending parks are (economically, socially or due to migration backgrounds) marginalised. I know of middle-class people who go there, and not necessarily do these join open groups; but could also be found among petty criminal (incipient) gangs. Finally, there are some kids of Austrian 'origin' in the groups as well, often girls in the 'open' groups. They, too, share the wish to live the independent park life.

Parks in the old working-class districts are similar in many ways, while each park is also special. Social conduct, dress, habits, would be similar throughout Vienna, making it possible for people to shift between parks, and, if they and their families move, join new park groups. Some, however, stick to their old park grounds and travel far to meet their former peers. Some visit their relatives in other parks; some oscillate between parks. Some parks are better equipped, others are larger, others nicer, closer to some meeting point, and so on. If adolescents know how park life works, they can stay within that structure across Vienna. For many, their park/cage stays a main frame of reference far into adulthood. 'Which park' is a famous question among people meeting each other at work, in a discotheque, or other places, the main identification is that of being a park person, not so much which park.

Groups are not homogenous and have their special features. Groups range from violent, incipiently criminal 'gangs', to 'closed' cage groups with nationalistic and religious views with no access to any 'better' facilities, to 'open' cosmopolitan metropole dwellers who manage, also due to their social and cultural skills and

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<sup>21</sup> But there is one park in the 5th district where a quite stable group of Serbian Roma girls and boys have been hanging out; the next generation (the girls bring their small children to the park now) is already spending their childhood there. Forming a large, multiply interconnected group of about a hundred members, involving grown-ups as well.

competences, their lives fairly well.

New groups have arrived in the parks; Chetchen and Afghan refugee adolescents; younger brothers and sisters of former important park groups who have differing aims and attitudes ('lacking conduct' often remarked upon by elder brothers and sisters); smoking pot is common knowledge now; kids increasingly frequent several parks, the former strict divisions among park groups are softened. Park cultures as a kind of movement has gained momentum with time and new generations. New meeting points are established (mall kids; cineplex centers; new outdoor sports facilities), others are re-enlivened (Reumannplatz in Wien-Favoriten, up to a hundred kids and more, a focal point for park-based adolescents).

Adolescents' park life has become a movement, and people claim 'their parks', and their right to live as they like. Parks are not under control from grown-ups - especially not at night, rules are being made up by the relevant groups themselves (if not always democratically), the space can be used as wished, and hiding and escaping (from police, parents, youth institutions etc.) is easy. Smoking (tobacco, pot), drinking, sex, and violence are not regulated/forbidden/sanctionized. Parks are great places for a wide variety of experiences. And also often first contact zones with prostitution, violence, incipient criminality, illegal activities of many kinds.

In the next chapter I try to focus on those park kids who predominantly produce or consume black music, or music clearly derived from black music.

### **Black Music - Park Music**

The beginning of the Nineteennineties found park kids at school (if they went) listening to a variety of black music from the charts. "I knew Michael Jackson from my village in Turkey, all the videos, they are great ... In Vienna at school they listened to MC Hammer, Doctor Alban, and Leyla K." - "And in the park?" - "In the park? Only Arabesk," says 1979-born Muzaffer Hasaltay, filmmaker and artist<sup>22</sup>. This is also my experience from these times (I was teaching 'Intercultural Learning' to 10-14 year olds); Almir, a refugee boy from Bosnia, asked me to tape him my Snoop Doggy Dogg album "Doggy Style", but the music we all heard on our ghetto blaster every afternoon in the classroom was 'Hello Africa' and 'What Is Love'.

Towards the new millennium, New York, Compton, and other USA ghetto images gradually became part of many park adolescents' inner world which they also found mirrored in their Viennese park surroundings: the fenced-in cages; neon-lit parking lots; sirens of ambulances and police cars; and amidst all that, the group=gang of 'brothers' sticking together trying to survive from day to day, or rather, from one night to the next. Music thus became the soundtrack of their own lives, blending pictures from video clips into their own outlook on cage grounds. Park public was also entertained by Björk and Missy Elliot videos (among many others) which addressed new topics as human/machine relations.

The park movements have not been influenced much by other Viennese black music scenes. Although sets in parks have been played<sup>23</sup> by 'Demonflower'

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<sup>22</sup> Interview, July 2008

<sup>23</sup> organised by Christoph Möderndorfer for mobile youth work, especially from 1996 to 2001

Werner Geyer - the grand doyen of Vienna HipHop -, and famous DJs as DSL and Sugar B., also by younger HipHoppers such as Zuzee from the major label act Waxolutionists), there has not been much intermingling. But DJ Hossein 'Mastercash', well acquainted with park culture, has brought modern R'n'B and park kids together at Volksgarten Club every Friday since the middle of the Nineties, resulting in the formation of an all-Viennese scene comprising mainly older teenagers from migration backgrounds, from international schools and also from parks. But a very strict door policy (Volksgarten is a fancy inner city club with a longstanding tradition) segmented 'good' and 'bad' park kids, 'in' or 'out'.

What about the means of cultural transmission, records, vinyl, tapes, or else? The onset of cds, walkmen and portable cd players enabled individual access to music; as these gadgets became cheaper, park kids could acquire them and thus get access to music, and mainstream and the charts brought HipHop and rap along. However, it was the heavy onset of music television which became the most important source for black music. MTV, then Viva, Turk MTV since 2006, delivered music clips, music videos, most important sources which also transported 'real' images of backgrounds; musicians were positioned into their allegedly 'natural' surroundings. This is especially true for HipHop and Rap clips, and after all "Rap, asserted Kurtis Blow at the time (1983), is 'a way for the people of the ghetto to make themselves heard'" (Szatmary:284<sup>24</sup>) – a fact which the park kids could not fail to notice.

The next step after Music Television and video clips was the onset of the internet which has become the main source of information for park kids all over Vienna. The internet also offers access to many informations on music (which were, in earlier times, strictly confined to insiders and collectors, hanging out in record shops). Thus, park kids could - if they wanted – find out their favourite songs' words, and even if their English is not good, manage to understand what their rappers were rapping about at all.

Internet cafes opened up on every corner and in between (many of them so-called 'ethnic' enterprises) in working-class districts, where park kids go to play Counter Strike and other interactive games, and to watch xxx-rated clips and movies, trailers, and so on, at cheap rates.

I met Yusuf, 17, in the restricted-access back-room of an internet café in the 5<sup>th</sup> district; while the others were playing games outside, he sat smoking cigarettes and downloaded US-American gangster music clips; he liked the weapons, the violence, the cool attire. In fact, this is how he spoke about his encounters with enemies, and also how I saw him in various situations. His (juvenile) delinquency has brought him into jail several times<sup>25</sup>.

Mobile phones are used to watch tv and clips, and interactive video uploading facilities like YouTube and MySpace.com can be easily used for watching, and also publishing videos and clips filmed with phones.

### **New Rappers: Das ist meine Stadt - This Is My City**

Recently, rapping and rhyming has become a prominent and most visible/audible

<sup>24</sup> Szatmary, David P., *Rockin' In Time. A Social History of Rock-and-Roll*, 1991. The Rap Attack, pp 282-288

<sup>25</sup> Encounter: July 2007

form of expression among park kids. Breakdance and beat-boxing -'talking bodies' - have given way to language in a stricter sense. Rapping (like Beat-boxing) does not take much equipment, it can be practised without any technical means, alone or in groups<sup>26</sup>.

This is due to mainstream HipHop and rap acts from USA and Germany who made it into the charts and therefore could be accepted in Viennese parks. There is hardly any connection between the new park rappers and longer-standing German<sup>27</sup> and Austrian<sup>28</sup> Hip-Hop scenes which had developed in the Eighties and were quite well established by the Nineties of the last century.

The German charts rappers, especially Bushido, rapper with migrant (Tunisian) background, and Sido, Vienna adult park rappers, and Turkish rapper Ceza are presently the most important incentives for park kids to start rapping, while their idols might be African US-Americans like Tupac, Puff Daddy, 50Cent, the Wu-Tang-Clan. Gangsta Rap is the species most ardently followed, but also topics as family, politics, religion, school/work are taken up.

New rap groups in Vienna<sup>29</sup> come directly out of parks; however, those with the biggest success are grown-up men, hardly teenagers. Examples are Stone Park and, new album out just now, Iran-born Nazar who seems to have planned his career and established connections to Germany (Assphalt) where his tracks are produced. Both acts rely heavily on their fate as foreigners, as immigrants.

Nazar's album, 'Kinder des Himmels' (Heaven's children) just came out and is sold out already. His video is, on you-tube, dissed by others due to his height (he seems to be short), sexual orientation (dubbed 'homo' and 'pussy-licker' at the same time), his girlfriend, and - more substantial - due to the fact that he 'hates pot-smokers' and he is not known at the main meeting-point for park kids in Favoriten, the Reumannplatz ('Adalan sik tir lan', Nazar diss, on youtube).

Sua Kaan's Mevlut Khan says in an interview with Biber<sup>30</sup>, free magazine 'for the second generation', that their violent raps and videos were mostly for fun, and that people had taken it too seriously. Gjana Khan: "We are the new Austrians". Sample from 'Ein Wiener': 'bitches are on their windows when I walk by - I am strong and beautiful - they jump down if I tell them to ...' Or also, 'Gott war mein Retter und wenn meine Zeit kommt dann fahr ich nach Mekka' (God was my saviour and when my time comes I'll go to Mecca'). Aqil & Mevlut Khan of OTK, the video showing cage and park images. Other samples: Platinum feat Ciko Baba & Sakal - 'Vom Knast bis zur Parkbank, jeder schiebt Krise, manche werden Dealer, manche werden Diebe, so ist das Leben' (from jail to the park bench, every one is in crisis, some become dealers, others thieves, that's life'), and Platinum Tongue & Mevlut Khan, Balkanaken: 'Ottakringer Strasse click clack Kopfschuss - bist du keiner von uns nehmen wir dein Handy weg ich cash dein Taschengeld schon am ersten Schultag' (Ottakringer street click clack shot in the

<sup>26</sup> It is not necessarily the most deprived who take up the mike, they rather play football or try to find some money before taking to creatively expressing themselves.

<sup>27</sup> On Rap and Hip-Hop cultures in Germany see 'Fear Of A Kanak Planet', written by long-standing German HipHoppers Hannes Loh and Murat Güngör, 2002

<sup>28</sup> Gächter, Martin, Rap und Hip-Hop. Geschichte und Entwicklung eines afrikanisch-amerikanischen „Widerstandsmediums“ unter besonderer Berücksichtigung seiner Rezeptionsformen in Österreich. 2000

<sup>29</sup> all on youtube.com

<sup>30</sup>Biber, Februar 2008, 'Echte Wiener: Gangsta Rap ist in Wien gelandet – Sua Kaan, Stonepark 12 und Becka Sekta', pp 34-40

head - if you're not from us we take away your mobile - I take your pocket money on your first school day').

The Gentlemen Gangstaz, in their video "OTK - DISS", rap against OTK, blaming them for not speaking German well, that they were 'proletarians', but: 'hab nichts gegen Kanaken weil ich selber einer bin' ('am not against foreigners because I am one myself').

Another rapper, R-Kan, also brings his message across via you-tube, main arena for rappings and disses. His video is made up from photos, showing repeatedly the street sign of his neighbourhood, Otto-Probst-Strasse (10<sup>th</sup> district), songs are e.g. called 'Hauptstadtjunge', (boy from the capital).

Taking up the park and cage identity and turning it around into a hood-defending notion, new rappers enact violence and intolerance in their videos and texts, published mainly by videos on the interactive net; media attention came quickly, and thus the park movement, not noticeable outside communities, became a new topic, heavily influenced by gangster rap videos, images of American ghettos, and extra cool and threatening stances: large groups of men, all black-headed, in the parks and cages, rapping about how nobody must mess with them. Migration background is a prerogative, and is paralleled to blackness ('Schwarzköpfe', Blackheads). Exclusion from mainstream ('white') society is mirrored in expressing that 'whites' must not enter the parks and/or whites must count on becoming victims of criminal activities.

However, media appearances and selling successes cannot for long keep up its own images, as park cultures are differently lived than these (grown-up) men try to put forward. Dominant groups in parks are boys from 14 to 16, who have succeeded in claiming 'their' cage or part of the park. Negotiations for contested space are lead differently from the images shown in videos. Fights do occur, and also maybe increasingly often, but among park user groups, not against 'white' trespassers. There are multiple group processes of fusion and fission going on, as well as tolerating each other, and moving of groups between parks.

### **Black Street Heroes of 97 - ?**

Black music in Vienna has come to parks since, with the slowly evolving park communities, music was shared on tape decks and ghetto blasters. From there on, scenes evolved for whom black music received an especially important position.

In a 1997 survey of adolescents in parks, analysing 159 questionnaires, the following youth cultures /musical styles were indicated: HipHop and Soul 55%, Techno 38%, House 32%, Rave 30% (younger groups), Reggae (17%, older groups), Rock 16% (mainly male), Folklore 7%. Idols were: Michael Jackson, Michael Jordan, Ronaldo, Wu-Tang Clan, Foxy Brown. Dreamjobs: football player, dancer, mechanic, salesperson, nurse, singer, actor, police, attorney. The actual job profile: unskilled workers, apprenticeship, unemployment (cited from: Sozialraumanalyse, unpublished study, C. Möderndorfer/D. Mayer 1998). In 1998, fit to measure to kids' wishes, the street heroes were Tupac and Michael Jackson from the music world, and Ronaldo, Michael Jordan, and Muhammed Ali from sports.

Michael Jackson as a phenomenon was very important from the beginning to the middle of the 1990s, still very much liked in 1998, especially for kids with Roma backgrounds and due to his dance-style ('Thriller'). His music and videos were entry-ticket for many children into the world of global popular music. His race did not seem to matter, which put him in a position of super-raciality. His place was taken over by Tupac who must be put at the other end of a scale ranging from Gangster Rap to universal pop. Due to his violent texts and his violent death, he could serve as a mythical figure, standing for a more violent approach than Michael Jackson who deplored marginalisation in a clearer and differently formulated way (videos 'Black and White', 'They Don't Care About Us', 'Earth Song').

Breakdance, a most sportive occupation at the brink of acrobacy, came to the parks by the middle of the 1990s and was closely related to black culture from the Bronx, transported by movies, and taken up by conventions, meetings, and other forms of incorporation and institutionalisation. Scratching and DJing never really hit the parks (lacking means: nobody could afford the Technics turntables), crews used tape decks and ghetto blasters. More breakdance crews formed towards 1999, 2000 and became less important since 2004, when beatboxing and later rapping became the most important self-produced musical styles. As actively played sports, basketball became less interesting, by soccer again is the dominant game in cages.

Which other developments can be seen until today? The park movements went on and became larger, more and more people joining while older parkers were still around, at least in their minds, and younger people followed, also new groups came to Vienna, claiming spaces and access to this movement, adding their own histories to the vast field of oral transmission which make up the chronicles of parks and cages.

Some adolescents have gained access to music business, especially young Roma musicians with 'Balkan' and 'oriental' style music, and also the older 'gangster and hood' rappers. Others moved into the new opportunities of music clubs and entertainment places built up by 'ethnic' entrepreneurs, working as DJs, security, in gastronomy or as (gogo) dancers. All these developments are part of and make up the new Viennese society, while still constituting marginalised domains with differing rules.

Rappers as R-Kan and Nazar express more the desire to be accepted as a part of Vienna's population, a rather anti-discriminatory plea. Younger rappers, now 14,15 years old, are influenced by and oriented towards the older park rappers, German rappers, and (ultimately) US American idols, have taken up rapping, and try to express their view of their lives and surroundings. Migration background plays a major role, but not necessarily an exclusive one, depending on a person's position in (park) life and his/her outlook and perspectives.

The music-consuming kids' preferences have changed over times. Some of the international-global oriented kids who heard and danced to r'n'b and HipHop in clubs have moved on in their lives, able to gain from their park and music experiences where they found strong backing, solidarity, and support to an open approach to life; other groups are still stuck in cages, watching Snoop, Pharell, Jay-Z, the Pussycat Dolls and all the other new black videos which are setting standards of creativity like Gnarls Barkley.

## Conclusions

Park kids share, irrelevant of their language, backgrounds, origin and economic position of families, the feeling of oppression and pressure. They are aware of today's deteriorating circumstances. Even if one does have a good job, s/he is likely to be friends with many others who haven't.

As Stuart Hall<sup>31</sup> observed for black people in Great Britain, the park kids feel that the promise of slow but unstoppable integration into Austrian society has not been kept, but that rather their position at the margins of society has further been consolidated – or, put differently, the margins have become broader, as the economic destabilisation has seized more groups and also grown-ups.

Adolescents feel that parks and cages are 'their' territories, where they can live their youth park cultures, while being excluded from other places and opportunities. Diversification of young park user groups brings about a variety of ways to look at life, which are constantly shared, adapted, adjusted, changed, and shifted according to relevant experiences in their lives. 'Open' or 'closed' approaches are shifting as well, groups' members being not homogenous in their attitudes. For some, 'origin' becomes ever more important, while others strive at circumstances where skin and hair colour, language, and origin do not matter.

Music is an important feature in adolescents' lives, and even more so for those spending most time in park and cage groups and structures. Whether listening to, or also creatively and imitatingly produced, it is a favourite pastime which holds promises of making a living, at least at the margins of a developing musical world in Vienna, including new clubs and scenes, music places, and tendencies.

Folklore from 'back home' and black music, or music oriented on black musical styles, are the most important tunes produced and listened to among park and cage adolescents. Music takes on increasing importance - along with soccer, also including a possible legal career - as jobs are on the wane, precarious and often at the margins of society, unemployment is on the rise, schooling is not attractive and easy to circumnavigate. Forms of musical consumption and production are opportunities for park adolescents to articulate their feelings, opinions, and critique, and to create new worlds.

Music is apt for creating spaces and imagining worlds, especially and most importantly since music clips were made. It is these spaces and places, connected to and lived out in park life, that are inhabited by the kids and are the contested areas: contested not only from outside, but also constantly debated in the groups; a combination of open and closed world approaches, a mixture of expressions, and a mosaic of counter-positioned strains which shares all the features Ward finds in Rhythm and Blues: popular cultures of oppressed groups

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<sup>31</sup> "...the liberal consensus assumption that we are all proceeding, slowly but inevitably, towards a racially integrated society ... Actually, for blacks, this premise of integration is a highly problematic question. There is much more evidence that Britain is, slowly but inevitably, drifting towards the creation of a permanent black minority of second-class citizens, large numbers of them living in poverty and deprivation, and subject to discrimination as a group" Hall, Stuart, 'Black Men, White Media', in Savacou, *Journal of the Caribbean Artists Movement*, vol 9/10, 1974

containing a critique of the system, constituting resistance<sup>32</sup>, and yet being inscribed with the values of the dominant culture.

Different kinds of black music serve as imagined and imaginary worlds as "popular culture of oppressed groups"; migration backgrounds take a strong position as main frame of reference, which is a mirror from what society gives to them: branded as 'foreigners', as '2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> generations', against which they put either the plea 'origins do not matter', or 'I am Viennese', or the violent 'out of my park'.

Black music serves as model and is important to express the non-white approach, to enhance solidarity and to deal with racism and discrimination. Further topics are family, religion, school and work, and politics. In Ward's opinion, "black music has acted as a bulwark against the psychological ravages of racism, frustration, often poverty, and sometimes despair in the black community", and I would hold that to be true for Vienna park kids as well: "making and consuming popular music remains a crucial way to 'keep from going under'" (Ward:452<sup>33</sup>). Reflection on life, one could say, and articulation are already a possible temporary solution.

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<sup>32</sup> Of course, "practices that are resistant to a particular strategy of power are thus never innocent of or outside power (...), always at risk of slipping from resistance against one strategy of power into complicity with another (Gupta/Ferguson:18f, citing Foucault). Resistance as experience shapes identities of subjects, and "the subject itself must be conceived as the unstable and often unpredictable outcome of experience" (Gupta/Ferguson:20).

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<sup>33</sup> Ward, Brian, Just My Soul Responding, Epilogue, pp 451-2, citing 'It's like a jungle sometimes it makes me wonder how I keep from going under', Melle Mel, rapper with Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, in 'The Message'

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