Abstract:

This paper considers the case-study of a singer from the northeastern Syrian Jazeera region, Omar Souleyman, to highlight on the politics of global music’s flow and circulation. Souleyman became locally famous for his performances in weddings. In the late 1990s, an American producer met Souleyman and launched his music to a Western audience. Souleyman’s career in the West kicked off in 2006 and he has since performed in prominent music venues in Europe and the US and collaborated with the superstar, Bjork. This paper examines the politics of representation of Souleyman’s music in both Syria and the West. Informed by an interview with him, and using literature on modernity, hybridity, and representation, it studies the production of locality and the dynamics of the local-global. The paper explores the multiple tensions around ascribing meanings to music based on understandings of modernity and authenticity – and how these meanings control the geography of music flow and entrapment.