ARTICLES
CULTURAL LOCALIZATION AND ITS LOCAL DISCONTENTS: CONTESTED EVALUATIONS OF CANTOPOP ELECTRONIC DANCE MUSIC

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Abstract

Cultural localization—modifications of the contents and meanings of globally imported cultural products by local audience and producers—has been one of the major research foci in global media studies, sociology of globalization, and cultural anthropology. Despite its broad applicability and theoretical utility, the concept of cultural localization actually remains a highly under-theorized and non-empirically grounded concept. This essay aims to enrich the study of it through examining two middle-range aspects—a cultural political aspect and a cultural economic one—of localizing electronic dance music in Hong Kong. I find that Cantopop electronic dance music was negatively received by local audience because of its cultural conservatism and its limited production volume. I elaborate the structural causes of the two weaknesses and argue that they are commonly found in cultural localization processes around the contemporary world. The findings compel us to rethink cultural localization in more open-ended and complex terms than current studies do. They also suggest that it is premature to suppose that cultural localization is dissolving global-local power differentials or rendering global-local distinctions meaningless.