

# Soul rebels and dubby conquerors. Reggae and dancehall music in Germany in the 1990s and early 2000s

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## Abstract

*In the 1990s, a vibrant reggae and dancehall scene emerged in several German cities, and in the early 2000s songs of reggae artists such as Gentleman, Seeed or Jan Delay rose to the top of the German pop charts. In this article, the German reggae scene of this time is depicted in respect to its formation, infrastructure, transnational relationships and sub-genres, and is related to general social and cultural developments in reunited Germany, e.g. a new national self-consciousness, tendencies towards a multi-ethnic society and new kinds of youth scenes. These findings are illustrated by a close reading of two songs from the seminal albums Searching for the Jan Soul Rebels by Jan Delay and New Dubby Conquerors by Seeed, both released in 2001. While Jan Delay's lyrics reflect the singer's commitment to the antifascist youth scene, Seeed celebrates a hedonistic lifestyle in the new capital Berlin.*

The reunification of Germany after 40 years of separation brought with it reflections regarding German history, self-image and self-awareness, and the new role Germany was going to play in Europe and the world (cf. Schildt and Siegfried 2009, pp. 471ff.). Additionally, this process of self-discovery implied broader considerations of social and cultural developments in modern societies, the worldwide triumph of Western individualism and consumerism as well as effects of globalisation. From the 1990s, popular music and youth culture in Germany also underwent various changes, which stand at least in an indirect relation to those processes and reflections and are discussed by pop journalists and social researchers. German pop critics coined the term 'mainstream of minorities' (Holert and Terkessidis 1996) in face of the alleged end of opposition and rebellion from youth subcultures against mainstream consumer culture. Cultural sociologists Ronald Hitzler *et al.* developed the concept of 'youth scenes' as post-traditional, rather loose networks of youth communitarianisation (Hitzler *et al.* 2001; Hitzler and Niederbacher 2010). In their studies, they observed a broad diversification of contemporary youth scenes in Germany that formed around various thematic focusses, e.g. several genres of popular music, computer games, sports or live action role-playing games. In regard to popular music, the German techno scene captured the spirit of the 1990s with slogans of a 'raving society' dancing through the capital Berlin in hedonistic 'love parades'. Moreover, there have

been more and more rock musicians who sing lyrics in German and there has been a growth of German rap music culminating in the hype of German gangsta rap in the early 2000s.

However, the 1990s saw the emergence of a German reggae and dancehall scene too, tying into popular music from the distant island of Jamaica. Although in the 1970s some Germans from an alternative milieu already loved to listen to Jamaican roots reggae, particularly Bob Marley, there had been almost no German reggae bands and no vital reggae and dancehall scene up to the late 1980s. It was not before the early 1990s that an agile underground sound system and club scene began to grow in Cologne and Hamburg and later in Berlin, Stuttgart, Leipzig and other cities. Then, in the course of the 2000s, German artists like Gentleman (born Tilmann Otto in 1975) or Jan Delay (born Jan Philipp Eisfeld in 1976) and the Berlin-based dancehall crews Seeed (founded in 1998) and Culcha Candela (founded in 2002) suddenly achieved broad attention and success at home and abroad, and even reached the top of the German pop charts.

Following the concept of youth scenes (Hitzler and Niederbacher 2010), the reggae and dancehall scene is understood to be a rather small and loose cultural network of strongly individualised youths who have common interests in reggae and dancehall music. According to Hitzler and Niederbacher, the members of a youth scene in general share certain material and mental forms of collective self-stylisation as well as characteristic attitudes, symbols and rituals that they further develop interactively at certain meeting places like festivals, club nights or other events, as well as within the media like fanzines, special interest magazines and internet websites. Therefore, certain activists or 'organisation elites' who organise and maintain those events and media are crucial for a certain scene. Additionally, some of those scenes are based on practices and shared values that include certain social and political orientation.

In this article, I aim at both depicting the German reggae and dancehall scene of the 1990s and 2000s and locating it within historical transformation processes in contemporary German society. How are changes in regard to German self-awareness and identity as well as globalisation and ethnic diversity articulated and reflected within reggae and dancehall music? First, I will look briefly at the history of reggae and dancehall in Germany as well as at its 'organisation elites' and infrastructure. Then, I will discuss several issues concerning life-style and self-images as well as cultural and political attitudes within the German reggae and dancehall community. Furthermore, I will take a closer look at two songs from two seminal CDs of German artists, Jan Delay's *Searching for the Jan Soul Rebels* (2001) and Seeed's debut CD *New Dubby Conquerors* (2001), in order to characterise and exemplify central themes and images such as criticism towards consumerism and racism as well as local pride which dominate the German reggae and dancehall scene with regard to recent developments in German society, culture and history. While I focus on the lyrics I will also look at the musical performances as well as at the videos. Finally, some conclusions in regard to contemporary German culture and society are drawn.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> My personal involvement with reggae music dates back to the 1980s when I enjoyed listening to records of, among others, Bob Marley, Black Uhuru and British dub poet Linton Kwesi Johnson. In the 1990s and 2000s I was mostly living in Hamburg and, there, I got in touch with the growing local sound system and dancehall scene. My interest in Jamaican as well as in German dancehall music, live and on record, has been reinforced since around 2003 by my regular reading of the German-language magazine *Riddim* and by listening to the accompanying compilation CDs.

## Reggae and dancehall in Germany – a very short history

Jamaican popular music, often filed under the umbrella term reggae, is an aggregation of related styles that emerged from the 1960s and went through several stylistic stages (see Stolzoff 2000; Barrow 2004; Burkhart 2015). However, reggae in the narrow sense refers to roots reggae of the 1970s while more recent developments in Jamaican popular music are often called ‘dancehall music’, or just ‘dancehall’, referring to the prevalent open-air discotheques where the music is played in Jamaica. While most of the earlier styles share predominant bass lines and strong offbeat or afterbeat chords (in ska and rock steady in the 1960s) as well as a slow back beat which is often accented by bass drum and snare drum simultaneously (‘one drop’) in roots reggae of the 1970s, Jamaican dancehall music after 1980 is stylistically more diverse, often relying on digital production techniques and sometimes borrowing traits from US rap music. Nonetheless, dancehall lyrics are often in Jamaican slang or patois and some of the musical elements of earlier reggae are still audible. Therefore, dancehall music is clearly identifiable as Jamaican popular music. For a better readability and since most contemporary German artists include songs of both genres, (roots) reggae and dancehall, in their repertoire I will use the terms ‘reggae’ and ‘reggae scene’ throughout and utilise ‘dancehall’ only for those songs from a more recent, post-1990 style that lacks distinct (roots) reggae traits like afterbeat chords.

In contrast to the UK (cf. Jones 1988; Saakana 2012), there has never been a community of Jamaican immigrants in Germany.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, influences from Jamaican culture have mostly been mediated by promotion of the international record industry and strongly filtered and reinterpreted by its listeners. For example, in the 1970s Bob Marley was appreciated as a Third World rock star by a German rock audience looking for a new Jimi Hendrix (Koehlings and Lilly 2012, p. 72). While many of Bob Marley’s lyrics were well suited to the political attitudes of an alternative and anti-capitalist milieu in the 1970s and early 1980s, the explicit religious background of Marley’s biblical Rastafari belief as well as his rootedness in a black Atlantic diaspora were almost completely ignored by German listeners.

Although there was scarcely a reggae scene in terms of German musicians and bands during the 1980s, there were some Jamaican reggae artists on German concert and festival stages, including reggae band Black Uhuru, singer Dennis Brown and dancehall deejay Yellowman. Additionally, from 1984 British radio DJ David Rodigan played reggae and dancehall music in his influential radio programmes regularly broadcasted by the British Forces Broadcasting Service which could be received in the North and West of Germany. In 1986, the annual reggae festival Summerjam (first called Reggae Sunsplash) was founded, which today remains the biggest reggae and dancehall festival in Europe with around 30,00 visitors; since 1996 the festival has been located near Cologne.

However, more important for the emergence of a vibrant German reggae scene was the foundation of sound systems in the 1990s in various cities, including Pow

<sup>2</sup> In the 1980s, there were communities of Ghanaian immigrants in cities like Berlin (West), Hamburg or Duesseldorf who founded several music groups. Some of those groups, e.g. Vitamin X, performed a melange of reggae and high-life (or so-called ‘burger highlife’) and extensively toured through West Germany. However, Ghanaian immigrants’ music never gained broader recognition let alone entered the German pop charts – unlike Gentleman or Seeed in the early 2000s.

Pow Movement in Cologne (since 1990), Silly Walks Movement in Hamburg (since 1991), Soundquake in Detmold (since 1992/1993), Sentinel in Stuttgart, and Supersonic in Berlin, both founded in 1998. Sound systems are mobile discotheque crews who play records in clubs and at open-air parties. They are based on their Jamaican role models with a selector, who chooses and plays records, and one or more deejays, who communicate with the audiences and toast over instrumentals. In contrast to the reception of reggae in the 1970s and 1980s as alternative or exotic, during this time German sound system activists were looking for a direct connection to the Caribbean island and its culture. Ingo Rheinbay, a founder of Pow Pow Movement, puts it as follows:

Der nächste Schritt war dann, dass wir 1990 nach Jamaika geflogen sind, um tiefer in diese Kultur einzutauchen. Uns war es sehr wichtig, die Ursprünge kennen zu lernen und den Vibe vor Ort anzuschauen. Das war sehr abenteuerlich – vermatschte Straßen, alle barfuß, und riesige Türme aus Boxen, wo irgendwelche Gestalten draufstanden. Dieses Erlebnis hat uns geprägt. Eines Abends wurden wir von einem Veteran Sound [System] aus Montego Bay eingeladen, der uns demonstriert hat, wie so ein Sound System funktioniert. Von da an waren wir der Reggae-Kultur erlegen. Zurück in Deutschland wollten wir das hier so authentisch wie möglich fortführen (cited in Karnik and Philipps 2007, pp. 90f).

[The next step, then, was to fly to Jamaica in 1990 in order to delve more deeply into this culture. It was very important for us to become more familiar with the roots and to feel the vibe of the place. This was very adventurous – muddy streets, everyone barefoot, and huge loudspeaker towers, upon which all the guys stood. This experience has affected us. One evening, we were invited by a veteran sound system from Montego Bay, who demonstrated how such a sound system operates. From then on we succumbed to reggae culture. Back in Germany we wanted to continue this as authentically as possible.]

Travelling to Jamaica and delving deeply into the Jamaican culture, learning about the ‘vibes’ there, experiencing the ‘authentic’ Jamaican dancehall and sound system culture with its big loudspeaker towers and so on, was crucial for Rheinbay, and a first step towards a replication of sound system culture in Germany. Soon, artists from Pow Pow or Silly Walks began to produce reggae and dancehall music, first of all so-called riddims, i.e. backing tracks for reggae and dancehall vocalists primarily based on certain rhythmic patterns (cf. Manuel and Marshall 2006; Burkhart 2015). Ingo Rheinbay produced riddims that were mostly played by the Jamaican Firehouse Crew and voiced by Jamaican artists. Some of these Cologne productions, e.g. Junior Kelly’s ‘Blaze’ or Richie Spice’s ‘Blood Again’, were successful in Jamaica, too. Similarly, Hamburg’s Silly Walks Movement recorded singles with Jamaican singers Tanya Stephens, Lutan Fyah and Turbulence. Additionally, in 1995 Soundquake initiated a mail order service for records operating all over Europe. Crucially, German activists began musical as well as economic relationships with their Jamaican counterparts. German sound systems not only popularised Jamaican artists in Germany by playing their records at club nights, but also actively produced reggae and dancehall recordings – opening new earning opportunities for Jamaicans in terms of record sales and concert tours. Additionally, German sound systems recorded dubplates with Jamaican artists. Dubplates are unique records of a certain sound system with artists singing, rapping or speaking (‘voicing’) over a riddim mostly with lyrics that praise that particular sound system (Ramstedt 2015). Dubplates are like trump cards in ritualised ‘clashes’ between different systems where the audience decides, through the sheer volume of their acclamation, which of the competing systems is ‘better’, i.e. has the better records, show and

personalities. While for the sound systems dubplates are bound with high expenses, to voice a dubplate is an extra income for the Jamaican artists who can earn between US\$250 and upwards of US\$1000 for one voicing (cf. Karnik and Philipps 2007, pp. 95–8).

All in all, German dancehall activists learned right from the beginning to act on a global stage with international networks of artists, promoters and labels that spread across Europe, to Jamaica and the United States. In 2000, Pow Pow Movement took part in a sound system World Clash in New York, competing with five sound systems from Jamaica, the United States and Japan. Five years later, Sentinel, a sound system from Stuttgart, won the World Clash in Brooklyn, beating five competitors from Jamaica, Canada, the UK and Japan.

More recently, since the turn of the century, efforts to support German artists and create a distinct German reggae and dancehall music have increased. In particular, the label Rootdown Records, founded in 2000 and based in Hürth near Cologne, has continuously released German-language dancehall by artists such as Maxim, Mono & Nikitaman, Nattyflo and Nosliw (see Karnik and Philipps 2007, pp. 174–82). Another label that features Jamaican artists along with German dancehall artists like Ronny Trettmann or Ill Inspecta is Germaican Records, a portmanteau word comprising the words *Germ(an)* and (Jam)aican, founded in 1999 in Leipzig (Karnik and Philipps 2007, pp. 160–8). Further, several compilation CDs exclusively with German (and Austrian) dancehall music were released in the 2000s, including *Dancehall-Fieber* (five volumes, 2000–2005), and *Statements Outta Babylon* (two volumes, 2003 and 2007). The first issue of the bimonthly high-gloss magazine *Riddim* (subtitle: ‘reggae, dancehall, tunes, culture’) was also released in 2001. With features, interviews and reviews, photo series, reports on dancehall and Rastafari culture as well as an accompanying compilation CD, the magazine has found a loyal readership with a circulation of around 45,000 copies (in 2012), and has become the central media institution of the German reggae scene.

## Reggae and youth scenes in 1990s and 2000s Germany

However, back in the 1990s, the German reggae scene was rather intimate or ‘underground’. The main scene events were summer festivals and club performances, such as Pow Pow Movement nights at Petit Prince Club in Cologne, or Studio One club nights in Hamburg. While there were still older reggae fans from alternative milieus of the 1970s and 1980s, a younger generation of dancehall fans emerged during the 1990s that had a musical background not so much in rock, punk or world music, but in hip-hop, or even in techno and rave. There are several points of reference between those scenes concerning common practices and attitudes as well as similarities in regard to musical features and, last but not least, collaborations between well-known artists of the corresponding music genres.

Dancehall and techno, or electronic dance music, share common practices of performing at dances or raves where a DJ (or selector) stands in the middle, mixing (or ‘juggling’) one record after another as well as comparable computer-based music production techniques, for instance the use of digital synthesisers, sequencer software and sound effects plugins. However, there are many musical differences, first of all a differing rhythmic-metrical foundation. While electronic dance music is mostly based on a fast and steady ‘four-to-the-floor’ beat, reggae and dancehall

riddims are often in a slower tempo and either have a reggae afterbeat or an asymmetrical accented pattern like 3–3–2 eighths (cf. Manuel and Marshall 2006, p. 445). Nevertheless, in the second half of the 1990s there was a rather short-lived intersection of electronic dance music and dancehall resulting in a fad of the rhythmically complicated jungle and drum'n'bass music that spread from the UK to Germany. Moreover, there are common grounds of sound manipulation in certain directions of electronic dance music and in dub reggae, culminating in some releases of the Berlin-based label Rhythm and Sound by Moritz von Oswald und Mark Ernestus with the Jamaican singer Tikiman.

The connections between dancehall and rap music are even greater. Unlike in electronic dance music, in both genres of rap music and dancehall music, the speaking, rapping or singing voice stands at the forefront of the music. In both genres, vinyl records are presented with the help of a sound system, a DJ (rap) or a selector respectively (dancehall), and a MC or rapper (rap) or a deejay respectively (dancehall) who raps or toasts over pre-produced beats or riddims played from records. Therefore, the technical and personal grounds of both a dancehall and a hip-hop performance are basically the same while beats and riddims differ stylistically. In general, the German hip-hop scene has preceded the formation of a reggae scene and has a much greater following (cf. Hitzler and Niederbacher 2010, pp. 84–9). The German hip-hop scene is nurtured mainly by two heterogeneous participant groups which are represented by different artists: middle-class youth on the one hand, e.g. Die Fantastischen Vier, founded in Stuttgart around 1989, and youth with a so-called 'Migrationshintergrund' ['migration background'] on the other hand, e.g. Advanced Chemistry, founded in Heidelberg in 1987. Of course, both groups partly overlap since some immigrants and their children are middle class too. Since the reggae scene tends to be more exclusively middle class, it is no surprise that a new generation of dancehall fans emerged from listeners who had been used to listening to 'conscious' or 'reality' rap music, i.e. including the depiction and critique of living conditions and political issues (cf. Krims 2000, pp. 70–80). Additionally, there are several German artists who first performed rap music or worked together with rap crews, and then started to sing or rap dancehall music, including Jan Delay (Absolute Beginner) and Nosliw. A transition from the hip-hop scene to the reggae scene took place especially after the rise of gangsta rap in Germany after 2000, characterised by less 'conscious' and more overtly aggressive lyrics (cf. Dietrich and Seeliger 2012).

There are numerous collaborations between German dancehall artists and rap artists. In 1999 German reggae singer Gentleman participated in the song 'Tabula Rasa pt. 2' from Freundeskreis' second CD *Esperanto* – a record that reached number 3 in the German pop charts. Moreover, Freundeskreis created a modest reggae hit with 'Halt Dich an meiner Liebe fest' ['Hold on to my Love'] built on an old Jamaican riddim ('Police and Thieves' by Junior Murvin) in 1998. Freundeskreis, founded in 1996 in Stuttgart, was a crucial group of conscious rap music in Germany. In 'Leg Dein Ohr auf die Schiene der Geschichte' ['Lay Down your Ear on the Tracks of History'] from their debut album *Quadratur des Kreises* [*Squaring the Circle*] rapper Max Herre, born in 1973, extensively relates his personal biography with historical events – from the CIA coup in Chile in the year of his birth to the nuclear disaster in Tchernobyl in 1986 until his antifascist engagement and the wars in Iraq and the Balkans in the 1990s. Significantly, the historical events he mentions do not refer to a narrow German history but to a global history of US

imperialism, ecological disaster and war. The chorus stresses the urge of a historical consciousness – the idea that ‘you’re just a part of it so get to the heart of it, ‘cause if you don’t go you won’t know’ (sung in English).

German singer Patrice performed as supporting act of the 1999 tour of well-known US r&b singer and rapper Lauryn Hill, former member of The Fugees. The facts that around that time German language hip-hop magazine *Juice* was starting to feature dancehall artists from Jamaica, and that in 2001 the compilation *German Link up! Dancehall meets Hip Hop* was released by Warner Music indicate that the audiences for dancehall and hip-hop in Germany partly overlapped. The debut record of sound system crew Seeed, which includes scratching and hip-hop beats as well as a reggae record of Jan Delay, rapper of the popular hip-hop band Absolute Beginners (both released in 2001), also points in this direction (see below). Typically enough, the performance of Seeed at the opening of the Soccer World Cup 2006 was labelled by the announcer as ‘deutscher Hip-Hop aus Berlin’ [‘German hip-hop from Berlin’].

### What it’s all about? Issues in contemporary German reggae music

German reggae artists often orientate themselves towards Jamaican artists and music. Therefore, looking for which artist types and song topics are present in Jamaica could serve as a starting point for a depiction of prevalent topics in German reggae. In his ethnographic study of Jamaican dancehall culture, Norman Stolzoff distinguishes several types of deejays, singers and ‘singjays’ in the 1990s according to their repertoire, in particular their song lyrics and their image (Stolzoff 2000, pp. 163ff.). According to Stolzoff, there are only a few Jamaican artists who solely sing, most of them drawing their inspiration from 1970s roots reggae, lovers rock or dancehall of the early 1980s. In contrast, most of the Jamaican artists associated with dancehall after 1990 are either deejays who toast or rap, or so-called singjays who mix singing with rapping. Firstly, there are Rastafari singjays and deejays who refer either to cultural consciousness (e.g. Tony Rebel, Buju Banton) or to a rude boy attitude (e.g. Capleton). Secondly, there are deejays reporting on the living conditions and criminal lives in the ghettos of Jamaica, either with a more critical attitude (like in US ‘conscious’ or reality rap) or a glorifying intention (e.g. ‘gangster’ or ‘gunmen’ like Ninjaman, Bounty Killer, Merciless, Cobra, Terror Fabulous). Lastly, there are deejays devoted to explicit or ‘slack’ lyrics (Yellowman, Shabba Ranks), often with funny undertones, as well as comedians in a strict sense, e.g. Red Rat and Goofy, who are popular even with Jamaican school children. Although some artists are dedicated to only one of the areas mentioned by Stolzoff, several artists, e.g. Beenie Man, mix up different areas in their repertoire, even in one album. Stolzoff’s typology could serve as a blueprint for the various song genres and issues treated in song lyrics in German reggae music. In Germany, however, there are fewer types of artists than in Jamaica. Additionally, many of the values and attitudes German artists express in their music and staging differ from those of their Jamaican counterparts in a more or less subtle way. I propose to distinguish roughly between four sub-genres according to different song-types and lyrics.

Firstly, a few German singers express in their music the spirituality of Rastafarianism, or at least a vaguely religious worldview and belief, such as Ganjaman, Sebastian Sturm and Uwe Banton. The most prominent of these

'conscious' artists is Gentleman, who grew up as the son of a pastor. Since the mid-1990s he has been regularly visiting Jamaica and has learned Jamaican patois first-hand. Meanwhile, Gentleman performed in Germany with sound systems Pow Pow and Silly Walks as well as with the hip-hop crew Freundeskreis. Gentleman mostly sings in Jamaican patois or in English. The lyrics of his songs often include spiritual messages concerning self-realisation, inner growth and universal love. With his second CD, *Journey to Jah* (2002), Gentleman received the Echo award of the German recording industry. His subsequent albums, starting with *Confidence* in 2004, went to the top of the German record charts. Gentleman is well known and successful in many parts of Europe as well as in North Africa and Jamaica. According to Karnik and Philipps (2007, p. 16f.), Gentleman's wide international success is due to his approach of appropriation through cultural mimesis ('kulturmimetisches Aneignungsverfahren'), his desire to be a dancehall artist as authentic as Jamaicans and his talent in accomplishing this aim. In his music, at least, there seems to be little room either for reflection on his German roots or for commentary on life in his home country.

Secondly, several artists take up the criticism of Rastafarianism against the Babylon system but relate this to the social and political conditions in Germany and Europe, to consumer culture as well as to racism, capitalism and imperialism in general. These artists are rooted in a left-wing or alternative milieu and have no relation to religion in general. Social criticism is delivered in German by several artists, e.g. Mono & Nikitaman as well as Nosliw, or Jan Delay (see below). However, contrary to German gangsta rap evolving in the early 2000s, there is no glorification of thug life or violence; violence is rather discussed within a political frame of oppression and resistance. Moreover, the homophobia of Jamaican artists is clearly rejected, at least in light of European societies – although there are attempts to relate homophobic attitudes to the cultural context of Jamaica (cf. Pfeleiderer 2011). Statements to legalise cannabis are also quite common. In 1994, the German Federal Constitutional Court decided that cannabis prohibition does not violate the constitution except for the prosecution of the owning of only small quantities. In the following years, German states interpreted the size of these 'small quantities' differently, leading to less prosecution in Hamburg and North Rhine–Westphalia at least. While consuming cannabis is widespread amongst German youth and only rarely prosecuted, selling or cultivating cannabis is still illegal. Therefore, in 2000 Benjie (Benjamin Kastner, born 1977) sings in his widely acclaimed dancehall song 'Ganja Smoka':

Ich rauch mein Ganja den ganzen Tag,  
ganz egal wer auch immer 'was dagegen sagt,  
rauche so lange bis ich selbst nicht mehr mag,  
tu niemandem was und werde trotzdem angeklagt. ...  
Ganja muss legal sein, wenn man mich fragt.  
[I smoke my ganja all day long,  
no matter whoever says something against it,  
smoke as long until I don't want anymore,  
lay my hands upon nobody and are accused nevertheless. ...  
Ganja has to be legal if you ask me.]

In contrast to such songs containing social critic, a third category comprises songs and singers who reflect on personal experiences of partnership and love relationships – as is widespread in popular music in general. Many of the lyrics of singer Patrice (born Patrice Babatunde Bart-Williams in 1979 in Cologne) and Nosliw (born Eric



Alain Wilson 1975 in Bonn), both sons of a father from Africa (Senegal and Sierra Leone respectively) and of a mother from Germany and Austria respectively, are rather thoughtful and even tender. Those love song lyrics are distinct from the Jamaican slackness lyrics that reflect gender relations in a very explicit or even pornographic way (cf. Pfeleiderer 2011).

Last but not least, there are artists and songs that celebrate the reggae scene, its parties and sound system clashes, the reggae 'massive' (the dancehall fans) and the artists and sound system crews. This subgenre refers to the core of the scene, i.e. the active members who participate in club nights and sound system clashes and buy (vinyl) records in certain inner-city record stores in Cologne, Hamburg, or Berlin. However, German dancehall crews like Seeed or Culcha Candela were quite successful in the 2000s – comparable with well-known Jamaican artists such as Sean Paul or Elephant Man who crossed over to the mainstream audience in the United States with songs in a more or less 'hardcore' dancehall style, too. The show qualities of the dancehall crews are crucial, in particular the excitement and eccentricity of the stage characters of some artists as presented in live and video performances, on record sleeves or in magazine features. One of these dancehall artists is Ill Inspecta (born Khalil Lechelt), who released his first record with the Leipzig-based label Germaican Records. Ill Inspecta explicitly wants to differentiate himself from the 'deutschen Wohlstands-Reggae' [German welfare reggae] that comes along with 'Gutmensch-Texten und erhobenem Zeigefinger' ['do-gooder-lyrics and finger-wagging'] (cited in Karnik and Philips 2007, p. 165). In contrast, he relates to 'rude boy' Jamaican dancehall artists like Vybz Kartel or Mavado and tries to establish his performance persona as an exaggerated character:

Diese Kunstfigur darf im Prinzip alles, das muss auch voll ausgeschöpft werden. Es darf sich eben nicht überschneiden mit der Persönlichkeit, die man als Mensch ist. (Cited in Karnik and Philips 2007, p. 165)

[This art character is principally allowed to do everything you can think of, there must be taken full advantage of that. It just has not to coincide with the personality of oneself as a human being.]

However, extreme characters have different meanings in Jamaica and in Germany. While in Jamaica characters like rude boys or gunmen seem to be 'real' and authentic owing to the disastrous social and economic conditions, the same characters in Germany are called up to transfer the energy and rawness of the Jamaican role models onto an European context, but often have an effect of explicit fictitiousness and (over)excitement. As Pete Lilly, editor of the German-language *Riddim* magazine, puts it:

Bestimmte Dinge aus Jamaika kann man sich gar nicht aneignen, die treffen per se nicht auf uns zu. Ich kenne niemanden, der hier eine Knarre hat. Man geht hier nicht auf einen Dance und guckt erst mal nach dem Fluchtweg, um sicher wieder rauszukommen, falls es mal abgeht. So sehr man auch den Bad Man raushängen lässt, man ist am Ende ein wohl situiertes Mittelstandsjunge, der ein kleines Abenteuer erleben will. (Cited in Karnik and Philipps 2007: 236f.)

[One cannot appropriate certain things from Jamaica, they do not concern us at all. I don't know anybody here who has a gun. You don't go to a dance searching around the emergency exit at first in order to get out safe if something happened. Even when you show off to be a bad man, in the end you are a well-behaved middle-class boy, who just wants to experience a little adventure.]

Obviously, such performances as rude boy or gunman in Germany resemble role play and often exhibit humour and irony rather than realness and authenticity. Sometimes these exaggerated characters even point in a funny, goofy or overtly daft direction, as with some songs of Ronny Trettmann (born Stephan Richter), a dancehall artist from Leipzig who worked with Germaican Records before founding his own label Heckert Empire in 2008. It's not surprising that Trettmann splits the German reggae scene; e.g. in the *Riddim* readers' poll, his song 'Der Sommer ist für alle da' ['Summer is for everybody'] was voted both the best and the worst German tune of the year in 2006 (Leserpoll 2007, pp. 29 and 30). Uli, selecta of the Sentinel Soundsystem, points to fundamental differences between German and Jamaican dancehall attitudes:

Die Typen, die Aussagen, die Krassheit, die Übertriebenheit, die Show, die Schärfe, dieses Durchgedrehte gepaart mit der Musik – das ist in Deutschland einfach nicht da. Und wenn es jemand versucht, wirkt das oft peinlich, oder er kann nicht singen. (Cited in Karnik and Philipps 2007: 105).

[The characters, the statements, the starkness, the exaggeratedness, the show, the sharpness, this craziness paired with the music – this just doesn't exist in Germany. And if someone tries, it often has an embarrassing effect, or he cannot sing.]

Be that as it may, the bias towards exaggeration in German reggae and dancehall music accords with a bias towards hedonism that Hitzler *et al.* find characteristic for one of three types of recent German youth scenes. Hedonistic scenes are youth scenes where '[d]ie Aufmerksamkeit gilt dem Augenblick: Im Hier-und-Jetzt will man Spaß haben, und sich nicht die Party von irgendwem oder irgendwas verderben lassen' (Hitzler *et al.* 2001, p. 225) ['the attention is directed to the moment: One wants to have fun here and now and do not allow anybody or anything to spoil the party']. However, hedonism and celebration of the music and oneself are not the only tendencies within the reggae scene. As shown, critique, elucidation and education in regard to social and political consciousness is another trend that conforms to another type of youth scenes, called *Aufklärungs-Szenen* ['elucidation scenes'] by Hitzler *et al.* Those youth scenes are characterised by a will to change society and by the conviction

dass (bestimmte) aktuelle gesellschaftliche Verhältnisse nicht akzeptabel sind und daher zum 'Besseren' gewendet werden müssen. ... Ihre Protagonisten – und insbesondere die Antifa-Szene – sehen sich als emanzipatorische Elite, die die Aufgabe hat, die 'entfremdete' Mehrheit von ihrem 'falschen Bewußtsein' zu befreien. Ihre Grundüberzeugung lautet: 'Alles ist politisch!' (Hitzler *et al.* 2001, p. 225).

[that (certain) actual social conditions are unacceptable and, therefore, has to be turned to the 'better'. ... Their protagonists – and in particular the antifa-scene – see themselves as an emancipatory elite, which has the task to free the 'alienated' majority from its 'false consciousness'. Their fundamental conviction says: 'Anything is political!']

There are also probably motives of the *Selbstverwirklichungs-Szene* ['self-realisation scene'], which is the third of Hitzler's three scene types, present within the reggae scene: the urge to fulfil a more spiritual or even Rastafari-inclined self-realisation expressed by singers such as Gentleman on the one hand, an urge to self-realisation through individual performance, competence and success on the other hand. The following two case studies bring to light those tendencies of the reggae scene along with references to German history.

## Looking back to German left-wing history: Jan Delay's 'Söhne Stammheims' (*Searching for the Jan Soul Rebels*, 2001)

Jan Delay started as rapper Eizi Eiz in the Hamburg hip-hop group Absolute Beginner (renamed Beginner since 2003), which became widely successful with the album *Bambule* in 1998. Einfeld's debut album *Searching for the Jan Soul Rebels* was released under the stage name Jan Delay in 2001. According to Koehlings and Lilly, Jan Delay's was 'the first reggae album that not only featured German-language lyrics, but also talked about German political issues' (Koehlings and Lilly 2012, p. 88). Later in his solo career, Jan Delay successfully switched from reggae to soul and funk (*Mercedes-Dance*, 2006, and *Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Soul* [We Children of Soul Station], 2009) and to rock music (*Hammer & Michel*, 2014).

While the title of the CD alludes to the seminal album *Searching for the Young Soul Rebels* recorded by the English new wave band Dexy's Midnight Runners in 1980, the photos pictured on the CD cover of *Searching for the Jan Soul Rebels* draw a connection between the left-wing student revolts of the late 1960s and the anti-fascist and 'autonomous' groups ('Antifa' and 'Autonome') of the 1990s and 2000s. On the front cover, there is a historical picture probably of a street-fighting scene during the German student revolts in the late 1960s. There are German policemen in uniforms of the time, paving stones lying around and silhouettes of cars in smoke clouds. On the back cover, a hooded activist, masked with the so-called *Hasskappe* ['hate-mongerer'], a black cap and a black scarf over his mouth, proudly poses before the container harbour in Hamburg that is situated opposite the Hafenstrasse –the stronghold in the 1980s and 1990s of the Hamburg squatting and anti-fascists or 'autonomous' scene. Ironically, all of the musicians and singers pictured throughout the CD inner sleeves are masked in this way. Additionally, there are visual references both to German hip-hop (Advanced Chemistry) and Jamaican reggae (Dennis Brown).

Along with songs that refer to the reggae music of the accompanying Sam Ragga Band and sound system culture ('Sam Ragga Styler', 'Die Sonne scheint' ['The Sun is Shining']) and a pure slapstick dialogue by Jan Delay and Hamburg's punk hero Rocko Schamoni ('Rebecca & Svenja'), the album includes several songs with explicit or implicit social critique: a rejection of the commercial use of Delay's songs ('Ich möchte nicht, dass ihr meine Lieder singt' ['I don't Want you Singing my Songs']), critique of computer and Internet geek ('Konsolien' ['Nerd Republic']) and of television consumption ('Der rote Knopf' ['The Red Button']). Obviously, these topics are not typical of Jamaican reggae and dancehall. On the contrary, Jan Delay's lyrics refer to issues specific to German society voiced in a left-wing or 'conscious' tradition. His album also includes two songs that refer to German history from a decidedly anti-fascist perspective: 'Söhne Stammheims' ['Sons of Stammheim'] and 'www.hitler.de'.

'Söhne Stammheims' (with a nod to the name of the popular German hip-hop band Söhne Mannheims, founded in 1996) is an overtly political song. The lyrics allude to the suicide of four members of the Red Army Faction (RAF), Ulrike Meinhof, Andreas Baader, Gudrun Ensslin and Jan-Carl Raspe, in 1976 and 1977 in the high-security wing of the prison in Stuttgart-Stammheim. Presumably, the occasion for the song is the dissolution of the RAF, which was declared by the remaining members in 1998. This declaration marked a final point in the history of German radical left-wing movements of the 1968 generation. At the beginning of

the song, a voice declares: 'Stop the comeback of fascism in Germany and in Europe', therefore relating the RAF to the anti-fascist movement. Then, the musical texture of the song develops as a strange contrast of rather greasy synthesiser chords, alternating between F# major and C# major throughout, an oddly sounding synthesiser melody and a rather hectically rolling drum pattern. In contrast to most songs on the CD, in 'Söhne Stammheims' only the afterbeat chords of the electric piano mark the song stylistically as reggae. Throughout Jan Delay sings with a peaceful voice and in a calm manner. The beginning of the songs goes:

Endlich sind die Terroristen weg  
 und es herrscht Ordnung und Ruhe und Frieden,  
 und das bisschen Gesindel, das noch in den Knästen steckt,  
 tut sowieso keinen mehr interessieren.  
 Nun kämpfen die Menschen nur noch für Hunde und Benzin,  
 folgen Jürgen und Zlatko und nicht mehr Baader und Ensslin.  
 [At last, the terrorists are gone  
 and there is order and quiet and peace,  
 and the little scum, that still sticks in the prisons,  
 does not interest anybody anymore.  
 Now, the people fight for dogs and gas  
 following Jürgen and Zlatko and not Baader and Ensslin anymore.]

These lines are overtly ironic. Because of the disappearance of the terrorists, order and peace rule again – in spite of the few remaining political prisoners insulted as scum. Now, people are fighting for their pets and for lower gas prices and follow the stars of reality TV show 'Big Brother', Jürgen Milski and Zlatko Trpkovski. Later on, Delay mentions German arms trade and the practice of officially deporting children whose parents are rejected as asylum seekers in Germany. Thereby he critiques the double moral standards of German politics – claiming a continuity with Nazi militarism and racism. In combination with the strange musical mixture described above, this depiction of contradictory and inhumane German politics gains an overtly weird and uncanny aftertaste.

The corresponding official video is even more uncanny and ironic. The clip starts with a camera panning over a hilly landscape, then stopping at Jan Delay and his band who are performing on a meadow and parodying a folk music band with sun glasses and traditional Alpine costumes (with Swiss flags and edelweiss sewn on). Additionally, three young women are dancing in traditional Alpine costumes. All of them are dark-skinned, probably of Caribbean or African descent, which ridicules the myth of the Alps as the racially 'pure' heart of Europe. Jan Delay himself sings, looking towards the camera, and meanwhile performs inviting gestures with his arms, similar to gestures in German folk music shows that signal that the singer, musicians and audience all belong together.

Another song of the CD, 'www.hitler.de', takes the same line, pointing at the continuity and omnipotence of fascism in the digital age, in Germany and worldwide:

Der böse Mann mit dem kleinen Bart ist noch gar nicht tot.  
 Mindestens zweimal am Tag sagt er mir hallo. ...  
 Er ist mobil, er ist online, er ist allgegenwärtig.  
 Und die Anzahl seiner hirnlosen Jünger vermehrt sich gefährlich.  
 Er züchtet Schafe, er züchtet Menschen.  
 Und um Euch vor ihm zu warnen, sing' ich ihm dieses Ständchen! Attention!  
 [The evil man with the little moustache is not yet dead.]

At least two times each day he says hello to me. ...  
 He is mobile, he is online, he is omnipresent.  
 And the number of his brainless disciples is growing dangerously.  
 He breeds sheep, he breeds humans.  
 In order to warn you of him I sing this serenade for him! Attention!]

Obviously, these two songs stand in the tradition of resistance against fascism that constitutes a dynamic youth scene in Germany, so-called 'Antifa' or 'Autonome' with about 6000 active members in 2000 (cf. Hitzler *et al.* 2001, pp. 149–62). According to Hitzler *et al.*, the Antifa youth scene can be characterised on the one hand by theoretical and educational discussions of canonical left-wing texts, and on the other, by a practical, or to be more precise, aggressive and violent fighting against fascists groups:

Der Diskurs wird zur dominanten Handlungsstrategie gegenüber Nicht-'Faschisten', während Militanz die Auseinandersetzung mit 'Faschisten' beherrscht. Was von Mitgliedern der Antifa als ‚Öffentlichkeitsarbeit‘ bezeichnet wird, ergänzt diese beiden Strategien zu einem Handlungskomplex, bei dem es nicht zuletzt darum geht, Agitationen gegen Faschisten gegenüber einer – wie auch immer gearteten – ‚breiteren‘ Öffentlichkeit zu legitimieren. (Hitzler *et al.* 2001, p. 153).

[The discourse is turned into the dominant action strategy against non-'fascists' while militancy commands the dispute with 'fascists'. What is called 'public relations' by the members of the Antifa complements both these strategies into an action complex which involves not least the legitimisation of agitation against fascists for a 'broader' general public – whatever this may be.]

However, the anti-fascist youth is not restricted to one certain music genre, but prefer various genres like punk, hardcore, hip-hop and techno as well as Jamaican ska or alternative rock. Moreover, members distance themselves from political songs that try to overtly propagandise the critical attitudes and beliefs of the scene. The following view of one member seems to be quite common: 'Musik ist zum Feiern da. Wenn man das mit Politik verbindet, geht die eigentliche Aussage verloren, und was bleibt, ist eine dumpfe Parole' (cited in Hitzler *et al.* 2001, p. 157) ['Music is for partying. If one relates music to politics the actual message is lost, and what is left is a dull slogan']. Presumably, it is for this very reason that Jan Delay formulates humorous or ironic lyrics rather than straightforward political messages.

### **Celebrating Berlin: Seeed's 'Dickes B' [Thick B] (*New Dubby Conqueror*, 2001)**

The 11-strong dancehall crew Seeed, founded in Berlin in 1998, introduced dancehall music to a huge German audience. With a melange of reggae songs, contemporary dancehall riddims and electronic sound effects, as well as an amazing stage show that includes a thrilling dance choreography (often with additional female dancers), Seeed demonstrated that German dancehall music could be state-of-the-art and sexy.

Seeed's frontline consists of three vocalists, Enuff (born Pierre Baigorry), Ear (born Demba Nabé) and Eased (born Frank Dellé), a full band including saxophone, trombone, keyboards, guitar, bass, drums and percussion, and a DJ. It is significant that all three frontmen have a migrant background: Baigorry is the son of a French mother and a German father and was raised in Berlin-Steglitz; Nabé grew up in East Berlin as the son of a German mother and a father from Guinea; and Dellé, the son of a father from Ghana and a German mother, was born in West Berlin

and partly raised in Ghana – he later lived in Munich and Trier before coming back to Berlin. In many songs, Seeed mixes different languages – as rap groups like *Freundeskreis* did before them. Baigorry mainly raps in German, while Dellé usually sings in English and Nabé uses Jamaican patois.

The debut CD *New Dubby Conquerors*, published and promoted by major record company Warner Music in 2001, starts with the programmatic ‘Dancehall Caballeros’. In the corresponding video bizarre characters are combined with sceneries – the band posing as cowboys in a Wild Western town – that reference the Berlin background, as Enuuff sings: ‘Berliner Jungs auf Abwegen, kurz vorm Abheben’ [‘Berlin boys flirting with the wrong path, shortly before having one’s head in the cloud’]. This reference to Berlin and to the local rootedness of Seeed’s members is the pivotal issue of the song ‘Dickes B’. The title of the song alludes to a colloquial term for ‘buddy’ used by German youth today – like in the quite common expression ‘Ey Dicker, was geht?’ [‘Ey, dude, whassup?’] – while ‘B’ is referring to the number plates of Berlin cars, which all start with a capital B.

While many songs of the CD could be assigned rather to the (roots) reggae genre, or even to dub reggae owing to a slow tempo and certain sound effects, both ‘Dancehall Caballeros’ and ‘Dickes B’ are merging musical elements from dancehall and hip-hop. ‘Dickes B’ starts with some scratching noises referencing hip-hop and sound system culture. Then, a hymn-like motive is played twice by the brass instrument and leads to the first rap part and to the main musical structure of the song which includes a simple bass line, bass drum accents on 1 and 2+, cymbal and scrapper patterns, and a syncopated two-tone-cell of a bass synthesiser. Both the complex rhythmic structure of the riddim and its reduced harmony (no chord changes) and melody point in the direction of contemporary Jamaican dancehall music (Manuel and Marshall 2006); according to the tracks list, the song features Jamaican dancehall producer Black Kappa. The permanently changing, twittering sound of the bass synthesiser even alludes to electronic dance music but is, admittedly, not completely unfamiliar among new hip-hop beats too. However, during the refrains the riddim is completed by reggae-style afterbeat chords.

The lyrics of ‘Dickes B’ celebrate Berlin as Seeed’s hometown. At the same time, Berlin is associated with reggae music and partying. The first rap, with 16 end-rhymed lines, portrays life in Berlin both during the day and at night. Enuuff claims that reggae music (‘dicker Beat’ [‘fat beat’]) is why he fell in love with Berlin and his soundtrack to moving through town (‘wenn ich durch Berlin-City cruise is’ Reggae mein Motor’ [‘cruising through Berlin city reggae is my motor’]). With his neighbours he shares a love for reggae records (‘frische Downbeats’ [‘fresh downbeats’]) from the local record store and for sound system culture. He praises the nightlife with stunning bass (‘Du versinkst im Bass wie ‘ne Moorleiche im Moor’ [‘you sink into the bass like a bog body into the moor’]) and hardcore riddims (‘es zwingt dich in die Knie, denn der riddim is hardcore’ [‘it brings you to your knees because the riddim is hardcore’]), enjoys partying throughout the night and even boasts, in the morning-after party, of smoking a joint (‘dickes Rohr’ [‘fat tube’]) at the Brandenburg Gate. To sum up, the subject of the first rap is a hedonistic lifestyle and a local rootedness, which stands at the centre of the refrain too:

Dickes B, oben an der Spree,  
im Sommer tust du gut und im Winter tut’s weh.  
Mama Berlin, Backsteine und Benzin,  
Wir lieben deinen Duft, wenn wir um die Häuser zieh’n.

[Thick B, up at the Spree,  
 you do a lot of good in summer, it hurts in winter.  
 Mama Berlin, bricks and gas,  
 we love your smell when we move around the houses.]

According to these lines, 'Mama Berlin' is, on the one hand, a mother, while on the other, Berlin is painful in winter and – with the smell of bricks and gas – a rather rough town in general. In the second rap, right after the refrain and a repetition of the brass hymn, Enuff changes perspectives. He mentions the mass appeal of Berlin ('um Paraden zu feiern und exklusive Feten, die Massen sind jetzt da, es hat sie niemand drum gebeten!' ['to celebrate parades and exclusive parties, the masses are there now, nobody has asked them for']) and then, for just one line, he thinks back to Berlin during the Cold War – 'Früher ging's in Berlin um Panzer und Raketen' ['Formerly, tanks and rockets were involved in Berlin'] – which contrasts to the 'Blümchentapeten' ['flowered wallpapers'] and cheap life in East Berlin today, where he can work on his music. Lastly, he criticises the coolness of some people who are not earnest and reliable enough or have no competence for creating music ('zuviel Kraft in der Lunge für zu wenige Trompeten' ['too much power in the lungs for too few trumpets']). Therefore, in the second rap the largely hedonistic message of the song is mixed with historical references – Berlin is a town with history – as well as with references to pride and self-realisation about successfully creating good music.

After two further choruses Ear follows up with a toast in Jamaican patois that praises in detail the Berlin reggae scene, where one can go to dancehall club nights at several times during the week – Monday at Escobar, Tuesday at Tanzbar, Wednesday at Subground – and finally praises ('bigs up') the deejays of three Berlin-based sound systems: Barney Millah of Concrete Jungle, Panza of Supersonic, and Alex of Such A Sound. The song is followed by a rather long coda where after-party sounds – clinking glasses, murmuring and slight coughing (presumably while smoking) – are audible.

The video, directed by Daniel Harder and produced by Paul Schuh, reinforces the message of the lyrics. The clip features both well-known places in Berlin and the underground club life of music and partying. In the first three minutes, one sees the band members wearing suits and walking, dancing, riding bicycles and singing through Berlin: on the Warsaw Bridge in Friedrichshain, at Kreuzberg around the Kottbusser Tor (including the insider Downbeat Record Store at Oranienstraße), at the Alexanderplatz, in front of the Berlin Cathedral, at a multiethnic flea market presumably in Kreuzberg, on the rooftop of a building, at the Potsdamer Platz, at the Landwehrkanal in Kreuzberg (wearing sunglasses while snow falls around) and performing a sophisticated choreography (with walking sticks) in the underpass of a subway station (presumably at Alexanderplatz). Then, Ear raps his toasts walking under the bridge of the U1 subway at Postamt Skalitzer Straße, at the Potsdamer Platz and at the remains of the Berlin wall at Mauerpark – while other members are literally dancing on the wall – again at Alexanderplatz at dusk, and finally in a night venue performing in front of an excited audience. During the final minute of the clip one sees the stage performance of Seeed with quick screen changes to an enthusiastically dancing audience, often filmed in slow motion. The last image shows Enuff grinning for the camera; the after-party noises of the track are missing in the video version.

To sum up, 'Dickes B' celebrates Seeed's hometown of Berlin as an exciting and good-humoured place to live, with both a certain rawness and a motherly protectiveness. Berlin is the new capital of the reunified Germany but at the same time it is international, multi-ethnic and up-to-date in regard to popular music and party culture. The huge popularity of Seeed's 'Dickes B' beyond the reggae and dancehall scene presumably owes to its authentic capacity to capture the vibes and lifestyle of that young Berlin.<sup>3</sup>

## Conclusion and outlook

In the 1990s and 2000s, German society underwent several changes. Starting with the reunification in 1990 Germans were looking for a new self-awareness and a new role in Europe and the world. In this context, discussions of Germany's recent history – Nazi fascism, Eastern totalitarianism and US hegemony during the Cold War as well as implications of globalisation – have been on the political agenda. While popular culture and youth scenes rarely engage directly in these reflections, one can detect several effects of these historical transformation processes there too, along with more general reflections on Western consumerism and individualism.

Although the reggae scene is only a minor cultural group it is, nevertheless, a vibrant part of the 'mainstream of minorities' within contemporary German popular culture, and it shares several attitudes and cultural orientations with other youth scenes. Similar to the techno and rave scenes, there is a strong tendency towards hedonism and an easy-going celebration of oneself as well as a certain pride in the local scene and the hometown, as exemplified in Seeed's 'Dickes B'. At the same time, however, there is a critical attitude towards contemporary society, to consumerism and media dullness as well as to capitalism, fascism and racism in general. Therefore, the reggae scene is confronted with an ambivalence with which their members have to cope. On the one hand, their attitudes are markedly post-materialistic and 'conscious' (and with some singers even spiritual or religious), but on the other hand, they celebrate having fun and partying in a rather excessive way. Regardless, the scene seems to successfully integrate both components by including different artists or at least different songs that relate to these contradicting messages. One could say that reggae and dancehall music afford both energetic music with boosting lyrics that celebrate the local scene with its sound systems and dancehall massives, and more critical lyrics in regard to consumerism, bourgeois narrow-mindedness, etc., as with Jan Delay, who aligns himself with the antifascist youth scene. Furthermore, the reconciliation between hedonism and political consciousness goes along with both the appreciation of an open-minded, multi-ethnic society and a new German self-consciousness, which is expressed most of all in the usage of German language within its popular songs.

Nowadays in Germany, ethnic diversity seems to be a matter of course – in society and in culture as well as in politics. While there is a new wave of xenophobia and racism in Germany since the 1990s – most of all in those regions with a smaller immigrant population – it seems to be a matter of course for the well-educated urban

<sup>3</sup> In 2009, more than a third of around 1000 readers of the Berlin city magazine *Tipp* voted for 'Dickes B' as the new Berlin hymn; this was only second place since around 10 more people voted for 'Schwarz zu blau' from Peter Fox, i.e. the pseudonym of Enuff aka Pierre Baigorry as a solo artist (cf. [tip Berlin 2009](#)).



middle class to live and collaborate with immigrants and their children. Similar to the hip-hop scene, many children of immigrants are members of the reggae scene and follow role models like Nosliw or Patrice or the frontmen of Seeed and Culcha Candela. At the same time, there is a strong local rootedness of many scene activists regardless of their parents' origin.

Since the 1990s, German singers and rappers have become more self-confident in using German lyrics – in rock music and rap music as well as in dancehall music. While some reggae artists prefer to use Jamaican patois in order to create 'authentic' reggae music and others use English, artists like Jan Delay or Nosliw have started to sing in German, or mixing German, English and patois like the three frontmen of Seeed; Culcha Candela adds Spanish to the mix, thanks to the Columbian roots of one of its singers. Moreover, there are artists who use their local accent or dialect, including Saxon (Rony Trettmann), Bavarian (Hans Söllner) and Schwyzerdütsch [Swiss-German] (Phenomden). The use of German seems to be a general tendency in German popular music that started back in the 1970s and 1980s but strongly increased in the 1990s after the German reunification. Recently, Thomas Phleps (2014) has shown that, from 2011 to 2013, more and more German and German-language songs have been leading the pop charts in Germany each year compared with songs in other languages. What seems to be rather a matter of course in other European countries like France, Italy and Spain is a new achievement for German youth, which for decades relied strongly on popular music from the United States and Great Britain (though in the 1950s and 1960s sometimes in German translations sung by German artists). As Nosliw puts it in an interview with *Riddim* magazine on the occasion of the release of his second CD *Mehr davon* in 2007:

'Wir sind jetzt soweit, dass man Reggae in deutscher Sprache nicht mehr ignorieren kann und wir haben uns fest vorgenommen, in Zukunft für noch mehr Furore mit unserer Musik zu sorgen'. (Cited in Moritz 2007, p. 56)

[ 'Right now we are not able anymore to ignore German-language reggae, and we are firmly determined to make more fuss with our music in the future.' ]

This tendency is obviously related to a detachment from the role-model of the United States that predominated Western German popular culture during the Cold War. Significantly, the reference point for a newly emerged youth scene – the reggae scene – is not a music genre originating from the United States or the UK, but popular music from a small, underdeveloped Caribbean island. Of course, there are still cultural imbalances and economic dependencies between actors from Jamaica and Germany. However, while US popular music was often received in a cultural one-way-street, reggae and sound system activists try to collaborate with their Jamaican colleagues on an equal footing. At the same time, German reggae artists rarely just copy and imitate their Jamaican role models, but start to develop a music with lyrics that reflect the divergent conditions in Germany and Europe.

Looking at the reggae scenes in other European countries (except the UK and France), Koehlings and Lilly speak of the pioneering and leading role of Germany. Although regional reggae scenes develop at a much faster rate than in the 1980s and 1990s, '(n)evertheless, a lot of people are still looking to Germany, be it for sound systems, record outlets, artists like Gentleman or a magazine like *Riddim*' (Koehlings and Lilly 2012, p. 91). They continue: 'The development process of other continental European countries mirrors the one seen in Germany in that they

began by first copying the Jamaican blueprint before turning initial misunderstanding into something productive, something that is Jamaican in form, but European in content' (p. 92). Interestingly enough, Leipzig-based Germaican Records founded several sub-labels dedicated to releases of local artists within several European countries (as well as to Japan and Latin America): Germaica Austria, Germaica Iberia, Germaica Italia and Germaica Polska with Internet websites in the respective languages (see <http://www.germaica.net/>). It is tempting to relate the claim of a pioneering role of the Germans within the European reggae scene with the leading role of Germany within the European Union in regard to economics as well as, recently, to migration politics. However, in other European countries such as in Italy or Finland (Ramstedt 2014; Järvenpää 2014), let alone the UK and France, vibrant reggae scenes have flourished completely independently from German influences or role-models.

While German reggae and dancehall music seem to reflect several aspects of self-awareness and identity within contemporary Germany, looking back on German history is a rather rare topic within German reggae and dancehall songs. An exception is Jan Delay's reference to the Red Army Faction, which still seems to be an institution that many anti-imperialistic and anti-fascist groups consciously look at, especially in former West Germany. In contrast, there is little dispute over history on the Eastern side of the Iron Curtain. Again, there seems to be an exception: Ronny Trettmann's 'Grossvater' ['grandfather'], a song which was quite successful in 2008 judging from its accolade as best national tune of the year by *Riddim* magazine's reader's poll (cf. Leserpoll 2009, p. 28). In 'Großvater', Trettmann tells of his grandparents' life during Nazi Germany, the Second World War and the German Democratic Republic, including the captivity of his grandfather in a Soviet labour camp.<sup>4</sup> This points to a chapter of the GDR history that was taboo in the East during the Cold War.

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<sup>4</sup> The lyrics go: 'Er war erst 16 Jahre alt, als er die Heimat verlies und in Kriegsgefangenschaft geriet. In Sibirien unter Tage, überleben war ne aussichtslose Lage, Spitzhacke in der Hand, kurz geschorene Haare, in 'nem fremden Land, Strafarbeit für Jahre, nichts zu essen, keine Frau, nur Tabakmangelware. Seine ganze Kindheit war 'ne Militärparade, seine ganze Jugend 'ne todbringende Strapaze' ['He was only sixteen when he left his home and found himself in a prisoner-of-war camp. In Siberia working underground, surviving was a hopeless situation, with a pickaxe in his hands, short cut hair, in a foreign country, forced labour for years, nothing to eat, no woman, only defective tobacco. His whole childhood was a military parade, his whole youth a lethal strain.']

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