

Cosmopolitanism and Global Imaginaries in Ivoirian Music

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Popular mass-mediated music including the genres *zouglou* and *coupé-décalé* have become important platforms for societal and political debates in Côte d'Ivoire since the early 1990s. *Zouglou* is a word-led genre and its incisive texts of social commentary have been a key to *zouglou* music's international success. One of the recurring themes in *zouglou* songs relates to the former colonial metropole France, and by extension the West in general: *zouglou* artists, singing from the point of view of economically marginalised youth, depict themselves as social underdogs, at the receiving end of an unjust and unequal postcolonial relationship. In 2002, while Côte d'Ivoire was experiencing a severe political crisis that split the country in two, a new musical style called *coupé-décalé* emerged. In a context where artists have acted as popular opinion leaders, this musical genre has been heavily criticised in Côte d'Ivoire for being lyrically vacuous.

However, *coupé-décalé* is also effectively engaging with a socio-political project. The significance of *coupé-décalé* is not in the content of its song texts, but rather in its imagery and the life-style of its initiators. Born in the nightclubs of the Ivoirian diaspora in Paris, *coupé-décalé* is a transnational musical style *par excellence*. *Coupé-décalé* as a genre celebrates the exploits of young Ivoirians having made a fortune in France – rather than suffering from the injustice of the postcolonial relationship, *coupé-décalé* artists celebrate themselves for mastering both environments. Heavily influenced by Congolese (DRC) musical references, and making ample use of both Ivoirian and global cultural references, *coupé-décalé* has been active in the creation of a young urban and cosmopolitan identity that is at home both in Europe and in Africa.