Eco Hip-Hop Education

Rap Music, Environmental Justice, and Climate Change in Music Education

Linus Eusterbrock

Abstract *Hip-Hop music's history as a paradigmatically urban form of music might make it seem far-fetched to explore a connection with themes such as nature, the environment, and climate change. But Hip-Hop has a tradition of addressing environmental questions. The essay seeks to draw from this tradition by exploring practices in Hip-Hop music that provide opportunities for music education to engage with environmental issues. It focuses on environmental justice, discussing works of Black and Indigenous artists Common and Supaman about access to water; place-based pedagogy, as in DJ Cavem's tracks on access to nature and healthy food; and normative contradictions in the climate crisis, as Hip-Hop artist Conny negotiates in his work.*

Introduction

Hip-Hop did not originate in the countryside but in New York, in the Bronx, and its history as a paradigmatically urban form of music might make it seem far-fetched to explore a connection with themes such as nature, the environment, and climate change. But Hip-Hop has a rich tradition of addressing environmental issues (Müller/Durand 2022a).[1] The present essay seeks to make

1 Examples from the history of Hip-Hop include the celebration of rain as spiritual cleansing from oppressive conditions and the beginning of a new relationship between human beings and nature in Arrested Development's "Raining Revolution" (1992), and the reflection on the cultural significance of and struggle for (drinking) water in "New World Water" (1999) by Yasiin Bey (formerly known as Mos Def). More recent tracks are discussed in this essay. Further examples of Hip-Hop tracks that explicitly engage with ecological issues can be found in Müller and Durand 2022b and Nocella II et al. 2017.

this tradition useful for music education by exploring practices in Hip-Hop music that provide opportunities for engaging with environmental issues. In particular, I would like to spur a discussion on the idea that the particular ways in which Hip-Hop music engages ecological themes offer an opportunity for music education to address questions of environmental justice, place-based pedagogy, and normative ambiguity.

In the following, I will focus solely on Hip-Hop *music*, with an emphasis on rap lyrics. Seeking connections to Hip-Hop practices of graffiti and breaking would certainly be worthwhile but would go beyond the scope of this text. My considerations are not limited to a specific educational area but pertain to all fields of music education, whether it be school music classes, higher education, or music programs in youth and cultural centers. I will refer to Hip-Hop *cultures* "to reflect the notion that a monolithic hip-hop culture does not exist" (Kruse 2016: 248). Since I am mainly familiar with US and German rap, I will only engage with these two traditions, well aware that this focus narrows the perspective and fails to do justice to the diversity of global Hip-Hop cultures. Furthermore, I will mainly address conscious rap, which is predominantly aligned with progressive values. This is another limitation that allows only a very narrow view of Hip-Hop cultures, and which opens me as an educator to criticism that I have taken the easy route by excluding uncomfortable language and genres like gangsta rap from music education (see the chapters by Jabari Evans and Charlotte Furtwängler in this volume). Moreover, my perspective is inevitably shaped by the fact that I am a White, male, European, able-bodied researcher holding a privileged social position. As an example: when I write about the Indigenous rap that arose during the protests against the Keystone XL pipeline in the United States, I do so not as someone with intimate knowledge or lived experience of local Indigenous cultures.

Ecological issues have so far played only a minor role in scholarly discussions about music education. As US music educator Daniel J. Shevock observes: "The 21st century has been defined by ecological crises, and these crises have been absent from most critical conversations in music teaching and learning" (Shevock 2020: 174). Beginning around 2018, and further inspired by the first (and, to date, only) monograph on the subject, Shevock's *Eco-literate Music Pedagogy* (2018), a debate is emerging about how music education might engage with ecological issues. Space constraints prevent this text from providing an overview of the debate (see instead Bates, forthcoming). It should be noted, however, that several authors understand ecological music education as a place-based pedagogy (Gruenewald 2003), deriving from and

engaging with the place where one lives, works, and learns (see Bates 2011: 118; Shevock 2018; Smith 2021). The hope is that place-based pedagogy can make global crises tangible in everyday life and lead to concrete material changes following the principle of "think globally, act locally." Moreover, discussions here are increasingly pointing out that the (intersectional) dimensions of justice in today's ecological crises need to be addressed more directly in music education than has been the case (see Esterbrock 2022).

I consider it necessary for music education to engage with ecological issues in all their cultural complexity, normative ambiguity, and implications for justice. Hip-Hop practices offer opportunities here, as I will attempt to show in the following. I will begin by making some general observations about the relationship between Hip-Hop cultures, music teaching, and environmental education, to then discuss three thematic areas of focus where I see particular opportunities, namely, addressing environmental justice, engaging in place-based pedagogy, and negotiating normative contradictions.

Eco Hip-Hop Education

As this essay examines the potential of Hip-Hop practices for ecological music education, it is important to ask how the relationship between music education, Hip-Hop cultures, and environmental education should be understood in such an endeavor. Adam Kruse (2016, with reference to Hill 2009: 119–126) has distinguished three different approaches of working with Hip-Hop in educational contexts: "hip-hop as bridge," where Hip-Hop practices are used as a tool to achieve other educational goals, such as language acquisition; "hip-hop as lens," where learning through Hip-Hop uncovers and reflects upon power structures within the cultural artifacts of Hip-Hop cultures and beyond; and "hip-hop as practice," where Hip-Hop practices themselves are understood as practices of generating and disseminating knowledge, i.e., as a pedagogy (see, for example, Dimitriadis 2009).

Ecological music education aims to engage with the relationship between humans and the natural ecosystem against the backdrop of its current state of crisis; at the same time, it of course also pursues other music educational goals, such as cultural participation and the imparting of knowledge and skills in various musical practices and cultures (see Esterbrock 2022: 387–388). Addressing ecological issues through Hip-Hop practices in music education operates in a field between two demands. First, it aims to have students learn about basic

Hip-Hop practices such as beatmaking and rapping and gain knowledge about Hip-Hop cultures and history. Second, it aims for children and adolescents to learn to engage with environmental issues such as climate change through listening to and creating Hip-Hop tracks.

At first glance, one might think that this second aim could be categorized under "hip-hop as *bridge*," suggesting that Hip-Hop is being instrumentalized here for a separate educational aim—as we find, for instance, in the use of Hip-Hop for media education. But I would like to argue that the use of Hip-Hop practices to engage with environmental issues in educational contexts corresponds at least as much to the second and third modes identified by Kruse, meaning that Hip-Hop functions here as a *lens* to examine the cultural dimensions of ecological crises in Hip-Hop songs and beyond, and that Hip-Hop is to be understood as its own *practice* of ecocritical knowledge generation and dissemination (see above). As I attempt to show in this essay, there have been and are many actors within the ultradiverse field of global Hip-Hop cultures who explicitly engage with ecological issues; there are, moreover, many shared characteristics of Hip-Hop cultures, such as the engagement with the material conditions of one's own place, that are relevant for productively confronting ecological crises. Hence, the topic of the environment would not be *externally* imposed on Hip-Hop, and Hip-Hop would not simply be *instrumentalized* for ecoeducation. Rather, what I am proposing is that we engage with Hip-Hop practices themselves as a public pedagogy that poses ecological questions. What is needed here is for us to transfer this informal environmental pedagogy that is inherent to Hip-Hop to educational institutions.

That said, a certain degree of instrumentalization ("hip-hop as bridge") is probably unavoidable when focusing on ecological issues in Hip-Hop-based music pedagogy, if only because of the fact that we have chosen this focus. Here, however, it is important for educators to critically reflect and minimize the degree of instrumentalization as much as possible, as any unreflective and excessive instrumentalization of Hip-Hop practices for other educational purposes carries several risks.

First, it can represent a cultural appropriation of Hip-Hop cultures that might even undermine the sociocritical concern inherent in many Hip-Hop cultures. For example, Oliver Kautny has shown in his essay in this volume how elements of the classic song "The Message" by Grandmaster Flash & the Furious Five (1982) were appropriated as a parody used in German music education during the 90s, taking the music out of context and neglecting the sociocritical message of the original lyrics. Second, a crude instrumentalization of Hip-Hop

for educational purposes typically results in music that does not meet the aesthetic criteria that are associated with the appropriated Hip-Hop music styles. This can also be observed in the numerous pieces of ecological rap produced for school use. (Many educators have probably encountered such teaching material before—and if not, a quick online search will lead to relevant examples.) Third, rap music not meeting the aesthetic standards of the respective genre might deter learners and make it difficult for them to relate, with the result that it hardly offers students the artistic means of expression it hopes to provide. Hence the aim of any Hip-Hop-based pedagogy in working with ecological themes must be to address the ecological crises of our times through the expressive forms of Hip-Hop music, while taking seriously the concerns and artistic means of the Hip-Hop cultures from which it draws.

Hip-Hop and Environmental Justice in Music Education

Criticizing social injustice is an integral part of conscious rap. Accordingly, Hip-Hop songs that address environmental themes often address them as a justice issue, such as the issue of unfair distribution of environmental burdens and their consequences within society (Harrison/Pace 2022).

To provide an example of the potential that the exploration of environmental justice issues in Hip-Hop holds for ecological music education, I would like to take a look at two Hip-Hop tracks from recent years that are dedicated to the cultural and material significance of water (based on a 2022 analysis by Stefan Benz): Common's "Trouble in the Water" (2014) and Supaman's "Miracle" (2018). I will focus here on the subjects to whom the tracks attribute agency vis-à-vis ecological crises. What do the tracks tell us about who can do something to fight environmental destruction—individuals? the government? corporations? everyone? This question of *agency* is crucial for determining who bears *responsibility* to act. Negotiating how responsibility is to be assigned for ecological destruction and its consequences is a central part of the debate on climate justice and environmental justice (Gardiner 2011).

"Trouble in the Water," which rapper Common recorded together with Malik Yusef, Kumasi, Aaron Fresh, Choklate, and Laci Kay, appeared in 2014 on the collaborative album *HOME* (an acronym for "Heal Our Mother Earth"), which is marketed in the liner notes as a "soundtrack for the climate movement." *HOME* is produced and distributed by the Hip-Hop Caucus, a collective of music activists that aims to "connect […] the Hip Hop community to the

civic process to build power and create positive change" (Hip-Hop Caucus: n.d.). The album prominently denounces the lead contamination faced by marginalized, and in particular Black, communities in the Rust Belt city of Flint, Michigan, in the United States (Benz 2022).

The track "Trouble in the Water" warns against environmental destruction, and especially water pollution, caused by humans and calls for environmental activism. It also explicitly frames water pollution as a matter of justice, as evident in the following two bars: "Contaminate the ocean / Now the water is lethal / Four bucks for two liters / That should be illegal." Here, the track addresses both the dangers of water contamination and the commercialization of clean drinking water.

As Benz (2022: 26–29) shows, the track inconsistently attributes agency and thus responsibility for the consequences of water pollution. It primarily establishes an anthropocentric human-nature dualism, with humanity as a whole being held responsible for environmental destruction. For instance, the text refers to the biblical narrative of nature as God's gift to human beings, whose greed proves that they are unworthy of this paradise they have been given, and which they are destroying: "In the beginning was the word / And then He made water / Then He made man / And then came the slaughter."

However, such an indictment of all humanity risks obscuring the different kinds of agency and responsibility among individuals and communities in today's ecological crisis—whether between the so-called Global North and Global South or resulting from discriminatory factors such as race, class, or gender. Such a generalization might make sense in the context of the track's intention: to motivate as many individuals as possible to act, all listeners must first be held accountable. In educational spaces, however, the song should be taken as an opportunity for a critical discussion about responsibility for environmental destruction. At times, the text holds all listeners accountable to "heal our mother earth"; at other times, it refers to an unspecified "they," who, for example, are responsible for fracking and the pollution of drinking water (see Benz 2022: 28).

A different approach to attributing agency and responsibility for water pollution is followed by the track "Miracle" (2018), a collaboration between the Indigenous Apsáalooke rapper Supaman and the Black-Indigenous rapper Maimouna Youssef. The track is set in the context of Indigenous protests against the contamination of drinking water by the so-called Dakota Access Pipeline, which began in 2016 and continue to this day. This oil pipeline threatens the water supply of Indigenous communities living in and around the

Standing Rock Indian Reservation. "Miracle" understands the fight for clean water as a fight for Indigenous rights and survival. The chorus ends with Youssef citing the Stand'n'Rock protesters' battle cry "Water is life!," lamenting that "all around the world / My sisters and brothers hurt." Supaman and Youssef position themselves in a line with other struggles to preserve basic necessities of life worldwide, "From Flint, Michigan / To my Egyptian friends." The song seeks solidarity with the Black civil rights movement, for example by quoting Public Enemy's album title *It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back* (1988). It emphasizes continuity with historical Indigenous struggles for environmental and food justice, for instance, by invoking the spirit of the "Ghost Dance," a nineteenth-century religious movement with which Indigenous communities protested against the U.S. government's reduction of their food rations. Finally, the song condemns not only environmental injustice against human beings. The video for the song (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C9-VTggwePA) ends with a quote from Black Elk: "All things are our relatives / What we do to everything / We do to ourselves / All is really one" (4:42–47). This reveals the song's spiritual and ecocentric perspective (Kortetmäki 2013).

"Miracle" foregrounds various justice-related implications of ecological issues by identifying marginalized communities as particularly affected, naming the responsibility of governments and corporations, and revealing structures of colonialist, racist, and capitalist exploitation. This song, too, can serve as an opportunity in the classroom to think about agency in relation to environmental destruction. The sometimes vague attribution of agency in "Trouble in the Water" could be compared in the music classroom with the attribution of agency in "Miracle," which holds exploitative and racist practices of capitalism responsible for ecological crises. This would make it possible to ask questions about agency and responsibility in the climate crisis by engaging with various Hip-Hop tracks.

In addition to engaging with existing tracks such as those discussed above, and exploring the contexts from which they originate,[2] music educators can have students produce their own tracks on related topics. One goal might be for students to express and share their experiences of injustice through creative means and to employ musical tools to critically reflect on the underlying

2 When songs by Indigenous musicians, such as "Miracle," are addressed in music education, it is crucial to pay due attention to the cultural context of the music to avoid the often-repeated mistake of "extracting ecological insights from Indigenous cultures without paying attention to colonial history" (Balestrini 2022).

ideologies (see Hess 2019: 6; Eusterbrock 2022: 391–393). Similarly, for example, Michael J. Cermak has set up a Hip-Hop songwriting project "that used environmentally themed (green) hip-hop to stimulate learning in an environmental science classroom" (Cermak 2012: 192). Cermak demonstrates how writing one's own lyrics can serve to reflect on the role of discriminatory categories such as race and class in environmental disasters (ibid.: 196–198). In such songwriting projects, it is important not just to adopt Hip-Hop practices, such as rapping, for environmental education but to seriously engage with Hip-Hop music and culture, to consider the questions of environmental justice posed in songs such as "Miracle," and to start from the lived experience of the students. To use Kruse's (2016) terminology, as introduced above, the point is to employ Hip-Hop not merely as a *bridge* to environmental pedagogy. Instead, Hip-Hop can offer students a *lens* to gain a clearer view of the systemic causes of climate change and related crises, just as Hip-Hop's *practice* of engaging with the intersectional justice-related implications of ecological crises can provide inspiration for teaching.

While some scholars in ecological music education have demanded a focus on environmental justice (see Shevock 2018, Smith 2021), a detailed and nuanced examination of the justice dimensions of environmental crises in relation to music education has only just begun (see Eusterbrock 2022). Since the expression of experiences of injustice and the critique of underlying ideologies have a long tradition in Hip-Hop, the integration of Hip-Hop practices into ecological music education could help to foreground the justice-related implications of ecological crises.

Hip-Hop and Place-Based Learning in Music Education

For most people, Hip-Hop may initially be associated primarily with urbanity (see above), unlike other musical genres that are traditionally associated with nature, such as folk music. However, the close connection of Hip-Hop cultures with urbanity is by no means contradictory to an engagement with ecology.

For one thing, rap music from *nonurban* areas that addresses locally situated nature certainly exists. To name just one example: in his track "My Sub" (2011), the rapper and producer Big K.R.I.T. incorporates the rural Mississippi landscape he calls home by using rhythmic cricket chirping instead of a hi-hat, into which he lays the massive sub-bass around which the piece revolves (see Burton 2017). What's more, the question of ecology is not only a rural but also

an urban one. Ecocritical cultural studies have long located nature primarily in nonurban landscapes (Müller/Durand 2022). Yet urban residents are equally part of ecology and exposed to ecological crises.[3] Even in a city neighborhood without a single tree, ecological issues arise, e.g., the very fact that there are no trees raises questions of environmental (in)justice; further questions might concern water quality, air pollution, heat resilience, and the availability of regional foods.

Scrutinizing one's immediate surroundings, the everyday spaces within one's own community, and their material conditions has long been a key element of Hip-Hop culture, for example, in regards to how the built environment of housing projects influences the thoughts and behaviors of their residents (see, for instance, Rüter 2022). The tradition of engaging with local (material) conditions in numerous Hip-Hop practices holds potential for ecological music education: a number of scholars who explore the prospects of an ecological music pedagogy see it as a place-conscious critical pedagogy. This pedagogy combines "place-based education, with its focus on local solutions and environmental consciousness, with a critical pedagogy that encourages and enables students to question the contexts and various forms of oppression within which they live" (Bates 2011: 118; see also Shevock 2018 and Smith 2021). Hip-Hop practices can highlight the role of *urban* ecology in place-based learning within music education. To date, ecological music education has shown a marked tendency to concentrate mainly on human-nature relationships in nonurban settings.[4] This trend can be countered by incorporating Hip-Hop practices into ecological music education, as Hip-Hop culture is traditionally linked with urban settings and experiences, though not exclusively.

As an inspiration for place-based work with Hip-Hop in music education, the work of DJ Cavem—which exists at the intersection of rap, environmental,

3 Global urbanization (by 2050, an estimated 80 percent of humanity will live in cities) further underscores the significance of urban nature experience.

4 To take the influential work of Shevock (2018) as an example: while acknowledging that his place-based and ecoliterate music pedagogy is designed to be applicable to rural, urban, and suburban areas alike (ibid.: 28), his book predominantly features examples related to rural nature, and its philosophical-poetic reflections on the concepts of soil and wilderness (ibid.: chapter 1; 22–23, 70) suggest a similar orientation. This should not be viewed as a shortfall of the approach: it actually provides a counterbalance to the urban bias of music education research, which often regards urban conditions as the pedagogical norm (see also Bates 2016).

and food justice—can serve as a model.[5] DJ Cavem, whose real name is Ietef Vita, is a rapper, vegan chef, and environmental and nutrition educator from Denver, Colorado (USA). He grew up in a disadvantaged neighborhood predominantly inhabited by poor people of color, where there was a liquor store, a youth prison, and fast-food joints, but no access to either nature or healthy food (see Nocella II et al. 2017). As a young man, DJ Cavem developed community-based initiatives that foster organic urban gardening, work to protect the climate, educate about healthy and plant-based nutrition, and offer activities that include cooking, gardening, and music courses for children. He addresses these same themes in his work as a rap artist. His lyrics revolve around food and environmental justice, gardening, and sustainability, and his album *Biomimicz* was released with a seed pack and recipes for vegan dishes.

Nutrition and health are among the topics that are particularly suited to ecologically conscious place-based education, as they connect the global with the local dimensions of ecological crises and relate to the concrete experiences of people in the place where they live. Industrial agriculture and factory farming are not only driving the destruction of the climate and ecosystems globally, but their products are also harmful to the health of local communities; local solutions such as the decentralized, community-based production of plant-based foods through organic urban gardening, as advocated by DJ Cavem, combat both the direct local effects of unsustainable agriculture—obesity, diabetes, etc.—and their global impacts, such as climate change.

When ecological crises are linked to the behavior of citizens (such as their dietary habits), there is always the danger that systemic problems will be individualized: it is important not to suggest individual sustainable consumption as the main solution for climate change, while industry actors continue to produce even more emissions and fight against decarbonization. That's why it's crucial in education to consider the social dimensions of ecological crises and to ask questions about environmental justice, such as who bears responsibility for environmental damage and who suffers from its consequences. DJ

5 Moreover, the songs mentioned in the previous section by Supaman and other Indigenous rappers, who dedicate their work to the defense of the Standing Rock Reservation, can be understood (despite all references to global struggles for environmental justice) as place-based public pedagogy for ecological justice. They discuss the *local* effects of environmental destruction and draw their resistance from the symbols, languages, and sounds of *local* Indigenous cultures.

Cavem's work is a good example of how the systemic and justice-related aspects of the link between environment and nutrition can be addressed in music. In his songs, he adresses the meager availability of locally produced plant-based organic foods in poor areas and communities of color, and the fact that marginalized communities often suffer disproportionally from environmental damage, such as poor air and water quality.

An example of the discussion of environmental justice in DJ Cavem's art is the video for his song "Pull Up on the Gate" (2021); in it, he is seen as a landscaper maintaining the gardens of predominantly White affluent suburbs. He draws attention to the fact that people of color in US cities often lack access to natural areas where they might relax or garden to produce their own food, while it is often people of color who work as landscapers tending the gardens of the privileged. In this way, a rap song about gardening can highlight the issues of justice inherent in access to nature and environmental protection.

Music like DJ Cavem's lends itself well to music educational contexts because it inherently embodies an educational stance: DJ Cavem calls himself an educator, and his album *The Produce Section* is "part album, part curriculum" (DJ Cavem: n.d.). As an artist with a national profile, his educational approach is per se not only place-based; and yet, his art provides material for place-based education because it deals with how food and environmental justice manifest in *local* contexts and what *locally* oriented activism might look like. The work of DJ Cavem can serve as inspiration for an eco Hip-Hop education as place-based education; in the actual pedagogical practice, teachers and learners would then jointly engage with their place (neighborhood, village, school environment, etc.) and draw on its resources: How is their place being affected by climate change? How do people eat and move, and how is this related to the ecological crises of our time? What alternative possibilities for nutrition and transportation could be imagined here? What access to nature do people have? What mechanisms of oppression are effective at this place with regard to access to nature and healthy nutrition? The answers to these questions will vary greatly depending on the place where such a place-based Eco Hip-Hop education is being undertaken. Methodologically, it would be possible, for example, for students to deal with these topics by writing rap lyrics or making beats in which they sample environmental sounds, thereby commenting creatively on the local situation.

Hip-Hop and Negotiating Normative Contradictions

In Hip-Hop, there is a tradition of playing with irony and ambiguity and of navigating and straddling normative contradictions (for instance, oscillating between embracing capitalist consumer culture and criticizing it). Hip-Hop's particular strategies for dealing with cultural complexity and normative contradictions also have significance for ecological music education. To support this claim, I would like to analyze a song by the German rapper Conny—"Schäm Dich!" (Shame on you!, 2020)—in which he deals ironically with climate shame, i.e., shame at one's own environmentally harmful consumer behavior and the defense mechanisms we have to suppress or ignore it.

The song repeatedly features samples from speeches given by climate activist Greta Thunberg, who is understood as a moral authority before whom the lyrical I wants to justify its environmentally harmful behavior.[6] In the verses, the lyrical I delivers a speech in its own defense, while the chorus concludes: "Schäm Dich, wenn Du Dich jetzt noch nicht schämst" ("Shame on you if you aren't ashamed already"). Because Conny intones the verses and chorus, the track creates the impression of an inner dialogue in which the lyrical I grapples with its contradictory feelings in light of its own consumer behavior.

The verses touch on many important aspects of the topic of environmentally harmful consumption: the conflict between hedonism and morality ("I'm at the grill and all I get is hate / Why are climate killers so much fun?"); defensive reactions against moral condemnation ("I won't be told I'm a criminal"); the difficulty of moving away from established and familiar, but unsustainable values and habits ("But why doesn't it work today if it worked before?"); a society that imposes a neoliberal work regime on its citizens and encourages consumption as recreation, while demanding individual sacrifice for climate protection ("First they feed you 60-hour work week hustle / Then they don't even want to let you have a vacation"). This last issue in particular provides space for engaging with the complex topic of individual responsibility in the climate crisis: Does the fixation of climate protection discourse on individual behavior shift responsibility away from politics and business and distract from the systemic nature of the crisis (Adams 2018)? Or is (more) sustainable individual consumption a necessary part of climate-conscious action, if only for reasons

6 It should be noted that Conny's song, as well as this article, were written before Thunberg's controversial comments after the Hamas attacks on Israel on October 7, 2023, and the subsequent invasion of Gaza by the Israeli military.

of personal integrity and to make the issue something that matters in our everyday lives (Mark 2019)? Conny's song "Schäm Dich!" ventures into this normative thicket.

While Conny certainly takes a position by parodying and ultimately discrediting the defense of environmentally harmful consumption, he also questions the practice of climate shaming by exaggerating it. Thunberg is taken seriously as an admonisher, yet the figure "Greta as a moral conscience," as portrayed by the media at the time, is also treated playfully when Conny performs a dance choreography in the video to the song with a Greta double. The song addresses the topics of sustainable consumption and emotions provoked by our relationship to the climate in their cultural complexity and normative ambiguity; and it does so by employing practices that have a rich tradition in Hip-Hop: playing with identities, navigating normative contradictions, and grappling with the tensions between the individual and the collective, consumption and morality, and so on.[7]

Whereas pedagogical materials for addressing environmental issues in music education often contain simple moral sermons, a song like "Schäm Dich!" negotiates normative contradictions and thus might relate to the personal experiences of students. Whereas climate education still often suggests that the patent solution lies in individual behavioral changes ("How YOU can save the climate"), the song asks questions about who bears responsibility and about the cultural context of consumer behavior. A nuanced consideration of responsibility for climate protection is especially crucial in education, because even though children and young people should be taught sustainable values, they do not hold positions of political power, which is why simply shifting responsibility to them ("You are our future!") seems particularly preposterous. Whereas songs for climate education often seem one-dimensional and didactic, here, ambiguity, irony, and humor, help to achieve a creative engagement with the climate crisis.

7 The practice of sampling in Hip-Hop also proves to be helpful for Conny's artistic strategy: by sampling audios of Greta's speeches instead of quoting her, her media character can appear in the track's theatrical arena. Toward the end of the song, another sample from one of her speeches can be heard: "Apparently … [climate change] was something humans had created by our way of living. Are we evil?" This is followed by a break with sudden silence, leaving the listener alone with themselves, while the delay sound effect left over the sentence "Are we evil?" opens up an acoustic space, a space for thought, in which this central question being posed by the track can resonate. These few seconds create an agonizing silence before the beat kicks back in.

Conclusion and Outlook

In this article, I have attempted to show that Hip-Hop can help foster engagement through music pedagogy with ecological issues in their cultural complexity, normative ambiguity, and justice-related implications. Discussing the relationship between Hip-Hop cultures, music education, and environmental education, I argued first that addressing ecological crises in music education using Hip-Hop practices does not have to mean simply instrumentalizing Hip-Hop for educational purposes, but can also be understood as a transfer of Hip-Hop's own engagement with ecology to formal educational contexts. I then supported this claim by identifying three aspects of the thematization of ecological issues in Hip-Hop music that are interesting for music education: first, the focus on environmental justice, which I discussed using two tracks about access to (drinking) water by Common and Supaman; second, the opportunities Hip-Hop offers to engage with one's own place and hence for place-based ecological music education; and third, negotiating normative contradictions in relation to everyday action in the climate crisis.

Of course, the opportunities that Hip-Hop practices offer for ecological music education are not exhausted by the aspects discussed here. Many other aspects would be worth discussing. As an example and outlook for possible follow-up research, I would like to conclude by pointing out one of these additional potentials of Eco Hip-Hop education, which I cannot elaborate further given the space constraints of this text: Hip-Hop's tradition of Afrofuturism (see Christopher 2022). Afrofuturism is "both an artistic aesthetic and a framework for critical theory" that "combines elements of science fiction, historical fiction, speculative fiction, fantasy, Afrocentricity, and magical realism with non-Western beliefs" (Womack 2013: 9), while also providing critical perspectives on a present marked by social injustice and racism. Critical visions of the future are relevant for ecological music education, as it cannot limit itself to criticizing the present but should also serve as an artistic forum for imagining and reflecting on alternative futures (Milkoreit 2017). Furthermore, Afrofuturism always negotiates the relationship between humans and technology (Galli 2022)—a relationship which must be transformed if sustainable forms of society are to be possible at all. (However, addressing Afrofuturism—a Black liberation aesthetic—in education poses the critical question of cultural appropriation, particularly among non-Black students and teachers.) Exploring these and other topics for ecological music education can be the goal of future research. Such an inquiry would be worthwhile because, as I have tried to show

in this text, Hip-Hop practices can help music educators and students artistically grapple with ecological crises and present-day regimes of oppression in their cultural complexity.

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