

Dept. of Communication and Culture – Musicology, 10 Oct 2024.

Venue: Lille sal (room: 1585-119), entrance from the side of the building.

Please do not enter before 12:00, and please do not pass through “Store sal”.

Directions in Music Sociology?

Music is imminently social, and music sociology constitutes a broad and well-established field for inquiries into music’s changing socialities. In this half-day seminar, we would like to explore this field, examining how prominent legacies intersect with emerging approaches and perspectives for future research. For example, how are music’s socialities reconceived in the light of more-than-human conditions such as AI or the environmental crisis? How do identity politics and global inequality affect ideas about music as a technology of the self or a means of community building? How is the temporospatial organization of musical life shifting, for example, due to aging audiences and digital means of interaction? Finally, how are calls for application and activism balanced against traditional ideals of humanistic and social science research?

Program

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| 12:15 | Welcome |
| 12:20 | Andy Bennett, Griffith University: Music scenes or music Eco-systems? Towards a sociology of music in a post-industrial, post-digital and post-pandemic society |
| 13:20 | Break |
| 13:35 | Lea Wierød Borčak, AU: Danish communal singing and the limits of social inclusion |
| 14:05 | Mads Krogh, AU: Reconsidering Musico-Cultural Communities: Aesthetic Assemblages and Affective Dynamics on TikTok |
| 14:35 | Break |
| 14:50 | Kyle Devine, University of Oslo: Re: Directions in Music Sociology |
| 15:50 | Goodbye |

Abstracts:

Music scenes or music Eco-systems? Towards a sociology of music in a post-industrial, post-digital and post-pandemic society

Professor Andy Bennett, School of Humanities, Languages and Social Science, Griffith University

The concept of music scene has been applied in sociological research on music for over three decades. Straw’s (1991) seminal article proposed music scene as a means of transcending more narrowly defined terms such as ‘subculture’, which saw musical taste and associated stylistic forms of dress as spectacular extensions of more traditional and physically situated communities. Straw’s

original theorisation of music scene was subsequently modified by Peterson and Bennett (2004) in their postulation of a three-tier model of scenes – local, translocal and virtual – which acknowledged how increasing global mobility combined with the rapid emergence of the internet necessitated a rethinking of scenes as not simply transcending physical space but also temporality. More recently, the concept of music ecosystem has also entered the frame as music research has become more focused on the value of music in the context of cultural economies (Rogers, 2017). To a significant degree, the concept of the music eco-system has also been inspired through the increasing prevalence of digital technology in various aspects of music-making, a something that took a dramatic shift during the recent COVID-19 pandemic (Frenneaux and Bennett, 2021). This paper will offer a critical analysis of the relative merits and disadvantages of the music scene and music eco-system concepts, including reflections on how music-making and consumption in regional and remote parts of the world may benefit from a hybrid conceptualisation that incorporates elements of both music scene and music eco-system theory.

Danish communal singing and the limits of social inclusion

Senior Researcher Lea Wierød Borčák, Unit for Song Studies, Aarhus University

Communal singing, i.e., spontaneous or semi-ritualized participatory singing in public and private settings, is widely assumed to be a central part of Danish intangible cultural heritage. The assumption is largely rooted in a standard narrative about the significant role of collective singing for the forging of Danish national identity and so-called high-trust culture. A surge of singing during the COVID-19 lockdowns in 2020 empathized the perception of the phenomenon's cultural significance, and in recent years, claims have flourished in public media and discourse about the wide prevalence of communal singing in Denmark as well as about its strong social inclusivity. Such claims, however, have rarely been problematized, which is what an ongoing research project at Unit for Song Studies, Aarhus University, intends to do. By way of historical-computational and ethnographic methods, we delve deeper into the sociocultural significance of Danish communal singing and create a more nuanced and empirically based picture of the many socialities involved in singing culture. In this talk, I will present some findings from our research with a special focus on the ambivalent and negative aspects of singing culture.

Reconsidering Musico-Cultural Communities: Aesthetic Assemblages and Affective Dynamics on TikTok

Assoc. Prof. Mads Krogh, School of Communication and Culture – Musicology, Aarhus University

In the evolving landscape of digital music culture, online platforms and social media reshape our understanding of musico-cultural communities. Taking the Aesthetics Wiki (www.fandom.com/) as a starting point and looking particularly at how “aesthetic communities” assemble on TikTok, this presentation discusses the relationship between platform logics and established markers of socio-musical difference (such as genre, location, gender, and ethnicity). Specifically, it is argued that platform logics prompt affective dynamics in the formation of aesthetic communities – in the double sense of foregrounding moods, vibes, atmospheres, and other sensory invocations of affectivity; and of continuously spilling over into new aesthetics, which manifests a state of excess, fluidity, and fluctuation. In turn, this reshaping of musico-cultural communities connects to broader discussions about the conditions of contemporary musical life, for example, in terms of platform capitalism, neoliberalism, and (post-)identity politics.

Re: Directions in Music Sociology

Professor Kyle Devine, Dept. of Musicology, University of Oslo

What are directions in social inquiry? Of course, social inquiry cannot help but follow the world where it leads. How then might we consider the relationship between directional thinking and research carried out in such a pursuit?

What I want to do in this presentation is reflect on the possibilities and limitations of the current ecological direction in music and music research. I will do so by looking at the musical world's ongoing and encompassing recomposition of itself in response to climate crisis. This is a widespread reevaluation and reorganization of music that includes everything from records made of plants and solar powered stereos to music sector-specific carbon calculators, climate credentials, carbon-focused arts funding, environmental nonprofits—not to mention musical thought, musical forms, and much else.

The goal is less to evaluate these initiatives on their own terms, as responses or solutions to climate issues, more to understand how the problem these initiatives seek to address has been formed for them in advance. How can the ecological direction in music and music research help to sympathetically critique solutions and help form other problems? Because without better problems, even the best climate ideas and intentions are poised to turn back into the effects they wish to oppose. And so long as the climate crisis is addressed foremost as a crisis of the climate, then the real crisis of this planet cannot be addressed.