

Introducing Urban Music Studies and Its Network

Einführung in die Urban Music Studies und ihr Netzwerk

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The first idea of initiating Urban Music Studies as a new field of social and cultural studies research dates to the year 2010 when Volker Kirchberg, Alenka Barber-Kersovan and Robin Kuchar, members of the Institute of Sociology and Cultural Organisation at Leuphana University of Lüneburg, organized a conference entitled *Music City Hamburg* (<https://www.transcript-verlag.de/978-3-8376-1965-2/music-city/>). This conference was inspired by theoretical works on creative industries and creative cities by authors such as Richard Florida and Charles Landry on one side and the controversial political dispute in Hamburg about a new and prestigious concert hall. At that time, the dispute erupted in connection with a large-scale construction project in the port of Hamburg, which, among other things, included the conversion of an old warehouse into the Elbe Philharmonic Hall as the designated landmark of the city.

Conference outcomes revealed that there are already some publications and research projects by Adam Krims, Sara Cohen and Andy Bennett, dealing with the relationship between the music and the city. However, they are located in different and mutually exclusive disciplines such as urban studies, human geography or music sociology, and thus lack a communal platform for a multidisciplinary scientific exchange. In order to improve this situation, an international workshop with the title *What is Urban Music Studies and what could it be?* was organized in Lüneburg in October 2017.

The main premisses for this workshop were the following:

- Music is central to urban culture.
- The relationship between music and the city is dynamic and reciprocal.
- Music forms communities and acts as a symbolic resource for these communities.

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- Music scenes contribute to the self-awareness of its inhabitants as being urban.
- Music contributes to the cultural identity of a city.
- As the urban is an essential part of music also a number of musical compositions are shaped by the urban settings in which they are created.

On the organisational level the launch of an *Urban Music Studies Scholars Network* was proposed in order to

- establish Urban Music Studies as a new inter- and transdisciplinary field of research;
- provide a forum where individuals and institutions involved in Urban Music Studies can meet and share their work in workshops and conferences;
- collect and disseminate information about Urban Music Studies;
- document the work (researching, teaching, publishing) in this field.

To put these goals into practice, two international conferences were organized at Leuphana University in Lüneburg. The first one took place in November 2018 and was entitled, *Groove the City—Urban Music Policies between Informal Networks and Institutional Governance* (<https://urbanmusicstudies.org/groove-the-city-urban-music-policies-between-informal-networks-and-institutional-governance/>). Most contributions looked at the ways that cities precondition the emergence and flourishing of music scenes by providing the social, material, and cultural resources required and how they act as focal points of the production, distribution, and consumption of acoustic capital.

The second conference, which took place in February 2020, was entitled, *Groove the City 2020—Constructing and Deconstructing Urban Spaces through Music* (https://urbanmusicstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Book-Of-Abstracts_Groove-the-City-2020.pdf). It featured more than 90 presentations given by speakers from 32 countries. The individual streams dealt with music in material and social urban spaces; experiencing urban spaces through music; and the music and the political urban space.

Following the COVID induced pause, the third Groove the City event entitled, *Vienna Perspectives—Art, Urban Space and Social In/Equality* (https://muk.ac.at/fileadmin/mediafiles/documents/Programme_2022-23/PH_WienerPerspektiven.pdf) took place in

November 2022 at the Private University for Music and Art in Vienna. Drawing on the case of Vienna some 50 participants presented and discussed utopian (and dystopian) concepts of local urban politics and the organization of musical life before and after the pandemic. The next UMS conference with the title, *Groove the City—Move the Streets* will take place 17-19 September 2026 at the University of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna.

As an important communication platform, the Urban Music Studies Network (<https://urbanmusicstudies.org/>) was established. It has approximately 900 members from all five continents, including from countries in the Global South (India, Brazil, Mexico), and the previous Eastern Block (Czech Republic, Poland, and Ukraine) as well as East Asia—Japan, Hong Kong and Taiwan. Subscribers have free access to an Urban Music Studies blog and a Facebook channel.

Further, a book series, *Urban Music Studies* (Intellect Publisher, Bristol; <https://www.intellectbooks.com/urban-music-studies>) has been launched with series editors Alenka Barber-Kersovan, Lisa Gaupp, Andrea Glauser, Volker Kirchberg and Robin Kuchar. Editorial board members include Andy Bennett, Giacomo Bottá, Pranoo Deshraj, Murray Forman, Paula Guerra, Fabian Holt, Marek Jezinski, Will Straw and Susana Zapke.

Two books have already been published. *Sonic Signatures—Music, Migration and the City at Night* (Derek Pardue, Ailbhe Kenny and Katie Young, eds.) interprets contemporary migrant music as sonic signatures constitutive of the city at night. *Popular Music in Leeds—Histories, Heritage, People and Places* (Brett Lashua, Karl Spracklen, Kitty Ross and Paul Thompson, eds.) offers the first academic compilation of the history, heritage, people and places of popular music in Leeds. Three more books are in preparation, and there is an ongoing open call for monographs, readers, and edited collections from, and for the field of Urban Music Studies. The series especially welcomes proposals by young researchers from a wide array of contents, methods, critical and analytical perspectives.

Urban Music Studies Scholars network deals with a broad range of topics and musical practices, current and historical, and focuses on countries and geographical regions that are normally excluded from the scientific discourse. The network is necessary in order to clarify the importance of music as a physical, mental, and politically formative factor in urban development within the framework of urban research, for example, among urban planners, urban sociologists and urban economists. Equally important is to make clear, to experts in musicology, that

they too must abandon and break with monodisciplinary understandings of music in history and society in order to recognize the importance of music creation, music production, and music consumption for and in the city.

This lively platform, addresses scholars from a variety of disciplines, such as sociology, social geography, historical and systematic musicology, anthropology, architecture, and city planning, and offers a large range of activities, including regular conferences, publications and other means of academic exchange. Covering subjects as wide ranging as identity construction, city branding, musical heritage and cultural tourism, this international network provides an appealing arena for scholars of arts management studies and cultural policy studies interested in music in urban settings.