

**8 - 9 - 10 APRIL 2026**

**WE WANT  
MORE:  
MUSIC!  
SOCIOLOGY  
CONFERENCE**

**ROTTERDAM, THE NETHERLANDS**

**THREE DAYS OF TALKS, SESSIONS, AND LIVE EVENTS**

**WEDNESDAY 8 APRIL:  
YOUNG SCHOLARS WORKSHOP (10:00 - 16:00),  
OPENING EVENT @ KATOENHUIS (19:00 - 22:00)**

**THURSDAY 9 APRIL:  
DAY 1 SESSIONS (9:00-17:00)  
FREE CONCERT @ ROODKAPJE (20:30)**

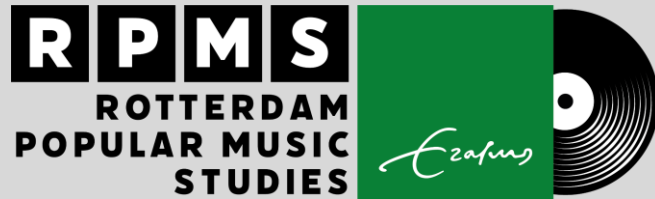
**FRIDAY 10 APRIL:  
DAY 2 SESSIONS (9:00 - 15:00)  
AUTHOR Q&A AND RECORD SPIN @ PLATO RECORD STORE (19:00)**

MUSIC AND: AUDIENCES,  
DIGITIZATION, ECOSYSTEMS,  
SOCIAL INEQUALITIES,  
HEALTH, WELLBEING,  
HERITAGE, TASTE, INDUSTRY,  
PLATFORM ECONOMIES,  
PUBLIC VALUE, POLITICS,  
CAREERS, EDUCATION,  
GATEKEEPERS, ARTIFICIAL  
INTELLIGENCE, ACTIVISM,  
AND MANY MORE.

ORGANIZED BY THE ROTTERDAM POPULAR MUSIC STUDIES (RPM) RESEARCH CLUSTER, ERA/MU UNIVERSITY ROTTERDAM



International music studies conference



## **We Want More: Music / Sociology!**

**Young Scholars Workshop We Want More: Feedback!**

8-9-10 April, 2026

Erasmus University Rotterdam

Organized by the research centre Rotterdam Popular Music Studies

Main organizer: Pauwke Berkers

Opening: Yosha Wijngaarden & Kristina Kolbe

Concert organizers: Frank Kimenai & Thomas Calkins

Session curators: Dylan Thompson, Yosha Wijngaarden, Julian Schaap, Janine Stubbe, Pauwke Berkers, Femke Vandenberg, Thomas Calkins, Kim Dankoor, Robbert Goverts, Frank Kimenai, Didier Goossens, Wessel Coppes, Jenn Clempner, Virgo Sillamaa, Martijn Mulder, Timo Koren, Miguel Neiva, Kristina Kolbe, Jelena Beocanin, Petrică Mogoș.

Design: Thomas Calkins, Michaël Berghman

Support: Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication

**Femke Vandenberg**

University of Groningen, NL

**The Practice of Gamified Concerts: Exploring the Experience of Live Music in Fortnite**

The continued growth of the gaming industry has opened up new spaces for live music, with, for example, Fortnite concerts offering large-scale shared experiences online. These environments reconfigure the traditional concert setting, as physical stages, artists, and audiences are replaced by their virtual, gamified representations. How does this change in the material foundation reshape the meanings audiences assign to live concerts and the competences required to participate?

This paper adopts a theory-of-practice approach, drawing on the “circuit of practice” (Shove et al., 2007; Magaudda, 2011) to analyze these shifts. Practices are understood as the interplay of objects (materials, technologies), representations (meanings, cultural symbols), and doings (competences, embodied activity). The material dimension of consumption is not only tied to how people listen to music, but also to how they use objects to perform aspects of their social lives—expressing identity, belonging, and distinction through digital actions.

The study employs video-elicited interviews with concert-goers in the video game Fortnite. Participants revisit self-recorded footage of their screens and narrate their experiences in relation to practice (objects, representations, and doings). This approach allows us to trace how materiality and meaning are co-articulated in real time, and how new repertoires of participation emerge around digital affordances. Viewed through the circuit of practice, these accounts offer a nuanced framework for understanding how platform infrastructures reshape audience experiences, cultural hierarchies, and symbolic boundaries.

*Femke Vandenberg is an Assistant Professor of Audience Research, at the Faculty of Arts, Rijksuniversiteit Groningen.*

**Rekik Amal**

University of Gafsa, TN

**Music in a Hybrid Media Landscape: The Tunisian case**

This paper examines how different media shape musical consumption in a society where traditional and digital infrastructures coexist. While global debates often focus on streaming platforms and algorithmic curation, in developing contexts such as Tunisia, radio and television remain central to everyday music consumption. The study explores how traditional and digital media influence musical tastes and audience practices, and what social inequalities emerge from these forms of mediation.

Building on cultural sociology and recent research on audience practices and media consumption, this study combines quantitative survey data (n = 300) on media use for music with qualitative interviews (n= 20) with listeners and cultural professionals. This mixed-methods approach captures both general patterns and the lived experiences of audiences, revealing how media shape musical access and preference.

Preliminary findings indicate that radio remains the primary channel for accessing music, particularly in rural areas and among lower socio-economic groups, where internet penetration and subscriptions to streaming platforms are limited. Beyond its “traditional” role, radio strategically engages audiences through tools such as intertextual references, choice of linguistic registers, and culturally shared frameworks, allowing it to penetrate social contexts effectively. Importantly, these discursive strategies carry a semiological dimension, as they contribute to shaping a virtual image in the listener’s mind, reinforcing radio’s capacity to structure meaning and cultural perception. At the same time, younger urban audiences increasingly adopt digital platforms, creating a generation and spatial divide in music consumption. These results highlight the persistent and transformative role of traditional media in structuring collective tastes and reveal inequalities in access to music across social groups.

By situating the Tunisian case within broader debates on audiences and media consumption, this paper contributes to a de-westernized perspective in music sociology, emphasizing the importance of contextual diversity in understanding how music matters socially and culturally.

*Dr. Amal, Rekik, PhD in Cultural Studies, is an Assistant Lecturer at the Higher Institute of Arts and Crafts, Gafsa, Tunisia. She Specializes in Music and Musicology and currently a second-year Master’s student in Sociology (research track). Her work includes publications on music-related interdisciplinary topics, and she has participated in international conferences and scientific seminars.*

**Marcela Hofman-Mourao**

Erasmus University Rotterdam, NL

**Commodifying Engagement: Audience Participation and Monetization in YouTube Music Reaction Communities**

This study examines participation in YouTube’s music reaction communities, focusing on how audiences’ interpretive and curatorial labor contributes to content co-creation within monetized environments. Building on Jenkins’ (1992, 2013) Participatory Culture framework and Bruns’ (2008) concept of produsage, and informed by recent work on creators’ relational labor (Glatt, 2023; Tynan & Linehan, 2024), the research asks: How are different forms of audience participation manifested and incorporated into content co-creation within monetized and platformed environments?

Using qualitative content analysis, 12 purposively sampled reaction videos and accompanying comment threads from four channels were analyzed. Focusing on European Power and Symphonic Metal (EPSM) reactions, the study identifies audience contributions including song recommendations, contextual genre knowledge, discovery narratives, and content direction.

Preliminary findings reveal a dynamic feedback loop in which audience comments substantially shape creators’ content choices. To capture this dynamic, the study introduces the concept of “Contribucers” – audience members whose curatorial labor directly influences channel content. Additionally, monetization features such as YouTube subscriptions and Patreon memberships produce a tiered participation economy in which “Sponsor Contribucers” gain heightened influence when providing creators with financial support.

These findings suggest that participatory culture on YouTube is increasingly structured by platform capitalism, where engagement becomes commodified and co-creation is reconfigured into a stratified, paywalled system of influence.

*Marcela Hofman-Mourao is currently a PhD external at Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication. In parallel, she is also a lecture at the department of Media and Communication as well as a senior lecturer in the Sport Management programme at The Hague University of Applied Sciences. She has a bachelor’s degree in journalism, a master’s in Sport Management, and a failed attempt to get a PhD in Sport Sociology. This time around, this 46-year-old mother one, is serious on obtaining her Doctor of Philosophy title, researching participatory culture practices within the heavy metal YouTube scene.*

**Bram Peper**

Tilburg University, NL

### **Tactile Nostalgia: The Meaning of Vinyl**

This paper examines the contemporary resurgence of vinyl records and their sociological significance. Once dismissed as obsolete, vinyl has returned to the cultural mainstream, with sales at their highest since the 1980s. The revival, however, cannot be reduced to sound quality. Rather, vinyl embodies tactility, ritual, and material presence—qualities absent from digital formats. The central question guiding this paper is why vinyl continues to matter in a digital age of abundance and convenience.

Drawing on 45 semi-structured interviews with collectors, casual buyers, and independent record store owners, the paper explores how vinyl's material and sensory dimensions evoke memory, shape identity, and foster community. I argue that vinyl represents a form of *tactile nostalgia*—an embodied connection to the past that adapts within contemporary cultural life.

The analysis is informed by classic and contemporary theories of nostalgia and material culture. Following Davis (1979) and Boym (2001), nostalgia is understood as a symbolic resource rather than mere longing, while Miller (2008) and Ingold (2013) highlight the ways material engagement anchors memory. Halbwachs' (1992) notion of collective memory and Bourdieu's (1984) concept of cultural capital further illuminate how vinyl functions simultaneously as personal memory object and social marker.

Findings show that vinyl's appeal lies in its sensory rituals—holding, flipping, and listening—that transform records into vessels of memory. For older listeners, vinyl offers continuity with youth, while younger buyers express second-hand nostalgia, connecting with a past they never lived. Independent record stores emerge as collective sites of memory, where browsing becomes a social practice distinct from algorithmic digital consumption. Finally, imperfections such as pops and scratches are celebrated as signs of authenticity, reinforcing vinyl as an antidote to the perceived disposability of digital culture.

This paper demonstrates that vinyl's cultural endurance lies not only in sound, but in its capacity to materialize memory, community, and authenticity.

*Bram Peper, sociologist at Tilburg University, department of sociology. My research interests include work–life balance, work-life issues, work pressure, sociology of nostalgia, and music. For almost fifty years mobile dj, and for the last 8 years on the local radio as well. A life devoted to sociology and music.*

**Frank Kimenai**

Erasmus University Rotterdam, NL

**Why'd You Have to Go and Make Things Complicated? Sixteen Key Complexity Features in Music Ecosystems Explained**

The music sector is a living, interconnected and embedded value network that is often referred to as an ecosystem. This ecosystem is a complex adaptive system that has distinct dynamics and properties. Operating in and making policy for this complex music ecosystem requires specific knowledge and skills. This research investigates if complexity theory can provide these insights for music ecosystem practitioners and policy makers. It does so by introducing a comprehensive framework of 16 distinct features of complexity in complex adaptive systems into the context of the music ecosystem. Through a three-step translation method, based on focus groups conversations with academics and sector practitioners, the framework is translated and validated in the context of a music ecosystem. First, the credibility and transferability of the framework is assessed. Second, its dependability is determined, and third, its confirmability is set. Preliminary results show that the 16 features of complexity are 1) applicable to a music ecosystem context; 2) provide new insights into understanding music ecosystem realities; 3) can be pooled into 5 meta-categories, namely the music ecosystem's structures, processes, organization, causalities and unknowns. In the final step of our research, these insights will be validated and tested for usability in the work practices of music ecosystem policy makers.

*Frank Kimenai is a Rotterdam-based researcher and senior advisor at KEA European Affairs, specializing in the music sector and cultural and creative industries (CCIs). With over 25 years of sector experience and a background in ecology, he focuses on making Europe's cultural ecosystem more sustainable, equitable, and resilient. Frank advises governments, institutes, and organizations like the European Commission and MishMash, the Norwegian institute for AI and the CCI's, while pursuing a PhD at Erasmus University Rotterdam on the resilience of music ecosystems. He is also a public speaker, radio host, and is converting his family's farmland into a forest.*

**Robin Kuchar**

Leuphana University of Lüneburg, DE

**Theorizing ‘Music Ecosystem’ for Urban Music Studies – from Underground to Infrastructure**

In order to initiate a more theory-based discourse, this paper critically discusses the concept of and questions among the notion of music ecosystems, a.o. in terms of potential ideas for updating the theorization of music scene for research. Therefore and against the backdrop of growing complexity and multi-layered facets and spaces within the spheres of urban culture, the paper relates ‘scene’ to recent notions of ‘ecosystem’ and conceives music ecosystems as ‘urban cultural infrastructure’. In which way these concepts might be a valuable approach to further conceptualize a more holistic understanding of music scene? Which role ‘scenes’ can play as self-reliant entity – or as a sub-category within urban cultural infrastructures or ‘music ecosystems’? The paper negotiates different theoretical perspectives by taking in account three Hamburg based music venues and Hamburg’s musical landscape as case studies.

*Robin holds a PhD from Leuphana School of Culture and Society. His main fields of interest are cultural production and participation, music scenes, and the relationship of culture and urban space. He is co-editor of ‘Music City – Musical Approaches to the Creative City’ (2014) and co-initiator of the ‘Urban Music Studies Scholars’ Network’. He is author of various articles and chapters on music venues, music scenes and on critical evaluations of the notion of music and cultural ecosystems.*

**Francesca Cireddu & Martin Nicaastro**

University of Pavia, IT

**Musical Participation and Urban Revitalization: A Deep Mapping of the V Municipality in Rome and NoLo Neighbourhood in Milan**

This paper presents the first results of the three-year project *Musical Participation and Urban Revitalization*, which investigates the relationship between collective participation in popular music practices and processes of urban regeneration. The focus is primarily methodological, as we introduce a new digital mapping environment designed to integrate geospatial analysis with ethnographic research and to create a more layered understanding of urban transformations. Building on the application developed by the international Live Music Mapping Project (LMMP), the interactive map combines pre-existing statistical data, newly collected information, and multimedia content, and in doing so fosters a non-hierarchical and complementary dialogue between quantitative and qualitative research traditions.

Within this framework, we seek to understand the dynamics that link the geolocation of music practices – such as live venues, rehearsal rooms, or recording studios – with statistical indicators including real estate values and demographic composition, as well as with the lived experience of practitioners and participants. Rather than isolating these dimensions, the project aims to produce a deep and time-sensitive representation of the musical and social ecologies of two peripheral urban areas that have recently undergone rapid revitalization: the V Municipality in Rome and the NoLo neighbourhood in Milan.

By foregrounding the role of popular music within these processes, the research also sheds light on its ambivalent impact, not only as a catalyst for community-building and cultural vibrancy but also as a factor that can accelerate gentrification. The hybrid approach we propose allows us to trace correlations between musical participation, urban revitalization, and agents of change, while at the same time identifying risk factors for local music ecosystems – the very ones that have often driven positive transformation. In doing so, we argue for models of urban change in which music practices are not merely symptoms of revitalization, but active and sustainable forces of societal development.

*Francesca Cireddu is PI of the project Musical Participation and Urban Transformation, funded by Fondazione Cariplo and hosted by the University of Pavia. She earned a Ph.D. from Tor Vergata University of Rome with ethnographic research on the online transposition of live experience in alternative music contexts.*

*Martin Nicaastro is a research fellow at the University of Pavia. During his recently completed PhD, he conducted a digital mapping of Milan's live music scene (1958–1962). He develops mapping applications for the Live Music Mapping Project. He teaches data visualization at the EnExDi research school (ENS, Lyon).*

**Susan O'Shea**

Manchester Metropolitan University, UK

**Technology, Leisure Mobilities and Care in the Electronic Music Open Mic Movement**

The Electronic Music Open Mic Movement (EMOM) is an umbrella term for independently run music collectives. Emerging in Manchester, England (2017) as a response to exclusionary performance spaces, the international network continues to develop across Mexico, Colombia, Australia and many European countries. It is an open format that can be adopted by anyone whilst maintaining core values of inclusivity, participation, and support for diverse electronic music genres. EMOM makes an important contribution to Do-It-Yourself (DIY) cultures and contemporary grassroots music ecosystems.

We ask a fundamental question that sits at the intersection of contemporary leisure, digital and popular music studies: What role do portable technologies and mobility practices play in creating and sustaining the social relationships that underpin grassroots leisure communities across multiple sites?

A convergent parallel mixed methods design that is broadly participatory combines digital and in-person ethnography with 51 semi-structured interviews and 122 survey responses. As an EMOM participant O'Shea co-constructed the research topics with the founder of the movement to ensure ethical transparency and openness.

Findings highlight the importance of portable music technologies where mobility between events is a defining feature of how communities sustain themselves. Friendships are formed in-person and maintained through digital networks of care. There are intersectional challenges around travel infrastructures and accessibility, financial barriers and the prevalence of an older male demographic. We developed conceptual frameworks, Technomobile Leisure Communities (TLCs) and Distributed Leisure Ecosystems (DLEs), to theorise the EMOM movement which relies on sustaining mobility, care, and autonomy without formalisation. This offers lessons for other technomobile communities such as live coding or maker spaces.

Policy implications relate to vulnerabilities to digital algorithms, loss of data, over-reliance on informal networks, knowledge/heritage loss and cultural and physical infrastructure concerns. Positive well-being outcomes for some older male participants could be further explored in mental health contexts.

*Dr Susan O'Shea, Senior Lecturer in Sociology, Manchester Metropolitan University. Susan founded and co-leads the research group Music and Sonic Studies Manchester (MASSmcr) which offers a sonic manifesto for sociologically informed approaches to music and sound studies. Susan also performs with the Salford-based post-punk electronic duo Factory Acts.*

**Rosa Reitsamer**

University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna, AT

**Cultural Work, Music and Gender in Domestic Spaces**

Traditionally, popular music studies have explored rock as men's creative labour, the streets as sites for the formation of male-dominated youth subcultures and public venues as the most important places for the consumption and performance of popular music. The domestic space, as Reynolds and Press (1995) put it, was considered as 'the last place you'd look for action' (p. 348) as it was historically associated with the private sphere, femininity, consumption and passivity as well as reproductive work and care responsibilities.

Inspired by the recently proposed 'domestic turn in popular music studies' (Prior et al. forthcoming), this paper sheds light on the cultural work carried out by female-identified, queer and trans DJs, music producers and event organizers in domestic spaces. Based on interviews conducted with these musicians and cultural workers, three aspects of their work in the domestic sphere are presented: first, the strategies of self-promotion, self-marketing and networking on social media platforms; second, the intersections between creative music work and reproductive work; and third, the collaborations and relations between DJs, producers, event organisers and other cultural workers in domestic spaces.

Theoretically, my empirical study is informed by feminist writers (e.g. Praznik 2021) who have highlighted the parallel between unpaid domestic work and cultural work and laid the foundation for a feminist understanding of cultural work. The latter points to the marginalization of women in music production and the importance of the domestic space in studying musicians' working conditions as well as the gendered, classed, and racialized economic relations in which creative work is embedded (Reitsamer forthcoming). Analytically, my study aims to heighten our understanding of the home for female-identified, queer and trans DJs, music producers and event organizers who are excluded from mainstream histories of electronic music and the informal networking culture dominated by white cis men in the electronic dance music industry.

*Rosa Reitsamer is Professor of Music Sociology at the mdw – University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna, Austria. Her research interests include the sociology of higher music education, cultural work and music labour markets, valuation practices at higher music education institutions and intersectional perspectives on music, gender and social inequalities.*

## Rike van Kleef

Independent Scholar

### **Cheap Seats: Gender, Power and Discrimination in the Music Industry**

This paper presents insights from *Billige Plätze. Gender, Macht und Diskriminierung in der Musikbranche* (Ventil Verlag, 2025), a non-fiction debut that examines gendered power relations and discriminatory structures in the contemporary music industry. The central research questions are: How are gender and power structurally intertwined in the music business, and what mechanisms of exclusion shape the experiences of women and marginalized genders?

The book draws on feminist theory and concepts such as hegemonic masculinity (Connell), the male gaze (Mulvey), masculine domination (Bourdieu), gendered organizations (Acker), and intersectionality (Crenshaw). Building on Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital, the music industry is analyzed as a field where symbolic and material resources are unequally distributed along gendered lines. The study further engages with feminist music sociology and critical popular music studies (e.g., Berkers, Cameron, Clawson, Hoegaerts, female:pressure, Mullens, Nenić, Nikolić, Schulz, Zanoni), highlighting tensions between (creative) autonomy and structural inequality. Methodologically, the research combines (1) interviews with musicians, industry professionals, and activists; (2) literature and discourse analysis of media, policy, and institutional statements; and (3) reflections on the author's own professional experiences. This triangulated approach reveals both institutional structures and lived realities.

Findings show that exclusion in the music industry is not an individual failure but a systemic condition. Gendered gatekeeping, precarious labor, and sexual harassment intersect with racism, classism, and ableism to reinforce hierarchies. While feminist networks and initiatives have gained visibility, their transformative potential is often marginalized. In short: change is underway, but structural transformation remains elusive.

By situating *Billige Plätze* within broader debates in music sociology, the paper calls for moving beyond representation and diversity rhetoric towards a structural critique of the industry. The choice of a non-fiction format also reflects a commitment to science communication—bringing these findings to a wider audience and bridging the gap between academic research and public debate.

*Rike van Kleef is a cultural worker, journalist, and author. She writes and speaks on gender, culture, and social policy, drawing on her experiences in the music industry. Her corpus includes awardwinning work on gender representation at German music festivals and her debut book *Billige Plätze* (2025).*

**Sarah Mengede**

Independent Scholar

**Feminism & Shared Positionality in Contemporary Rock Journalism**

Feminist researchers and activists have highlighted the marginalisation of women in the rock press for decades (Leonard 2007). Previous scholarly work on women and music journalism suggested that women journalists adopt 'sexist' journalism styles rather than resist them to be accepted into the 'boys club' (e.g. Davies 2001). How do journalists depict women musicians today, and what are women's perceptions of contemporary rock journalism?

Drawing on a feminist approach, my paper will challenge previous research and demonstrate how women music journalists express solidarity with women rock musicians due to their shared positionality as feminist women in a patriarchal music industry. I will discuss how women rock musicians co-construct feminist narratives with journalists to expose and resist oppression. The paper will examine women's experiences as active participants in contemporary music journalism and how they perform feminist solidarity in a patriarchally defined space. This will also involve a discussion of how 'popular feminism', #MeToo, and a media landscape that is increasingly receptive to feminism have influenced how journalists portray women musicians.

My paper will draw on my recent PhD research, which involved semi-structured interviews with women rock musicians and journalists, and a critical discourse analysis of music journalism articles and photography. This triangulated, feminist method constitutes a novel approach to studying women and music journalism. The paper will provide intriguing insights into how musicians, photographers, and journalists perform feminism and resist gender norms within the constraints of a patriarchal, neoliberal, and competitive industry. Investigating themes such as motherhood, ageing, and feminist solidarity, it contributes to discourses on gender and popular music during and after #MeToo. Therefore, it speaks to the conference's themes 'music, activism, and social change', 'social inequalities, cultural representation, and coloniality in music', and 'production, labour, and careers in the music industry'.

*Dr Sarah Mengede is a media and popular music researcher from Germany. She has recently finished her PhD at Newcastle University titled 'Feminism, Solidarity and Shared Positionality in Contemporary Rock Journalism', which investigated women's experiences in and perspectives on contemporary rock journalism. She is currently working as a freelance researcher.*

## Ruth Timmermans

Dutch Research Council, NL

### **Uncovering the Hidden Dynamics of Old Boys' Networks in the Music Industry through New Computational Social Network Analysis Methods**

Calls for greater diversity and inclusion in the music industry have been ongoing. Yet structural change and equal gender representation among performers and professionals seem to remain elusive, despite numerous interventions and the industry's (self-)image as meritocratic. In literature, a frequently cited barrier is the persistence of old boys' networks at decision-making levels. This research develops novel methodologies for the mapping of such networks and analyzing their properties, potentially revealing mechanisms of exclusion in the music industry. Using methods such as natural language processing and machine learning, social media data were mined and analyzed to facilitate the first computational mapping of a network of artistic gatekeepers in the Dutch and Flemish music industries, including actors without social media presence. Analysis revealed a robust male core group, with men concentrated in positions of authority, while women more often served as connectors between (sub)communities. This pattern reflects the entrenched labour division between power and care in the music industry. Men also cultivate stronger connections with their peers, especially within their field of expertise. In contrast, women must forge cross-gender connections. This effort is constrained by network structures themselves, creating a vicious circle that hinders greater gender diversity. These findings demonstrate that exclusionary dynamics are not incidental but are deeply embedded in the structure of the music industry's professional networks. Building on this foundation, the next phase will employ the latest methods in social network analysis to explore how old boys' networks shape music ecosystems, with the goal of informing more effective strategies for fostering sustainable, equitable, and resilient music industries. Initial results from this follow-up study are expected in January 2026.

*After conducting research at Leuven University, Ruth Timmermans served as director of Gonzo Circus Music Magazine for two decades. In 2023, she obtained an additional Master's degree in Digital Humanities from Groningen University, focusing on computational social network analysis. She works at the Dutch Research Council and continues research on gender inequality in the cultural and creative industries.*

**Niels van Poecke, Mariana Gusso Nickel, Jacqueline Tromp & Hanneke W.M. van Laarhoven**

University of Amsterdam, NL

**Cancer in Everyday Life: Exploring the Aesthetic Affordances of Music among Patients Living with Advanced Cancer**

Background and research aim: The relevance of arts-based methods for supporting narrative meaning-making among patients with advanced cancer is increasingly recognised within palliative care. While existing research has explored several modalities of arts-based methods, the potential of music as a resource for narrative meaning-making has received little attention. This pilot project asks: How do patients with prolonged incurable cancer (re-)construct meaning in the context of their daily lives through daily life engagement with music?

Methodology: The research is grounded in a sociological approach, drawing on the concept of aesthetic affordances to investigate how music enables possibilities for self-care and autobiographical meaning making. Methodologically, the project employs a solicited music diary design to capture patients' (n= 10) music behaviour.

Preliminary findings: Findings support existing research on the affordances of music as a prosthetic device of the body, highlighting participants' use of music to regulate symptoms (e.g., (poly)neuropathy, insomnia) associated with cancer treatment. As a tool and resource enabling narrative meaning-making, participants reported that after experiencing their cancer diagnosis as a form of narrative disruption, they shifted focus to the meanings of songs' lyrics, using them as resources (e.g., words, stories) to reflect on personal experiences. Music also afforded a symbolic form of time-travel, enabling participants to re-visit significant events (e.g., relationships, depression) and contextualise present existential concerns within a broader life-narrative. Moreover, participants engaged with music as a resource for self-distancing, allowing them to detach themselves from everyday life constraints and view their lives through the perspective of the song's protagonist. Finally, music functioned as a resource for self-transcendence, as its meanings were perceived to outlast the finitude of one's lived time.

Conclusion: These findings suggest that music can be a valuable resource for supporting narrative meaningmaking within palliative care.

*Dr. Niels van Poecke is Senior Researcher at the Contingency, Culture, and Oncology research line of the department of Medical Oncology, Amsterdam UMC. His research focusses on co-designing, investigating and evaluating participatory arts-based interventions into supportive cancer care, which aim to support cancer patients in dealing with existential questions and concerns.*

*Mariana Gusso Nickel, is a PhD researcher at the Contingency, Culture, and Oncology research line of the department of Medical Oncology, Amsterdam UMC. Her research focusses on the intersection of art, supportive care, and life-writing practices.*

**Julia Peters, Antonia Becker, Julian Schaap, Koen van Eijck et al.**

Erasmus University Rotterdam, NL

**Familiar and Accessible Live Music is Associated With Stronger Emotional and Physiological Responses**

Music is known to impact well-being, yet much research focuses on recorded classical music in clinical settings with socially homogenous audiences. This limits our understanding of how diverse groups respond to live music, which offers unique opportunities for social connection, shared emotions, and embodied engagement. In this study, we examine the effects of live classical and popular concerts on the psychological and physiological well-being of a socially diverse audience (n=509) in an ecologically valid setting. The experiment, conducted over two days with counterbalanced genre order, varied in accessibility and familiarity of the musical stimuli. Participants completed surveys and wore chest straps to monitor heart rate (HR) and variability (HRV) during the concerts. The audience reported stronger kama muta (“being moved”) for accessible music, with the strongest responses occurring for widely familiar music, regardless of genre. These emotional experiences were accompanied by increased HR and decreased HRV, suggesting sympathetic arousal during peak emotional moments. Social background had limited effects. The findings highlight the emotional, social and physiological potential of familiar and accessible music in live settings where people from different social backgrounds gather.

*Koen van Eijck (1967) is professor of Cultural Lifestyles at the Department of Arts and Culture Studies at Erasmus University. He received his PhD from the Department of Sociology at Tilburg University in 1996. His current research and publications focus on social inequality and trends in cultural participation and taste patterns, arts education, the perception and appreciation of visual art and (classical) music and cognitive sociology.*

## Tristan Eissing

Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, DE

### **More of the Same Is Not Always Better: Negative Effects of Popular Music**

In contexts involving health, well-being, and therapy, music is generally considered as a positive resource. Despite its positive effects in many areas, popular music can pose a serious risk, particularly for individuals with a substance use disorder (SUD) who wish to become and/or remain abstinent. For most people with an SUD, popular music is closely linked with the consumption of psychoactive substances. Reasons why music might be an individual risk factor include conditioning processes, emotions, memories, one's personal or social identity, etc. (Horesh, 2010; Cournoyer Lemaire, 2021; Silverman et al., 2023; Bensimon, 2024)

Little is known about the reasons, both individual and collective, that music might endanger abstinence. The explorative study's results are derived from semi-structured interviews with therapists (n=13) and groups of individuals with SUD (N=5, n=38), along with a questionnaire (n=442) that builds upon the interview findings. The interviews were analysed using qualitative content analysis (Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2024). The questionnaire was analysed descriptively.

Many individuals who begin therapy view music solely as a positive influence. They struggle to imagine a time when they might not want to listen to 'their' music and may not realize that it can be dangerous. However, individuals who have relapsed indicate that music has played a direct or indirect role in their relapse. For instance, music can reinforce thoughts that grant permission for substance use. When someone changes their preferred substance or becomes abstinent, their musical preferences often shift too. There are also other contexts in which some music, individually, might not be positive. It is important to recognize that music itself is neither inherently negative nor positive, but rather how we personally relate to it. We must discuss the contexts in which music can be detrimental, which I will exemplify herein one way possible.

*Tristan Eissing studied musicology at MLU Halle-Wittenberg. He is writing his doctoral thesis on the potential risks of music for people with substance addiction. After initially receiving a graduate scholarship, he has been working as a research assistant at TU Braunschweig since 2024.*

**Katey Warran, Olivia Turner, Bethany Whiteside & Emily Davis**

The University of Edinburgh, UK, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, UK & Durham University, UK

**Exploring Meaning-Making and Reflexivity in Music and Health: The case for Sociology**

The application of sociological theories and approaches within research exploring the relationship between music and health are at the fringes of the field, with approaches from psychology and public health at the forefront. Sociology has much to add in terms of better understanding social inequities, understanding meaning-making processes, and offering theoretical tools for researchers working across music, health and wellbeing. In this paper, we synergise findings from three research studies to elucidate the value of sociology: 1) A co-produced ethnography of a participatory music for dementia programme; 2) A social network analysis (SNA) of a national arts and health festival; and 3) A qualitative focus group study with people working in the field of arts and health. Framed primarily in relational sociology, cultural sociology, and symbolic interactionism, we reflect on the social structure of music and health communities and how, more broadly, arts practitioners make meaning in precarious conditions. In particular, we explore how policy priorities in the field may be overshadowing the relational meanings at the heart of music engagement. To contribute to current discourse, we raise a series of critical questions constructed from our data that we hope will support reflexive processes for researchers working in this space. As a focus group participant raised: "What is the role of society in arts in health? It must be contested. It has to be contested." We hope this paper will be a platform for this contestation.

*Dr Katey Warran is Head of PATHS (Public Health, Arts, Theory, Sociology) Research Group at the University of Edinburgh and recipient of a Leverhulme fellowship exploring interconnections between sociology, arts, and health. She is Honorary Fellow at UCL, Global Advisor for the Jameel Arts & Health Lab, and a musician.*

*Dr Olivia Turner is an artist-researcher. She is undertaking postdoctoral research in arts and health based in the Edinburgh Centre for Research on the Experience of Dementia, University of Edinburgh. She also holds the role of Associate Lecturer at Newcastle University and is Deputy Director of the PATHS Research Group.*

*Dr Bethany Whiteside is Senior Lecturer and Doctoral Degrees Coordinator at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. Much of her research activity is situated in Dance for Health working closely with dancers with neurological conditions, practitioners, and organisational stakeholders.' Emily Davis is a Postdoctoral Research Associate in the Moving Bodies Lab at Durham University, exploring the intersection of arts, health, and social science. Her work draws on her background as a dancer and practitioner, with a particular focus on experiences of dancing with chronic illness.*

**Andrik Becht & Tom ter Bogt**

Utrecht University, NL

**Music Preferences and Self-Concept Clarity**

Establishing a clear sense of identity is a crucial task during adolescence and young adulthood. A key element of this process is the development of a coherent and consistent sense of self across contexts and time, commonly referred to as self-concept clarity (SCC). Theoretical and preliminary empirical studies suggest that adolescents and young adults may find support to clarify their identity by listening to music, but whether and when SCC and music are most strongly connected has not been studied before. The aim of this longitudinal study is to explore these relationships by examining the associations between SCC and liking various types of Popular music, both mainstream –such as Pop, Hip-hop, Popular Rock, and Dance/Trance– and non-mainstream – Heavy Metal, Goth, and Hardstyle dance– during adolescence and into young adulthood.

Six times,  $N = 900$  Dutch adolescents and young adults ( $M_{age\ T1} = 12.48$  years, 51% females) completed a survey assessing their SCC and music preferences. Latent Growth Curve analyses with SCC as time varying covariates showed that there was no systematic association between SCC and mainstream preferences for Pop, Hip-hop, and Dance/Trance in mid- to late adolescence, and that this relationship became mostly positive in young adulthood. Most important, adolescents with low SCC preferred thematically complex, non-mainstream genres such as Heavy Metal and Goth, and a more mainstream genre such as Popular rock, or music that is linked to a non-mainstream subculture: Hardstyle dance. Lower SCC levels remained linked to higher preferences for Goth and Heavy Metal music even into young adulthood. This suggests that Goth and Heavy Metal continue to hold significant importance particularly for young people who struggle with clarifying their identity.

*Andrik Becht is an assistant professor at Utrecht University, The Netherlands. His research is aimed at understanding adolescent (identity) development from both a contextual and neurobiological perspective, with a specific interest in advanced longitudinal modelling techniques. Tom ter Bogt is an emeritus professor of Popular Music and Youth Culture at Utrecht University. His research interests include the role of music in the lives of adolescents and emerging adults, youth culture, substance use and problem behavior.*

**Florian Roderburg**

University of the Arts Helsinki, FI

**Music Subculture Socialization of Teenagers in Germany: A Comprehensive Examination**

In Germany, the landscape of how teenagers engage with music subcultures is undergoing a transformative shift. This study seeks to unravel the intricate dynamics of this transformation, specifically focusing on the dwindling influence of traditional youth centers and the concurrent rise of high schools as potential spaces for socialization. In the age of digital media dominance, the discovery and consumption of music have undergone a profound evolution, raising questions about the interpersonal exchanges within music subcultures. The fundamental research question guiding this study is as follows: To what extent do municipalities and church organizations have an impact on the development and socialization of teenagers within music subcultures in Germany, and to what extent can high schools effectively fill the void left by the decline of youth centers in terms of providing a space for individual development and music subculture socialization? To address this overarching question, the study will delve into the historical role of youth centers as vital “third spaces” (Oldenburg 1989) that have been fostering a sense of community and facilitating individual development among teenagers; both quantitative (surveys) and qualitative (interviews) methods are already being applied. The study will explore the potential of high schools to serve as alternative spaces for music subculture socialization. Furthermore, in light of the shift from physical to digital media in music consumption, the research will investigate how this transformation impacts interpersonal exchanges within music subcultures, emphasizing the diminishing reliance on face-to-face interactions for music discovery.

*Florian Roderburg is a doctoral researcher at Sibelius Academy Helsinki. He holds an M.A. degree from the Cologne University of Music and an M.Ed. degree from the University of Wuppertal. Florian completed his B.A. degree at the University of Wuppertal and the Australian National University (exchange year).*

## Freek de Haan & Giorgio Touburg

Erasmus University Rotterdam, NL

### **'It's Easy to Laugh at My Desire': Italo-disco's Post-Ironization**

Italo-disco is an eclectic, hard-to-define musical genre that, despite its name, has remained marginally recognized within its country of origin (Conti & Kirby, 2017, p. 417). Emerging primarily in Italy, though not exclusively confined to it, the genre reached its peak in the first half of the 1980s. Since then it has persisted via niche audiences, occasional mainstream DJ sets, and reissues, covers, and remixes.

Italo's musical features often, though not invariably, include reliance on synthesizers, a rigid four-on-the-floor beat, repetitive bass lines, and lyrics with frequent metacommentary on the song itself or on its broader social function (Martinelli, 2014, pp. 211–212). Yet its low production values, extravagant synth use, flamboyant performance styles, syntactically idiosyncratic lyrics, and frequently distorted or incomprehensible pronunciation contributed both to its lowbrow status at the time of its initial emergence and to its more ironic modes of enjoyment after the turn of the millennium. At the same time, recognition as an influence on later electronic strands (Hi-NRG, house, techno, nu-disco) retroactively complicates its camp status.

Starting from the authors' own ambivalent engagement, oscillating between genuine aesthetic enjoyment and bemusement at perceived clumsiness, their experiences in the local DJ scene, and observations of Italo's treatment in relevant media (cf. Roberts, 2022), the paper examines how multiple reception modes within one subject unsettle the standard association of sincere consumption with low cultural capital and ironic consumption with high cultural capital (Peters et al., 2018). In doing so, it also considers the possibility of 'post-ironic' appreciation, in which irony and genuine affection can co-exist in complex ways. Future iterations will incorporate interviews with consumer groups to examine these complex patterns of reception. The Netherlands provides an apt setting: a pirate-radio legacy sustains a community of early enthusiasts, while a strong electronic music scene generates successive waves of new fans.

*Freek de Haan is Assistant Professor of Sociology at the Erasmus University Rotterdam. His teaching and research focus on urban issues including gentrification, smart cities, and green transitions. Alongside his academic work, he has been an amateur DJ and Italo-disco enthusiast for over two decades.*

*Giorgio Touburg has taught and conducted research at several Dutch universities. He is currently an external PhD candidate at Rotterdam School of Management, where he studies the performativity of management education. A neurodivergent scholar, educator, and vinyl collector, Italo-disco has long been one of his favorite hyperfixations.*

**Juho Hänninen**

University of Helsinki, FI

**Culture Against the (Material) Structures. Does an 'Alternative' Disposition Endure Across the Life Course? Evidence from the Late-1970s Punk Rockers**

Musical preferences are often connected to other taste patterns, lifestyles and value sets. My study examines whether an 'alternative' or non-conformist disposition can endure across the life course, evaluating structuralist perspectives and socioeconomically rooted behavioural patterns to notions that highlight the autonomy of culture in shaping long-term dispositions. Focusing on Finnish punk rockers of the late 1970s who are now around 60-years-old, and a multi-method design combining autobiographical interviews (n = 24) with survey data (n = 170) and quantitative control data (n = 302), the study examines subcultures as a source of formative experiences and the endurance of this 'alternative' disposition over the adult life course.

Results reveal that the subcultural ethos significantly shaped the disposition, particularly creative practice and sociopolitical 'awakening.' In late life, the subcultural disposition connects with sociopolitical attitudes as liberal preferences and political behaviour, where the sample maintained leftist alignments despite structural predictors. Occupational interests also diverge from the general population, with a marked avoidance of traditional industrial roles in favour of creative or social sectors. Qualitative narratives highlight how subcultural schemas provided frameworks for agency, though most respondents adapted, rather than radically ruptured, their youthful dispositions over time. The findings underscore culture's independent role in dispositional formation, particularly when mediated through intense, identity-marking experiences like subcultural immersion.

The study advances debates on cultural autonomy, the development of personal culture over the life course, and generational and subcultural theories. It demonstrates that media-driven subcultures can function as formative social contexts for lifelong dispositions, challenging assumptions about structural reproduction.

*Juho Hänninen is a PhD Researcher in the final stages of their dissertation work at the Political and Social Sciences department of the European University Institute. Hänninen's dissertation examines the potential of cultural factors in human and biographical development, focusing on the transition to adulthood, the maintenance of friendship networks, and the formation and endurance of sociopolitical orientations. Hänninen holds an MA in social history and another in urban studies, and their earlier publications are in ethnomusicology and history.*

**Virgo Sillamaa**

Erasmus University Rotterdam, NL

**Between Rhetoric and Action: A Comparative Frame Analysis of Music Internationalisation Policies in Estonia, Finland, and the Netherlands**

There is nothing new in music – songs and artist – moving across political and cultural borders, but "internationalisation" as a policy concept has gradually entered the cultural policy discourse in Europe over the past decade or two. Depending on context, internationalisation can reference various themes, from cultural diplomacy, cultural relations to export development, each with its own context and history, thus becoming a loose signifier of sorts. The ambiguity of internationalisation as a policy concept has political utility but can lead to incoherent policy design in practice. Especially, if the policy instruments are shaped without understanding how the sector actors make sense of and pursue in practice their international ambitions. With a focus on music, the presentation reviews relevant cultural policy documents in Estonia, Finland and the Netherlands and applies frame analysis as an interpretive policy analytical technique to disentangle the various rhetorical framings of internationalisation in the policy documents and investigate the various ideological, philosophical, or strategic commitments embodied therein.

*Virgo Sillamaa is a music policy researcher, educator and consultant from Estonia, currently based in Brussels. He's an external PhD candidate in the Erasmus University Rotterdam focusing on researching internationalisation as a policy concept. With 25 years of experience in the music sector, he is currently the Research Manager of EMEE, European Music Exporters Exchange network and is regularly engaged in project development and implementation, such as managing research in the "Europe in Synch" and "Better Live" projects. He is a junior lecturer of creative project management at the University of Tartu Viljandi Culture Academy. He has MA degrees in music pedagogy (EAMT) and public administration (TalTech).*

**Mathew Flynn, Richard Anderson & Jacob Simmons**

University of Liverpool, UK

**“Accounting” (sic) for the Music Industries: Can Local Sector Mapping Provide a Basis for Standard Industrial Classification Code Reform?**

Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) codes, a UK equivalent of the EU’s NACE classification system, are used by the UK government to gather data on its industrial sectors. This data has been used to inform a 2025 “modern industrial strategy”, in which the UK music industry has been included as a growth sector. Whilst the strategy is underpinned by impressive economic statistics, the government’s reliance on SIC codes to assess economic performance has long been queried by the music industry. Given its current limited range of business identifiers, music sector practices are not accurately accounted for by SIC code methods of self-assessment.

This paper will reinforce this notion by describing our mapping of 3,231 music organisations in the Liverpool City and Northeast Combined Authority Regions. Here, inconsistencies in business self-categorisation acted as a roadblock to our understanding of regional music sector practices. Less than half of the organisations in both regions were identifiable via SIC code data. This raises the question: How can the UK government provide a coherent music industry sector strategy when the SIC code data on which the strategy is based, is inaccurate?

To address this, the research advocates for the adoption of an alternate method of economic estimation, based on our regional mapping. This approach works simultaneously from the top-down/bottom-up, providing regional authorities with tools to more accurately map the contribution of music industry to the local economy, as well as making transparent to music organisations the incentives for accurate self-categorisation.

The inclusion of the music industry in the UK government’s industrial strategy is encouraging. However, the inaccurate economic underpinning of this strategy undermines its salience. This research proposes a reformation of SIC codes in alignment with our regional findings to make clear to government the economic contribution of the UK music industry.

*Mathew Flynn is a senior lecturer in music industries, Director of the Institute of Popular Music, and Co-Director of MusicFutures. Richard Anderson is a Research and Innovation Associate for MusicFutures. Jacob Simmons is a doctoral candidate in music policy. All are at the University of Liverpool.*

## Lawrence Davies

University of Huddersfield, UK

### **Listening for Conservation and Regeneration amongst the Green, Wild, and Musical Spaces of the Ouseburn Valley (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK)**

The Ouseburn valley is one of Newcastle's regeneration success stories. Once a derelict and highly polluted industrial area, the valley has been transformed over the past three decades into a vibrant creative "hub" and leisure destination, and – most notably – an urban wildlife habitat. Such cultural and environmental abundance does not easily co-exist, however. Although the Ouseburn's green and wild spaces are a key part of its appeal for local artists and audiences alike, the success of the area's hospitality economy and speed and extent of recent urban development places the valley's environmental heritage and non-human inhabitants under significant threat. This paper asks how the Ouseburn's environmental, cultural, and economic agendas might better co-exist, and whether local conservation and regeneration strategies are an effective tool for balancing these current agendas with future challenges, in particular those posed by climate change. As well as reviewing relevant policy documentation and strategy produced by local stewardship organisations, the paper draws on interviews with local stakeholders and a series of soundscape and soundwalk recordings made in the valley. Sound occurs in multiple ways throughout the valley: live and recorded music spills out of clubs and bars, while the arches of three historic bridges amplify birdsong, urban farm animals, and the activities of the valley's last remaining industrial workshops; listening therefore emerges as a crucial and overlooked modality for making sense of the valley's cultural life. I draw on Højlund et al.'s (2024) concepts of "sonic citizenship" as well as Kanngieser's (2015) theories of sound as a geopolitical tool to critique local policy-makers' understandings of the relationship between cultural and environmental heritage in the valley. Finally, I consider future directions for participatory research, and reflect on the implications of "ecologies" as a conceptual framework for cultural activity amidst environmental crisis (cf. Hitters and Mulder, 2020).

*Lawrence Davies is a Research Fellow on the Amplification Project at the University of Huddersfield. His research focuses on the uses of sound and music to respond to the climate and nature crisis. He has also published widely on the international trajectories of African American jazz and blues music.*

**LaToya Brackett**

University of Puget Sound, US

**From Country to Rap: White America is Black Music's Master Colonizer**

In 2025 Beyonce finally won album of the year at the Grammy's, not for the music she was mostly associated with but, with her country album Cowboy Carter. This album sparked conversations about her place in country music, whether she should be considered a country singer, if her music is "appropriating" the tradition and sound of the genre. Even still, Beyonce was not the most recent Black singer producing country music hits being questioned, as Lil Nas X received similar, if not harsher, criticisms regarding his ability to call himself a country singer. Yet, a globally adored white, blonde woman named Taylor Swift, who did not originally aspire to be a country singer, and who altered her accent to fit the "stereotype," was easily accepted as a country singer, why? Race. The United States' racial stratification and associated institutionalization is central to unpacking the question of why Black artists gain such objection to engaging with country music, despite the origins of country being rooted in African American musical innovation. Utilizing Critical Race Theory this presentation explores the history of how white America colonized country music to the extent that even descendants of the originators reject the genre because its "white." Country music is not the only genre white America has colonized/coopted and profited from more than its Black originators. In sharing historical examples of white cooptation of Black musical innovation, and more contemporary engagement with American societal appeal towards white faces, despite a black sound, this presentation will analyze the permanence of racism and colonialism in U.S.'s music industry and the unfortunate reality that Black musicians may make the rhythm from their blues, but white musicians and producers will take that rhythm, leave the blues, and own the profit.

*LaToya Brackett, PhD (she/her) is an associate professor of African American studies at the University of Puget Sound, where she is also a leadership team member for the Race & Pedagogy Institute. A scholar trained in Black studies, she is an interdisciplinarian who centers the Black experience.*

## Ádám Havas

Carlos III University of Madrid, ES

### **Homage to Dionysius: Free Improvisation and the Cultural (De)constructions of Europe's Racial Color Line**

Free improvisation, also known as creative, spontaneous, or real-time music, is celebrated for its utopian qualities and aesthetic radicalism. Often positioned at the fringes of “legitimate culture,” this movement has served as the “ultimate avant-garde” since the 1960s – a dynamic space for experimentation, collective risk-taking, and unrestrained creative flow. While scholarship has primarily focused on Western – mainly US and West European – trends, the movement is deeply shaped by the local characteristics of geoculturally diverse urban scenes, offering a lens to explore postcolonial Europe’s sonic landscape within and beyond the Black Atlantic. Drawing on ethnographic research and over 40 in-depth interviews with musicians from diverse backgrounds in Barcelona and Budapest, this talk examines how free improvisation acts as a site of “aesthetic disobedience,” resisting neoliberal racial capitalism and creating a laboratory for rethinking the relationship between aesthetics and ethics in multiethnic contexts. The comparison of scenes from postimperial East Central and postcolonial Southwestern Europe provides a unique transperipheral vantage point to study the cultural and sonic construction of Europe’s racial color lines. Using concepts such as “plural habitus,” “sensual cosmopolitanism,” “social aesthetics,” and “trans-idiomatic” practices, the research explores how musicians, through spontaneous and collaborative performances, challenge fixed notions of genre, gender, class, race, and place. By synthesizing Bourdieu-oriented cultural sociology and postcolonial studies, this work raises critical questions about the role of musicians, music sociologists, and ethnographers in envisioning and building alternative futures. It also problematizes the concept of “improvisation” in both the arts and social mobility, particularly in a time when the combined forces of post-fascism and algorithmic capitalism threaten vulnerable social groups often racialized as “others”. It explores how free improvisation can serve as both a methodological and conceptual tool for interdisciplinary scholarship to engage with notions of futurity and resilience, especially in the face of ongoing technological, geopolitical, and cultural challenges. The detailed ethnographic study of DIY practices in various urban scenes demonstrates how alternative models of collaboration and conflict are being developed, which may be theorized as a distinct form of anarchism, one that rejects rigid institutional frameworks, academic orthodoxy, commercial market imperatives, technocratic cultural policies, and the (neo)liberal identity politics shaped by moral geopolitical and ideological stakes. Ultimately, it asks to what extent contemporary avant-garde music can be seen as a “Dionysian spirit,” offering an utopistic counterpoint to the discontents of neoliberal racial capitalism, even if it is often confined to the fleeting moment of performance.

*Ádám Havas is a sociologist whose work explores music in diasporic contexts through music sociology and postcolonial studies. Author of *The Genesis and Structure of the Hungarian Jazz Diaspora* (2022) and co-editor of *The Routledge Companion to Diasporic Jazz Studies* (2024), he was an MSCA Fellow (2022–24).*

**Rachel Gillett**

Utrecht University, NL

**Black History: History-Making and Representation in European Hip Hop**

This paper examines representations of enslavement, colonialism, and their legacies in Dutch and Francophone popular (rap) music to assess how they function as a form of history-making. It uses discourse analysis, and musicological analysis of Afrodiasporic components and local specificities in sound. It draws on some semiotic and media studies analysis of meaning-making, symbolism. Working within a cultural history and cultural studies framework it assesses works in their cultural and historical context.

In order to examine the process of doing representing underacknowledged histories of enslavement and coloniality through popular music, this analysis compares works from artists such as Fresku (Witlof, and Canon met Lubach,) Kery James (Letter à la republique), Disiz (La complexité) and Stromae (Papaoutai.) Their use of sonic, visual and lyrical allusion and sampling create a representational web of meaning that brings Black history into public view. In doing so they participate in a long genealogy of Black cultural politics within which music plays a key role. This paper thus calls on and responds to Paul Gilroy, Stuart Hall, Angela Davis, bell hooks and Tricia Rose. It builds on the work of Eyerman and Street (social movements and music), and Floyd and Baraka (Black musical transmission and activism), by arguing Black cultural production enacted anti-racist protest and Black Atlantic solidarity. It is part of a larger theme in my work that uses Dutch and Francophone Black Atlantic comparative analysis to examine these themes.

*Rachel Gillett is a historian specialising in Cultural History. Her research focuses on European colonialism, anti-colonialism and solidarity, popular culture, and the Black Atlantic from a French perspective.*

**Aleksandra Kolesnik**

Bielefeld University, DE

**Militarization of Soviet Rock Heritage and Fan Resistance: Contested Viktor Tsoi Memorials in Russia**

In contemporary Russia—and across several post-Soviet states—one of the most enduring cultural figures sustained through fan networks is Viktor Tsoi, the iconic rock musician of Kino, who rose to fame in the late 1980s and tragically died in 1990. Vernacular memorials dedicated to Tsoi are not only tributes to the musician but also spaces where communities embed personal stories and emotions into everyday memory practices, often defending them from state control and interference. Tsoi’s image has long been a site of contestation. Until the 2010s, fan memorials were frequently targeted for destruction as part of efforts to suppress informal public spaces. From the early 2010s, however, their role shifted: memorials became arenas of political expression. His song *Peremen* (Changes) served as an anthem of the Bolotnaya Square protests (2011–13), while memorials were used to articulate dissent—attracting police surveillance and intervention. Over the following decade, the Russian state gradually sought to appropriate Tsoi’s legacy, reframing him as a patriotic cultural icon. Since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, this process has intensified into overt militarization: Tsoi has been depicted in modern Russian military uniforms, featured in Victory Day parade rehearsals, and incorporated into propaganda narratives of patriotic sacrifice. This paper asks: how do processes of state appropriation and militarization of Tsoi’s legacy interact with, and provoke resistance from, fan communities who sustain alternative memory practices? Drawing on critical heritage studies and fan studies, the paper conceptualizes Tsoi’s memorials as contested heritage arenas where official narratives and grassroots practices collide. Methodologically, it is based on long-term ethnographic fieldwork (2018–23), interviews with fans, and monitoring of online communities (2018–25). Preliminary findings show that while the state seeks to instrumentalize Tsoi’s image for patriotic legitimation, fan communities resist by safeguarding autonomous memorials and preserving affective, non-institutional memories.

*Dr. Alexandra Kolesnik (PhD in History, 2017) is a postdoctoral researcher at Bielefeld University, Germany. She works in public history, critical heritage studies, and popular music history. Her current research examines fan activism, construction, and conflicts around Soviet rock music heritage across the post-Soviet region.*

## Miles Niemeijer

Podiumkunst.net/Dutch Jazz Archive & Koninklijke Bibliotheek, NL

### **Lost Sounds, Written Sources: Rebalancing Dutch Music: Memory with Live Data and FARO Practice**

Research question. How can people-centred heritage practices and live data methods rebalance which Dutch music histories become visible, and thus sustainable, in national memory institutions? Theoretical approach. Dutch national collections structurally overrepresent a narrow canon of classical, folk and mainstream pop. At the same time, entire genres such as Indorock, Surinamese popular music, hiphop, punk, electronic music and diverse jazz are almost absent. This imbalance distorts cultural memory, limits the histories available to communities and researchers, and creates a real risk of permanent loss if urgent steps are not taken. From a sociological perspective, this raises questions about cultural inequality, institutional power, and the processes through which prestige and legitimacy are reproduced.

Methodology. Corpora are curated from Delpher, the KB web archive and KB magazines, complemented with non-digitised zines (community collections). We analyse metadata and affect in written traces; run two focus groups with artists, journalists and heritage professionals; and prototype a live-coding audit (extending WAIVE) that maps textual features to sound and visuals so that visibility gaps become audible. Partners include the Dutch Jazz Archive and Allard Pierson. [Preliminary] findings. Early analysis shows entire genres missing from national holdings, while cataloguing and aggregation choices further skew what is findable. Cocuration highlights community priorities, i.e. diasporic press and local zines, that are vital to reconstruct scene histories but barely surface in institutional collections. These findings underline how institutional decisions co-produce cultural inequality and how communities contest such exclusions.

Contributions. (1) Operationalising FARO for music memory via participatory valuation, co-curation and audience study. (2) Making archival bias publicly inspectable by turning written sources into sound. (3) Bridging cultural sociology and heritage studies by showing how infrastructures and media shape who gets remembered, and how participatory interventions can rebalance representation

Outputs. Data stories guiding urgent web captures and community publications, opensource tools, and public demonstrations that test how libraries can broker inclusive, multi-voiced music memory.

*Miles Niemeijer is music project and research coordinator at Podiumkunst.net (on behalf of the Dutch Jazz Archive) and Koninklijke Bibliotheek (National Library of the Netherlands) researcher-in-residence (May-Nov 2025). His work addresses structural imbalances in Dutch music memory by linking (digital) heritage, creative practice and policy, developing participatory and live data tools for underrepresented genres.*

**Beate Peter, Femke Vandenberg, Aruna Karumampoyil & Karlijn Achterberg**

University of Groningen, NL

**Youtube Comments as Archives of Imagined Communities: Live Events, Relational Time, and Collective Memory**

This paper examines how YouTube functions as a community archive that shapes collective memory through audience engagement in the comment sections of live music concert videos. Moving beyond the well-documented role of YouTube in music consumption, the paper focuses on the temporal dynamics of participation and memory-making. Through analysis of a specific case (Enter Shikari's live performance at Reading Festival 2011) it asks how do YouTube comment sections function as sites of collective memory among specific taste communities?

Drawing on Jan Assmann's (2008) categorisation of memory, the study uses ATLAS.ti to conduct a thematic analysis of 616 comments on Enter Shikari's live performance at Reading Festival 2011 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s13RoHLMYr4>). First-level coding identified expressions of present, past, and future selves, second-level coding examined the collapse of temporal boundaries and the creation of collective memory among participants that were both present and absent at the live events they commented on.

Preliminary findings suggest that the temporal collapse inherent in YouTube's affordances fosters an imagined community structured by relational time (Petranker 2007). Within memory studies, this offers a new way to conceptualise collective memory. While resonating with Assmann's notion of cultural memory, YouTube's affordances enable users to incorporate memories of their future selves. This form of memory is co-constructed by those seeking to relive an experience and by those who were never present at the original event. For the sociology of music, it invites a reassessment of how taste is formed and classified, suggesting that digital participation reconfigures the temporal and affective foundations of musical belonging and distinction.

*Beate Peter examines the role that popular music plays in the formation of communities: how music is used to communicate, navigate aspects of inclusion and exclusion or helps to shape identities. Peter places particular importance on embodiment and the role of affect within music communities.*

*Femke Vandenberg is an Assistant Professor of Audience Research at the Faculty of Arts, University of Groningen. Her research examines how digitalization reshapes cultural consumption and taste, with a particular focus on popular music, social stratification, and mediated audience experiences.*

*Aruna Karumampoyil is a Research Master graduate in Arts, Media and Literary Studies at the University of Groningen. Her research interests include anxieties about political utopias, religion, popular media, and critical ethnography.*

*Karlijn Achterberg is a Research Master graduate in Arts, Media and Literary Studies at the University of Groningen. Her research interests include digital activism, affect theory and witnessing practices, as well as critical discourse methodologies.*

**Brian J. Hrac & Jack Webster**

University of Southampton, UK

**The ongoing platformization of music: How the evolution of Spotify is driven by market pressures and data-driven strategies**

With nearly 1 billion users globally, music streaming platforms such as Spotify and Apple Music have become dominant actors in the music marketplace. To date, existing studies have explored how these platforms have used digital data to compete and become dominant actors by attracting and engaging consumers through personalisation, curation, and other enhancements to the user experience. However, we argue that these studies overlook other forms of data use that are less visible but just as important to how streaming platforms respond to market pressures and competition. Drawing on our experience in the music industry as researchers, employees, producers and consumers we use a case study of Spotify to address this gap by looking at a set of 'back stage' actors, activities and processes that push the use of data beyond content, the user experience or advertising. We consider how Spotify negotiates what we call the 'development dilemma' by using their proprietary platform data to optimise the use of resources while reducing risks. In particular, the presentation highlights how and why Spotify 1) ensures that people, processes and priorities are aligned with its business strategy 2) uses metrics to measure progress and accountability across the platform 3) conducts research to reduce uncertainty and 4) uses experimentation to introduce and evaluate changes to the platform. In so doing, we demonstrate that Spotify is leveraging its scale and human and technical resources to sustain its market-leading position.

*Brian J. Hrac is an Associate Professor of Human Geography at the University of Southampton. He is interested in how digital technologies and global competition are reshaping the marketplace for cultural products. Over the past 20 years Brian has researched and published about different elements of the music industry.*

*Jack Webster is a mixed-methods researcher with extensive experience conducting user experience (UX) research in global technology companies. His work bridges academic research with an applied understanding of how technologies are built and businesses are run, with publications about digital platforms, market competition, and the social impacts of online consumption.*

**Robert Prey**

University of Oxford, UK

**Variegated Platform Capitalism and Musical Labour: Cross-National Evidence from a Global Survey**

This paper asks: *How has the rise of streaming platforms reshaped musicians' labour, income, and perceptions across different cultural economies?* In asking this question, this paper speaks primarily to two conference themes: "AI, streaming, algorithms, and the platformization of music" or "Production, labour, and careers in the music industry".

The global perspective adopted here builds upon the concept of variegated capitalism (Peck & Theodore, 2007; Marrone & Pirina, 2024). "Variegated capitalism" emphasizes how capitalism and labour relations do not take a single, universal form but adapt and manifest differently depending on local political economies, institutional frameworks, labour conditions, and cultural practices. The "variegated" perspective when applied to the study of musicians' online labour, highlights how the logics of digital platforms play out unevenly across world regions and even within sectors of the same industry.

Empirically, the paper draws on a survey conducted by the researcher of 1,198 musicians in Brazil, Chile, Nigeria, the Netherlands, and South Korea in 2025. The study examined perceptions of streaming, earnings, time use, platform dependence, and attitudes toward online promotion. Statistical analysis (non-parametric tests, chi-square, trend analyses) enables cross-national comparison.

Findings reveal both global commonalities and pronounced national differences. Streaming-native musicians (post-2015 entrants) report much lower incomes than earlier cohorts yet rely more heavily on streaming revenues and are more accepting of promotional work. Nigerian musicians report greater optimism, more international earnings, and more time spent communicating with fans—often using automation. By contrast, Dutch and Korean respondents are more pessimistic and careful about the time they spend communicating with fans online, while Brazilian musicians remain highly home-market oriented and relatively more positive about streaming. Chilean musicians report the lowest satisfaction overall.

Overall, the study shows how streaming multiplies participation and offers opportunities in some contexts, while at the same time deepening inequalities and recomposing labour. It is argued that platform capitalism manifests in variegated ways across national contexts, with musicians' labour serving as a diagnostic lens for these global dynamics.

*Dr. Robert Prey is Associate Professor of Digital Culture at the Oxford Internet Institute, University of Oxford. He is principal investigator of the ERC-funded project PlatforMuse (2023–2028; University of Groningen), which examines how online platforms reshape the creative labour, practices, and working conditions of musicians worldwide.*

**Mads Krogh**

Aarhus University, DK

**Affective Scenes between Local Engagement and Platformization**

This paper examines how processes of platformization reshape affective dimensions of music scenes in the work of independent record labels. Building on Bennett's concept of the affective scene and new materialist understandings of affect as intensity, I ask: How do locally rooted labels negotiate the affective bonds of community and connection under the logics of streaming platforms and social media?

Theoretically, the paper connects scene theory and affect thinking with studies of platformization, focusing on the intertwined mechanisms of datafication, commodification, and selection. These processes structure how music is categorized, circulated, and made visible through playlists, recommender systems, and platform metrics. At the same time, they intersect with intangible forms of belonging and intensity that characterize scene-based musicking.

Methodologically, the paper draws on a small-scale, interview-based study with independent label managers in Brisbane, Australia. These labels represent ventures deeply engaged in local community-building while simultaneously reliant on digital platforms for distribution and promotion. Findings point to a tension-filled landscape: On the one hand, platform logics impose classificatory fixity, opaque algorithmic procedures, and pressures of optimization, often experienced as draining or alienating. On the other hand, labels sustain affective scenes through local events, social connections, and embodied practice, while experimenting with social media and producer-oriented platforms to foster meaningful exchanges. This contrast suggests that while platformization "striates" the affective scene, alternative practices and imaginaries maintain its openness and intensity.

The paper reconsiders scene theory under digital conditions by emphasizing the interplay between affective engagement and platformization. More broadly, it contributes to sociological understandings of how music cultures navigate digital abundance, algorithmic visibility, and precarious artistic and affective labour.

*Mads Krogh is Associate Professor of Popular Music Culture at Aarhus University, Denmark. His research addresses issues of genre, mediation, and practice with inspiration from cultural sociology, ANT, assemblage, and affect theory. Publications include Methodologies of Affective Experimentation (Palgrave 2022) and Musical Genre: Assemblage, Abstraction, and Digital Terms (Bloomsbury 2025).*

**Yosha Wijngaarden & Zuzanna Macała**

Erasmus University Rotterdam, NL

**“Music comes from intuition, not rational calculation”: Field, practice, and authenticity in musicians’ engagements with AI**

This article examines how early- and mid-career musicians engage with artificial intelligence (AI) in everyday music-making practices. Drawing on twenty semi-structured interviews across genres and career stages, we distinguish analytically between generative AI (GenAI), which produces musical material, and AI-powered tools (AIPTs), which optimize and augment existing workflows. Building on Bourdieu’s field theory, Schatzki’s practice theory, and Moore’s conceptualization of authenticity, we show that musicians evaluate AI through layered understandings of first-, second-, and third-person authenticity. While AIPTs are largely normalized as efficiency-enhancing extensions of embodied practice, GenAI more frequently provokes moral ambivalence, particularly in genres where legitimacy is tied to interpretation, long-term skill accumulation, and expressive ownership. By situating AI within the social organization of music production, the study advances practice-oriented accounts of technological change and demonstrates how AI adoption is shaped by genre hierarchies, embodied dispositions, and field position rather than technological affordances alone.

*Yosha Wijngaarden is Assistant Professor of Media and Creative Industries in the Media and Communication Department at Erasmus University Rotterdam. Her research examines work, innovation, and inequalities in the creative industries, focusing on how work practices, earnings, and technological developments shape creativity and livelihoods.*

*Zuzanna Macała is a research master student majoring in Sociology of Culture, Media, and the Arts at Erasmus University Rotterdam. She is interested in the intersection of music, technology, and creative labour. Zuzanna is particularly fascinated by innovations and renegotiation of creative practices.*

**Aleksandra Barjaktarević & PTK**

Heidelberg University, DE

**What Does the Soundtrack of Class Warfare Sound Like?: The Role of Music in Political Action for Refugee Rights**

Music has always played a major role in expressing important and critical political views and mobilizing people. Despite this obvious contribution to social change, the general public often overlooks artists as contributors to the growth of human understanding and knowledge. When artists are mentioned—typically because their work appears relevant to pressing societal issues—their actual contribution to knowledge or research is rarely clearly defined. This is partly due to the dominant association of research with scientific paradigms: rationality, objectivity, empirical testing, and methodological rigor—qualities often seen as opposed to the nature of art. In our presentation, we demonstrate the limits of traditional scientific analysis and propose an interdisciplinary methodology that treats artistic research not as subordinate to sociology but as a valid heuristic<sup>4</sup> within scientific inquiry on the topics of music, activism, and social change.

We draw on a case study from the long-term project *Antinational Embassy*, in which we explore the role of music in political action supporting refugee rights. Formed in 2013 during the occupation of the Gerhart-Hauptmann-Schule in Berlin-Kreuzberg by refugees and asylum seekers, *Antinational Embassy* is a music collective rooted in activist engagement. Using multimedia materials—including interviews, documentary work, photography, and music—we demonstrate how arts-based research combined with sociological analysis can express experiences and meanings that elude traditional sociological methods. We show how music engages marginalized groups and acts as a “toolkit” for political mobilization in the fight for refugee rights.

Furthermore, we highlight how long-term collaboration between an artist—who engages deeply with social inequality and protest both as a solo artist and through *Antinational Embassy* (performing at protests and the Berlin State Opera), through social work within the local community, and via rap workshops addressing racism, violence, and bullying in youth centers and schools across Germany—and a sociologist can yield deeper insights into the lived realities of vulnerable groups. In particular, our collaborative analysis of critical moments—such as the 2014 school eviction protests, during which refugees, the members of *Antinational Embassy* and Kreuzberg community, including underage students, faced massive police violence and criminalization—has led to new understandings of police violence and how alternative approaches, especially those involving music, can support the fight for refugee rights. Ultimately, our presentation argues that integrating artistic and sociological approaches strengthens sociology as a discipline by uncovering new forms of heuristics and can inspire for creative political agency for social change.

*Aleksandra Barjaktarević is a sociologist and art historian specializing in classical and contemporary sociological theories, cultural sociology, and the sociology of the arts and architecture, as well as artistic research. Since 2021, she has been working as an academic assistant at the Max Weber Institute for Sociology in Heidelberg and, since August 2024, has been a research affiliate at the Center for Cultural Sociology at Yale University.*

*PTK is a rapper from Berlin-Kreuzberg, known for his socially critical themes and autobiographical lyrics. His earlier album *Kreuzberg & Gomorrah* reached number six on the German album charts in 2021. Since 2013, he has been a member of the band *Antinational Embassy*, whose members mostly met at a school in Kreuzberg that had been occupied by asylum seeker, displaced people, and migrants. In 2015, the group performed as action musicians in *Originale (1961)* by Karlheinz Stockhausen at the Staatsoper Berlin, under the direction of Georg Schütky. Since 2024, they have been working on a collaborative artistic research project on migration and music.*

**Kristina Kolbe**

Erasmus University Rotterdam, NL

**Exploring the Possibilities of Cultural Work as a Form of Political Struggle in Contemporary Europe**

In an era marked by resurgent far-right rhetoric and ethnonationalist politics, grassroots music collectives across Europe provide a critical lens for understanding how racial, gendered, and classed differences are lived, resisted, and reimagined through cultural practice. This paper draws on ethnographic and interview data collected between 2023 and 2025 with collectives in Berlin, London, Edinburgh, and Paris that in parts explicitly mobilise decolonial and feminist frameworks to engage in cultural activism around migrant justice, gender and queer liberation, labour struggles, and solidarity with Palestine specifically. While each city is often celebrated as a cosmopolitan hub of 'radical' cultural production, local grassroots initiatives articulating such intersectional commitments increasingly encounter institutional barriers, funding restrictions and forms of censorship that constrain their work. At the same time, this paper shows how music collectives offer sites of social contention, solidarity, care and resistance. Through performances, collaborative organising and the creation of autonomous spaces, I discuss how grassroots music collectives cultivate alternative imaginaries of community and belonging that push back against inequality, marginalisation and precariousness both in and beyond the cultural industries. Mobilising Hall's notion of 'conjuncture' and drawing on current sociological debates in creative work and activism scholarship, the paper traces how artists and activists negotiate these tensions across different urban contexts. In so doing, it explores both the shared challenges and the distinct possibilities of cultural work as a form of political struggle in contemporary Europe.

*Kristina Kolbe is Assistant Professor at Erasmus University Rotterdam and Visiting Fellow at LSE's International Inequalities Institute. Her work explores inequality, work and social change through studying the cultural industries. She currently holds a veni grant (NWO) to research how grassroots music collectives engage with care politics and creative activism.*

**Paula Guerra, Maria Manuela Mendes & Sofia Sousa**

University of Porto, PT

**Much More than Bandoleros. Territories of Encounters, Artistic Practices, and Identity Reconstructions among the gypsies/Roma in Lisbon**

References to Roma groups, composers, musicians, or performers are virtually absent from music encyclopaedias. This omission does not signify a lack of Portuguese Roma musical heritage but rather reflects the socio-political and cultural invisibility historically imposed on Roma communities. Even today, knowledge about Roma artistic and musical practices remains limited, as does academic, social, and political recognition of their potential as instruments for social inclusion. This paper examines the mobilisation of music and dance as catalysts for community dynamics and active citizenship, focusing specifically on Roma communities in the parish of Carnide, Lisbon. While locally anchored, the analysis situates these practices within wider Lisbon, national, and translocal contexts, and connects them to the growing recognition of artists with Roma heritage or repertoires rooted in Roma cultural traditions (e.g., Nininho Vaz Maia in Portugal and Rosalía in Spain). Drawing on five LabROMA—Laboratories of Music, Dance, and Citizenship—carried out up to July this year, the study adopts a collaborative and participatory approach to highlight voices, sounds, and knowledge. These laboratories explored themes including Roma history and culture, gender equality, racism and anti-Roma discrimination, psychosocial well-being, and civic and political participation. Music and dance served as both expressive forms and pedagogical tools, employing formal and informal learning methods to foreground aesthetics, sounds, and rhythms of Roma identity. They simultaneously revealed aspects of intangible cultural heritage frequently overlooked by the media and not always fully acknowledged within Roma communities themselves. The findings suggest that Roma communities have reconfigured music and dance as vital resources for redefining their role in contemporary society. These practices act as vehicles for empowerment and recognition, contributing to community development, multicultural coexistence, and economic sustainability, while helping to dismantle exclusion, stereotypes, segregation, and anti-Roma discrimination.

*Paula Guerra is Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Porto and Researcher at the Institute of Sociology of the same University. Paula is Adjunct Associate Professor of the Griffith Centre for Social and Cultural Research in Australia. Paula is the founder/coordinator of the KISMIF ([kismifconference.com](http://kismifconference.com)) and the co-coordinator of the Research Network of Sociology of Arts of ESA. Paula is co-editor-in-chief of SAGE journal *DIY, Alternative Cultures and Society* and the Bloomsbury Academic Series *Critical Studies in Do-it Yourself Cultures*.*

**Caroline Trenda**

Normandy University, FR

**Music as a Spatial Vector: The Case of the Malayali Diaspora**

Music is a spatial vector that produces territorial and identity meaning at different scales, from the neighborhood to the global diaspora. Moreover, it reveals both the emotional and socio-cultural ties between places of origin and places of settlement. It also accompanies processes of territorialization, reappropriation, or negotiation of belonging.

This paper aims to show how a geo-cultural approach and music in a diasporic context can bring a renewed perspective on the (re)construction, representation, and transformation of territories and identities. The focus is on the Malayali diaspora—originating from Kerala, South India, and largely spread across the world. This diaspora mobilizes traditional musical forms (such as Carnatic, folk, devotional) and their contemporary hybrids to reconstruct a lived and imagined Kerala. Thus, an immaterial lived space is produced, where memories and representations of Kerala are re-enacted and a sense of home is generated.

Using the geographical concept of *espace vécu* (lived space) introduced by Armand Frémont – and specifically immaterial lived space, this paper examines how music creates spatial identities at a distance and intertwines memory, nostalgia, and invention. The methodology relies on a targeted analysis of experiences and productions of diasporic Malayali musicians and collectives. The emphasis is put on practices, symbols, and uses that shape this immaterial space.

Preliminary findings suggest that Malayali diasporic music actively contributes to the creation of new representations of Kerala as an immaterial lived space, where the homeland becomes at once real and idealized, rooted and mobile, intimate and shared. This case illustrates how music helps the diaspora recreate and give meaning to transnational lived spaces, connecting the homeland and host societies, while shaping diasporic identities and producing a sense of home.

*Dr. Caroline Trenda holds a PhD in Political and Cultural Geography from the University of Rouen, France. She is Assistant Professor at St. Teresa's College, Ernakulam, Kerala, and Associate Researcher at ERIAC, Normandy University. She studies space, identity and women's movements in contemporary India through literature and cultural practices.*

**Louisa Hutzler**

University of Leipzig, DE

**Using and Transcending Belonging Shaped by Cultural Heritage in and through Music: Musicians' Strategies in a Transcultural Orchestra**

This paper explores musical strategies used to negotiate ethnic belonging and identity within the context of the transcultural Bridges Kammerorchester based in Germany. Established as a response to the arrival of refugees in 2015/16 and part of cultural change in post-migrant society in Germany (Sievers 2024), the orchestra blends Western classical music traditions with various musical influences brought in by its musicians, who have none or different migration biographies. Drawing on interviews with musicians and a musical analysis of selected works of the ensemble's repertoire, the study examines how ethnic-biographical dimensions and musical socialization interact within the ensemble's creative process. In this paper, I show that while the orchestra's artistic profile transcends ethnic boundaries by combining various musical traditions, it simultaneously reproduces processes of othering (Gaupp 2021, De Martini Ugolotti 2022). After providing an overview on the artistic profile of the Bridges Kammerorchester, including the ensemble's understanding of the concept of transculturality, I focus on three compositions from the repertoire to discuss how the musicians' musical self-positioning, its ethnic dimension, and its negotiation in the ensemble's musical practice are represented in the musical material. Thereby, I furthermore investigate how musicians' musical negotiation of ethnic categories ranges from nostalgic tendencies and identification with their country of origin to representations of its musical tradition and the juxtaposition and blending of several ethnically marked musical worlds. Discussing the musical examples and their relation to ethnic boundaries, the article explores their potential to overcome these boundaries and the artistic and social agency that this creates for musicians with migration biography (Parzer 2023), but also how ethnic boundaries are entrenched and essentialist representations of ethnicity are reproduced.

*Louisa Hutzler completed her doctorate with distinction at the University of Salzburg, specializing in music and migration. She studied musicology at the University of Leipzig and the Conservatory in Leipzig. Her research focuses on transcultural music practices as well as music and inclusion. In addition to her academic work, she is actively involved in projects that promote cultural participation and diversity. Among other initiatives, she directed an inclusive concert series in collaboration with the Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin. In the current semester, she is teaching two courses in the Department of Ethnology and Musicology at the University of Leipzig.*

**Sayati Das**

University of Oslo, NO

**What is *My music?*': Looking at Music-Based Reform Programs in India's Correctional Homes**

My current study looks at premediated forms of music-doing, with a focus on music-listening, in correctional homes across India. Particularly, it is looking at three sites – the Presidency Correctional Home in Kolkata; the Udaipur Central Jail in Udaipur; and the Chennai Central Jail in Chennai. Each of these correctional homes, much like other ones in India right now, host a number of cultural ‘programs’ and year-long arts-based curriculums – most, if not all, include music. However, these curriculums are more often than not designed for the incarcerated residents by external facilitators – thus, the basis of this study is the need to interrogate the power imbalance between both these stakeholders. What of the cultural autonomy of the incarcerated residents? How do we account for the distinct social processes that inform the distinctly different cultural choices of both these stakeholders? How do we incorporate the intersections of identity formation processes and consumption patterns within such initiatives – and thereby move towards a more inclusive space that does not rely on homogenous, prescribed cultural practices that are drawn from a social position that may have little to no resemblance with that of its participants’?

These questions are drawn from primarily two strands of scholarly thought - the Bourdieuan emphasis on one’s habitus and access to capitals; the second would be Stuart Hall’s unending hope in treating culture as a site of power struggle. While the former gives this study the motivation to brutally take apart seemingly well-meaning reform systems, the latter gives it the impetus to look for and subsequently suggest alternatives. However, both are unified by the need to treat music-doing as a wholly social phenomenon – not an objective, detached experience.

Through open-ended interviews and participant observation, this study has already sketched a vivid background through the detailed analysis of the Culture Therapy program from the Presidency Correctional Home in Kolkata, India – with the first set of extensive field interviews complete, it is amply clear that class, caste, and other ways of stratification are direct influences on music-doing (or the lack of it) within such institutions.

*Sayati Das is a Doctoral Research Fellow at the Department of Musicology at the University of Oslo. She is deeply interested in the fields of Music Sociology, Sound Studies, Media Studies, and Critical Theory. With an academic background in Sociology, she is particularly invested in studying the intersections of identity-formation processes and the various ways of doing music, specifically in the Indian context. She is currently looking at music-practices in correctional homes and central jails across various Indian megacities.*

**Madis Järvekülg**

Tallinn University, EE

**The Public Value Created by Public Service Media for and with the Music Industry in Estonia**

The platformization and datafication of music and media service markets have raised challenges for the sustainability and diversity of local music industries. At the same time, media scholars and practitioners are continuously renegotiating the role of public service media (PSM) organizations in the digital age and the kinds of value they are expected to generate for their host societies.

Bridging these two fields of inquiry, this paper asks: What kind of public value does Estonian Public Broadcasting (ERR) create for and with the local music industries in Estonia?

This question is addressed through a multimethod, exploratory research design that combines quantitative and qualitative approaches. First, the study investigates the presence – or absence – of music-specific programming principles, policies, and collaborative strategies at ERR through document analysis and interviews with PSM staff. Second, it examines the experiences of Estonian music industry professionals with ERR via an online survey and semi-structured interviews.

The analysis maps how music-specific programming and collaborations between ERR and music professionals produce different types of industry and societal value. Theoretically, the project develops a systematic synthesis of the concepts of ‘public value’ and ‘national innovation systems’, drawing on innovation and institutional economics, systems and value theories, media studies, and public administration scholarship.

This paper forms part of a postdoctoral project (running until the end of 2027) that examines the relationship between PSM and the local music industries in Estonia and Finland. The broader aim is to enhance understanding of how public and private institutions in the creative sectors interact, and to inform more effective media and music policies in both national contexts. At the conference, preliminary findings from the Estonian case study will be presented.

*Madis Järvekülg is a researcher and lecturer at the Baltic Film, Media and Arts School of Tallinn University, Estonia, and a visiting postdoctoral fellow at the University of Turku, Finland. His research focuses on the social dynamics of media and the creative industries, with a particular emphasis on the music sector.*

## Ralph H. Christoph

C/O Pop, DE

### **Economy for the Common Good (ECG) according to Christian Felber as a Normative Framework**

The economy for the common good is an alternative economic model that focuses on ethical values such as human dignity, solidarity and ecological sustainability, i.e. it serves the common good rather than purely financial gain. The common good balance sheet serves as a measuring instrument to evaluate the contribution of companies to the common good. This presentation explains the process of balancing, outlines the vision of a sustainable economy and highlights the advantages for companies, such as visibility and market attractiveness.

#### **Research question**

*How can the common good balance sheet, as an instrument of the common good economy, support the sustainable transformation process of cultural and creative enterprises (using the example of c/o pop GmbH, which organises the c/o pop Festival and the c/o pop Convention) and what effects does it have on organisations, the market and society?*

#### **Theoretical approach**

Economy for the Common Good (ECG) according to Christian Felber as a normative framework. Basic assumption: The economy serves the common good, not purely capital growth. Alternative success indicators: Common Good Product (macro), Common Good Balance Sheet (meso), Common Good Added Value (micro). CSR and sustainability theories: Classification of the GWÖ balance sheet under CSR/sustainability instruments (ISO 26000, DNK, GRI). Distinction: The common good balance sheet is more value-oriented, process-oriented and certifiable. Organisational development and transformation theories: ECG balance sheet as '360° sustainability management' → has an effect on internal motivation, external differentiation and innovation impulses.

#### **Methodology**

##### 1. Accounting process (practical methodology of the ECG)

- Project preparation, formation of teams.
- Six workshops over ten months covering the 20 topics of the ECG matrix.
- Preparation of a common good report.
- Self-assessment + external audit.
- Publication of the balance sheet (including audit certificate), re-balancing after two years.

##### 2. Research methodology (scientific investigation)

- Qualitative-empirical: Case study analysis of cultural organisations (e.g. c/o pop, Brauerei zur Malzmühle, Club Bahnhof Ehrenfeld); Interviews with stakeholders (employees, management, partners); Document analysis of published common good balance sheets.
- Comparative-analytical: Analysis of effects at the organisational level (e.g. motivation, innovative strength); Investigation of market effects (e.g. differentiation, visibility); Consideration of social effects (e.g. quality of life, sustainability, transparency).

*Ralph H. Christoph is one of the founders of the c/o pop festival and director of the affiliated c/o pop Convention in Cologne, Germany. The former journalist and editor (including SPEX – Das Magazin für Popkultur) was responsible for the public benefit accounting process at c/o pop as 'Transformation Manager for Sustainable Culture'*

**Alexandra Karamoutsiou**

University of Thessaloniki, GR

**From Music Studios to Citizenship: Cultural sustainability from Below**

Since the mid-1970s, DIY music studios have emerged in Thessaloniki, Greece. Until fairly recently, these heterotopic spaces (Lefebvre 1977; Soja 1996; Stavridis 2006; Karamoutsiou 2023) were the site of the expectations, dreams and creativity of hundreds of musicians.

Creative networks and musical ecosystems have formed around and within these spaces, shaped by the DIY and DIT ethos and based on the complementary skills and shared objectives of their participants (Oliveira & Guerra, 2016). Functioning as resilient musical pathways (Finnegan, 2007), these studios have been repeatedly carved out by the city's musicians.

Can this practice be seen as an example of social or cultural sustainability within the context of urban life? To what extent might DIY urban music practices contribute to a form of 'DIY citizenship' (Ratto & Boler, 2014) that resists the corrosive effects of harsh neoliberal economies, including overtourism?

This research is based on oral testimonies gathered through semi-structured interviews with musicians, combined with an understanding of the city as a multi-layered living archive (Hetherington, 2014). The presentation explores an interdisciplinary field at the intersections of critical music historiography, music sociology, spatial theories and political studies.

*Alexandra Karamoutsiou has received her PhD from the Department of Music Studies, AUTH Thessaloniki. She works as a postdoctoral researcher and adjunct lecturer in the same department. Her research field starts from urban music studies and specializes in the study of DIY music practices, creative networks, music communities, and non-institutional music spaces, focusing on the DIY music studios of Thessaloniki.*

Music, Labor, and Careers 1	Songwriting
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**Sharon Martin**

University of Bristol, UK

**Value of songwriting**

**Research question**

What insight can collaborative songwriting bring into women’s lived experience of gambling?

**Theoretical approach**

The theoretical framework for this research draws on narrative criminology and post-structural feminism.

**Methodology**

The methodology is participatory, Interpretivist and qualitative. Interviews with experts by practice, individual songwriting sessions, and a group songwriting workshop with experts by practice including sharing and reflecting on the research process.

**Value of songwriting**

Songwriting gives insight into lived experience, and recovery journeys. Narratives are a social force (Presser and Sandberg 2019). Songwriting enables listening and hearing women’s voices. It is creative, inclusive and enjoyable for participants, developing their skills. Songwriting develops strong research relationships (Fairchild and McFerran 2019, McCaffrey 2021) breaking down traditional barriers and hierarchies within research (McCaffrey et al 2021, Crockett Thomas et al 2019). Songwriting enables agency within narratives for those with lived experience of gambling (Presser and Sandberg 2019). Lyrics are shaped by experiences and intersections of power and selected and created by the narrator and the writer(s) of the song (Høybye 2024). Songs have a kind of agency as social actors in research (Crockett Thomas et al 2021). Songwriting is collaborative, creative and can be used in co-production. Songwriting is participatory as are recording and performance, facilitating public engagement. The Distant Voices Project shared songs through recordings and performance with the aim of creating dialogue (Crockett Thomas et al 2020). In this project songs will potentially be housed on the Aila website.

**Preliminary findings**

Songwriting research can counter the under-representation of women in gambling harms research. Highlighting narratives and lived experience journeys, including recovery, challenging dominant narratives of vulnerability revealing resilience, skills, and strength. Songwriting can contribute to the sharing of stories and amplifying of voices, raising awareness and destigmatising lived experience of gambling. Songwriting research can inform practice around embedding lived experience.

*Sharon has an MA in Women’s Studies and in Songwriting, she taught Sociology for many years in further education in South -West England. She is a songwriter and musician and was a BBC Introducing artist. Prior to her PhD she has written and presented on gender, open mics and folk music.*

## Rachel Skaggs

The Ohio State University, US

### Writing Alone in a Collaborative Field

Contemporary commercial music genres, like country and pop, have strong conventions of collaboration in the songwriting process. Co-writing serves important career functions for these songwriters, mitigating reputational and economic risk, as collaborative creative works are both seen as and legally are collective works jointly owned by all of a song's writers. In an art world with such collaborative conventions, can one write a song alone? This presentation will mobilize a mixed-methods analysis of successful country music songs and their writers from 2000 – 2015, arguing that writing alone is a creative process that is unconventional and most available to elites, specifically to recording artist songwriters.

Despite solo songwriting being a career entry point for many, it is not a common practice for professional country songwriters. However, those professional writers who do write alone might use the practice as a way to generate new ideas and melodies to bring to a co-writing session or, rarely, as a personal expressive practice. Writing alone encourages the creation of songs that express personal truths or perspectives that may or may not be the kinds commercial music that sound like radio or connect with audiences. These songs are potentially more oriented to artistry than commerciality, however, solo-written songs are disproportionately represented at the highest echelons of song success. Of the 1,197 songs that attained the highest levels of success in the period of study, only 12% were written alone. Of the 29 that songs achieved status in all four measured domains of success, seven songs (25%) were written by just one songwriter. Of those seven songs, five were written by their recording artist, revealing that writing alone is a practice more available to recording artists than to professional songwriters.

*Rachel Skaggs holds the Lawrence and Isabel Barnett Professorship of Arts Management as associate professor at The Ohio State University. Rachel is a sociologist of culture & work whose research focuses on relational ecosystems in creative industries. Her research can be found in venues like Poetics and Work and Occupations.*

## Adam Martin & Remy Hasswell-Martin

University of Huddersfield, UK & University of West London, UK

### Motivation and Meaning in Collaborative Songwriting

Songwriters are no strangers to questions of meaning. They will regularly spend considerable time and effort cognitively and practically engaging with questions of how best to communicate meaning through their work. Rather than focussing on meaning within the work, however, this paper seeks to explore what the process of the work itself and the creative process of collaborative songwriting means to those that do it. In this paper, we want to understand what motivates songwriters to work collaboratively, whether they consider their work to be meaningful and how working within a creative industry affects their experience.

We do so from a phenomenological orientation with our analysis focusing on qualitative data collected from semi-structured interviews with collaborative songwriters. Our methodology seeks to position the experience and perspectives of musicians at the centre of the focus in order to keep things 'closer to the ground'. Our sample includes songwriters, artists, producers and topliners at various stages of their careers, a sample that represents the 'day in day out' working of collaborative creativity.

We will highlight two key themes pertaining to the lived experience of collaborative songwriters: how they are motivated by the affective experience of collaboration and how they experience the music industry in relation to what they do. We will draw on participant accounts as well as theories of 4E cognition and affective framing to explore these ideas and understand what they tell us about the lives and work of collaborative songwriters today.

*Adam Martin is a senior lecturer at the University of Huddersfield and a songwriter/producer. His research interests include collaborative creativity, multimodal composition and music production aesthetics. Adam has recently written a book for Routledge on collaborative songwriting practice. Remy Haswell-Martin is a Senior Lecturer at the University of West London. His work explores musical consciousness and the role of our bodies in music-making and experience. Remy is co-author of a third edition of the internationally renowned *Rock: The Primary Text* (Routledge) with Allan F. Moore.*

Music, Health, and Wellbeing

Consumption and Audiences

**Julian Schaap**

Erasmus University Rotterdam, NL

**Usages of Music for Mood Regulation across Age, Gender and Educational Groups: A National Population-Based Study**

Psychological research demonstrates that music is widely recognized as a resource for regulating moods in everyday life, yet sociological research has largely examined music through the lens of taste and cultural distinction rather than through its practical emotional uses. This study integrates these perspectives by empirically investigating whether music-based mood regulation is socially patterned and how it relates to musical engagement and taste. Using population-based survey data from the Netherlands (N = 2,644), we analyze variation across seven mood-regulation strategies measured with the Brief Music in Mood Regulation (B-MMR) scale. Results show that the use of music for everyday mood regulation is widespread and primarily oriented toward maintaining or enhancing everyday mood. Multivariate analyses reveal a pronounced life-course gradient: younger individuals are substantially more likely to use music for emotionally intensive regulation, particularly for expressing negative affect and reflecting on personal experiences. Gender and educational differences are statistically significant but comparatively modest. Most importantly, indicators of musical engagement, such as listening intensity and the perceived centrality of music in everyday life, emerge as the strongest predictors of regulatory use. In contrast, music taste profiles contribute to variation but only to a limited extent. These findings suggest that the mood regulatory functions of music are shaped less by symbolic taste patterns and, aside from age, sociodemographic characteristics than by patterns of general music engagement. The study thus advances a practice-oriented sociological understanding of music, showing how music operates as a widely shared emotional resource, especially for young people.

*Julian Schaap is assistant professor of sociology of music at the Department of Arts and Culture Studies of Erasmus University Rotterdam. He researches the reception of music in relation to stratification and well-being.*

**Luca Carbone & Laura Vandebosch**

KU Leuven, BE

**Individualistic Success Narratives in Adolescents' Daily Music Consumption and their Relationships with Success-Related Cognitions and Well-Being**

In Western societies, adolescents are living typical developmental transitions in contexts that reward individualistic narratives of success, celebrating material wealth, hard work, and self-reliance. Among the various sources through which they are exposed to such individualistic success narratives, music is a central one. Music is one of the most enjoyed and frequently consumed media among adolescents and often functions as a crucial resource for inspiration and mood management. Music lyrics also frequently feature narratives about materialism and meritocracy, which might bring positive and negative effects on adolescents' identities and well-being, dependently on whether they consider such narratives as achievable and desirable. Music is therefore a potentially key medium to study in relation to daily fluctuations in adolescents' success-related cognition and well-being. Much experimental literature has highlighted the short-term relationships between music listening, listeners' cognition (e.g., beliefs), and well-being (e.g., anxiety). Fewer studies have focused on adolescents' everyday experiences with music, particularly in relation to their daily exposure to individualistic success narratives, success-related cognition (i.e., importance to be successful), and related well-being (i.e., performance pressure). Yet, we currently know little about the daily reciprocal relationships between the consumption of individualistic success narratives with adolescents' identities and well-being. To do so, we conducted a 14-day diary study among 723 adolescents ( $M_{age} = 16.3$  [ $SD_{age} = 1.7$ ], 61.1% girls, 67.6% Western-European) from Belgium, France, and Slovenia. This time-sensitive design allows to disentangle daily associations between adolescents' exposure to individualistic success narratives in their favorite music lyrics, their assigned importance to be successful, and their fluctuations in performance pressure. We particularly drew from social learning theory to hypothesize that adolescents learn from media consumption through the selective attention to media content and the vicarious learning from favorite role models. Analysis are still ongoing.

*Luca Carbone, Ph.D., KU Leuven, is a postdoctoral researcher at the Media Psychology Lab at KU Leuven and a guest professor at the Hanover University of Music, Drama, and Media. Their work lies at the intersection of cultural sociology and media psychology and engages with questions about cultural production of media ideals, music uses and effects, and adolescents' identity and health developments.*

*Laura Vandebosch, Ph.D., KU Leuven, is an associate professor at the Media Psychology Lab at KU Leuven. The relationship between media and well-being is the core subject of her research, leading to international publications in several fields, including developmental psychology, sexology, body image, social relationships and communication theory.*

## Mark van Bergen

Fontys University of Applied Sciences / Tilburg University, NL

### **Pre- and Afterparty Affect: Exploring Well-being Beyond Electronic Dance Music Events**

How does electronic dance music event (EDME) participation shape well-being before and after attendance? While existing literature demonstrates that EDME's generate positive well-being experiences extending beyond actual participation, research has predominantly focused on direct attendance impacts. The processes through which anticipation and post-event reflection contribute to participants' well-being remain underexplored.

This study examines how EDME participants experience well-being across extended temporal phases of event engagement. Drawing on Small's concept of musicking—which emphasizes music as social practice rather than object—and theories of anticipation and retrospective evaluation, I investigate how well-being emerges through the broader social and cultural practices surrounding EDME participation, including pre-event preparation, community engagement, and post-event integration.

Through face-to-face interviews and focus groups with approximately 30 frequent EDME participants (data collection runs from September 2025 until April 2026), this research explores two interconnected questions. How do participants describe the ways EDME engagement shapes their well-being before and after events? And which pre- and post-event activities enhance or diminish the overall EDME experience in relation to well-being?

The methodology combines semi-structured interviews focusing on personal well-being narratives with focus groups examining collective meaning-making processes around EDME participation. Participants will be recruited through purposive sampling from diverse EDM scenes to capture varied experiences across subgenres and event types.

This research contributes to music sociology by extending understanding of how musical participation creates well-being beyond immediate consumption moments, offering insights into the temporal dimensions of music's social and psychological impacts.

*Mark van Bergen is a writer, lecturer, and researcher in electronic dance music culture. His debut book *Dutch Dance* (2013) won the Pop Media Price. At Fontys, he guides students toward careers in the EDM industry, while pursuing his PhD research on how EDM event participation impacts individual well-being.*

**Phillipa Chong**

McMaster University, CA

**The Sound of Neurodivergence: Music, Memes, and the Cultural Politics of ADHD and Autism on Instagram**

This project examines how background music functions as a cultural and strategic resource in Instagram posts about ADHD and autism. Rather than treating neurodivergence as a set of medical conditions, I approach it as a cultural and political terrain, where competing meanings and identities are produced, circulated, and contested by lay creators. The study asks: (1) What kinds of music (popular, nostalgic, meme-based) are paired with ADHD and autism content? (2) How do these sonic choices contribute to the cultural framing of neurodivergence — as humor, tragedy, entrepreneurial brand, or political claim? (3) How do platform logics and influencer strategies shape the visibility of these framings? Theoretically, I bring together research on the platformization of culture, the sociology of knowledge, and digital cultural entrepreneurship. The dataset consists of the 100 most popular English-language Instagram posts about ADHD and autism, identified through Instagram's proprietary ranking algorithm. Using a mixed computational–qualitative approach, I analyze text, audio, video, and images to examine linguistic patterns, soundtrack choices, and content thematic framing. I argue that the sonic textures of ADHD/autism memes illuminate how medical categories are re-appropriated and re-signified in digital publics: they become memes, commodities, forms of lay expertise, and (gendered) niche market position-takings.

*Phillipa Chong is a cultural sociologist who studies how workers understand what they do, why they're valuable, and how knowledge and expertise gain legitimacy. Her research traces these dynamics across cultural industries undergoing seismic status shifts including book criticism, museum work, and public health. Chong is an Associate Professor of Sociology in Canada.*

**Matina Magkou & Lea Karwath**

Université Côte d'Azur, FR & Keychange

**Not Only Advocating but Enacting: Intersectionality as Organizational Practice in the Keychange Initiative**

In recent years, the music industry has become increasingly aware of how diverse identities shape creativity, representation, and cultural production. Numerous projects, initiatives, and campaigns have emerged to address equity and gender equality. Yet, despite industry reports and growing public discourse, academic research on inequality in the music sector remains relatively limited. Recent studies have examined gender equality initiatives (Wall-Andrews & Luka, 2022), women's leadership in music (Nenic & Cimardi, 2023; Magkou et al, n/a), advocacy for gender parity (Raine & Strong, 2019; Werner, 2022), labor activism (Reitsamer & Dagmar, 2022), and racial disparities in music funding (Stuart & De Laat, 2024). While highlighting persistent underrepresentation—particularly of women and non-binary individuals in positions of power—these studies often isolate single axes of discrimination and lack an intersectional perspective. This gap mirrors a similar tendency in the sector's own initiatives.

Our study examines the organizational transformation of Keychange, launched in 2018 as a European talent development program aimed at increasing women's representation in music. Initially grounded in a binary understanding of gender, Keychange has since evolved into a transnational platform embracing a broader, intersectional approach. This shift reflects not only changing political and social imperatives but also a deep internal re-evaluation of the initiative's own frameworks and practices.

Rather than merely advocating for intersectionality as a normative goal, Keychange has attempted to enact it through reflexive organizational change. Drawing on evaluation data led by the first author, along with interviews with team members and collaborators, we trace how intersectionality has become central—yet challenging—to Keychange's mission. As the initiative has expanded across diverse national and cultural contexts, it has confronted tensions between coherence and contextual relevance, requiring ongoing negotiation, adaptation, and uncomfortable conversations. Our study highlights intersectionality as a dynamic organizational practice, offering insights for cultural sector initiatives seeking to move beyond performative inclusion toward structural change.

*Matina Magkou is a postdoctoral researcher at GREDEG/CNRS, University Côte d'Azur, specializing in cultural and creative industries, cultural policies, and international cultural cooperation. She teaches across Europe and has worked on major cultural events and as a consultant for numerous cultural and public organizations internationally.*

*Lea Karwath is a cultural project and event manager with a master's in arts and culture management. She has organized major events like Theaternacht Hamburg and works with the Reeperbahn Festival, advocating for diversity through Keychange. She also has experience in theater production and radio hosting.*

**Oluremi Abati**

King's College London, UK

**Digital Audio Workstations, Inclusive Practices, and Socioeconomic Implications on Visually Impaired Music Producers**

This paper investigates the accessibility of Digital Audio Workstations (DAWs) to visually impaired (VI) music producers. It examines the evolution of music production technology and inclusive practices for VI producers. The study provides insight into the accessibility limitations of DAWs for VI users, particularly because DAWs are typically designed with graphical representations of sound which are incompatible with screen readers used by VI individuals. This paper therefore explores the impact of DAW accessibility limitations on the practices of VI producers in music production.

Questions: What are the impacts of DAW accessibility limitations on VI producers and how have these influenced their inclusion in the production industry? What are the ways through which DAW accessibility limitations to VI producers can be addressed so that inclusive practices are ensured?

Phenomenology is the theoretical approach adopted for this study. The concept of phenomenology provides a first-person insight into the lived experiences of VI producers as they interact with music technology, highlighting emotional, technical, and social barriers.

Ethnography is the methodology for this investigation. Essentially, ethnography is useful in music and audio production research to closely observe and record the practices and experiences of participants of a study. The participants were recruited from different countries which include the UK, USA, Sierra Leone, Poland, and Finland.

The initial findings of these studies reveal a wide range of DAW accessibility limitations, largely influenced by a culture of discrimination against people living with disabilities. It further establishes that these limitations are not solely determined by the design of DAWs. It highlights how various forms of socioeconomic disadvantage equally present significant barriers to DAW accessibility for VI producers.

*I am a fourth year PhD candidate and teaching assistant. My area of research is the accessibility of digital audio workstations. I have presented papers at different conferences including in New Zealand. I am also a singer, songwriter, and music producer. My latest production was an EP titled From Lagos.*

**Britt Swartjes**

Boekmanstichting, NL

**Systemic Change and Interventions on Gender inequality in the Dutch Popular Music Industries**

Gender inequality in the popular music industries has been extensively documented, both in the Netherlands and beyond. This research focuses on bottom-up interventions that seek to address and transform unequal gender dynamics in the Dutch popular music sector. By qualitatively mapping the current landscape of bottom-up gender equality interventions in the Dutch popular music sector, I explore how these might collectively contribute to systemic change. The first selection of 29 interventions, including short conversations with founders, shows signs of a fragmented and precarious field that depends on the time and effort that those involved are able to invest. Often, founders are people with backgrounds that are underrepresented across the entire music industry. While this fragmentation does not say anything about the significant efforts each of these initiatives undertake, and the collaborations within the music industry they have already established, a systemic approach to changing the industry necessitates combined efforts. Initial findings suggest several avenues for further exploration, including 1) how responsibility is distributed 2) what areas of the industries these interventions (do not) focus on 3) defining what a valuable intervention is. These steps may aid in viewing interventions as a combined effort to change the music industries at large – a systemic approach – which would help to move away from the idea that inequalities are individual problems that can be solved by individuals too. This may not only help to push the industry forward, but may also shift the balance from individualized efforts to collective responsibility.

*Britt Swartjes researches inequalities and work in the cultural sector, focusing on the music industries. Her PhD (2024) focused on DEI in the music festival industry in Rotterdam. She is currently a researcher at the Boekman Foundation (Amsterdam), tracking developments in the Dutch music sector and cultural policy more broadly.*

**Marjan Wynia**

University of Groningen, NL

**Game Changers: Exploring the Gendered Working Experiences of Women Stage Managers in the Dutch Music Industry**

Although the gender disparity within the music industry has been academically researched and debated in public discourse, the patriarchal structures and gendered cultural norms in the industry remain unchallenged. While artists and professionals, urging for structural change, have initiated activities aimed at gender equality setting certain shifts in motion, the industry continues to lag behind in assuming responsibility for its gender dynamics as the industry still adheres to its meritocratic principles. Therefore, a more comprehensive understanding of the discriminatory mechanisms through which these dynamics operate is required. Building on this premise, I investigate the structural inequalities within the music industry as I explore how women music professionals contest gendered power relations and institutional barriers. From an ethnographic perspective, I address the following research question: How do women music professionals navigate gendered power relations in a male-dominated industry and strategically negotiate processes of risk, authority and decision-making? I focus on three groups of industry professionals: stage managers, entrepreneurs, and music programmers. These women not only work in a masculine dominated industry, yet in a professional role that is strongly associated with masculinity. By theoretically exploring gendered notions on authority and expertise, navigating risk and trust, and the artistic genius perpetuating booking strategies, my research enriches our knowledge on more inclusive working environments. The experiences of the respondents provide a valuable foundation for our understanding of the gender dynamics in their working environment. By connecting a literature review of feminist gender research, sociological approaches, and cultural theories, my research exposes the social and cultural practices, dominant discourses, and exclusion mechanisms perpetuating the gender gap in music. Hence, this research provides new insights how women music professionals contest the industry's patriarchal power relations and create a more inclusive professional environment, thereby contributing to the strengthening of the sector's ecosystem.

*Marjan Wynia conducts PhD research on the gender dynamics in the Dutch music industry at Groningen University. She worked in the Dutch creative industries for 20+, for over a decade in music. She is also one of the co-founders of Juno, the first Dutch network organization for women music professionals.*

**J. Griffith Rollefson & Jelena Beocanin**

University College Cork, IE & Erasmus University Rotterdam, NL

**Pluriversal Pedagogy in the Planet Rap Project'**

This paper examines the intersection of music education, postcolonial theory and Hip Hop in higher education. It examines the potential of Hip Hop pedagogy to disrupt Eurocentric frameworks in music education and build “pluriversal” models of knowledge sharing (Mbembe 2015). Drawing on experiences from our collaborative course, Planet Rap: Global Hip Hop and Postcolonial Perspectives, and its incorporation into a virtual classroom transnationally, we reflect on how Hip Hop’s diverse, community-based philosophies of knowledge-making might reshape classroom dynamics in both physical and virtual environments. Further, we offer insights on how this work might be developed into an open access textbook and digital teaching platform for Hip Hop studies. We argue that teaching Hip Hop as more than a musical genre—as a multi-element set of practices and philosophies—encourages students to question dominant narratives of music history and knowledge production. In particular, we expand the discussion with lessons from Hip Hop dance studies to demonstrate how embodied learning can inform our research practices, methodologies and teaching and examine graffiti artists’ guerrilla strategies for occupying public space and attracting the public eye. Finally, by reflecting on the successes and challenges of Planet Rap’s virtual and digital tools for engagement, assessment, and cross-border collaboration within the UNIC project, the paper contributes to debates about decolonial approaches in music education and decolonial pedagogies more broadly.

*J. Griffith Rollefson is Professor of Music at University College Cork and the author of two books, Flip the Script: European Hip Hop and the Politics of Postcoloniality (University of Chicago Press, 2017) and Critical Excess: Watch the Throne and the New Gilded Age (University of Michigan Press, 2021). Rollefson is founding co-editor of Global Hip Hop Studies and PI of CIPHER: Hip Hop Interpellation (ERC CoG).*

*Jelena Beočanin is a PhD candidate at Erasmus University Rotterdam’s History Department whose research merges Hip Hop, popular culture, and postcolonial studies. She investigates how Hip Hop culture, music and dance, shape emotional practices and modes of resistance in postcolonial contexts. Jelena’s approach integrates embodied ethnographic methods and oral history.*

## Wessel Coppes & Dina Nemirovsky

Codarts University of the Arts, NL

### **We Don't Need No Education: Confronting Institutional Barriers Between Higher Music Education and Industry Demands**

Within a dynamic and precarious music industry landscape, Higher Music Education Institutions (HMEIs) act as beacons of relative stability. With curricula often offered across various genres, these programs are intended to prepare the next generation of successful musicians. However, definitions of success vary between genres and therefore between departments. Despite diverse track opportunities, HMEIs remain historically rooted in Western Classical music traditions, focusing primarily around the practices and values of the dominant group.

This research examines the relationship between Higher Music Education Institutions (HMEIs) and industry demands across music genres, focusing on both gaps in curricula and stakeholder perceptions of a conservatory's role and responsibility. It explores the institutional barriers and symbolic violence embedded within conservatory education, shaping processes of cultural legitimation and reinforcing social boundaries between 'high' and 'popular' cultures.

This study draws on research on how institutional leaders see higher popular music education, how popular music programs are constructed in HMEIs, and how HMEI stakeholders reflect on the relationship between curricula and industry realities across genres. The analysis is based on a combination of in-depth interviews and survey data.

Preliminary findings demonstrate that, although non-dominant (non-Classical) genres within HMEIs are increasingly expanding, curricula remain rooted in Classical traditions, often neglecting or contradicting genre-specific skills and values. While HMEI stakeholders agree that a conservatory should prepare students for music industry realities, courses aimed at developing these skills and competencies – Entrepreneurship courses – are perceived as disconnected from other areas of study and practical experience. This illustrates dominant culture tensions within Higher Music Education Institutions, as well as the divide between instrumental proficiency values and the commercial, practical demands of professional musicians.

*Wessel Coppes serves as Head of Pop and member of the management team at Codarts University of the Arts in Rotterdam. He recently completed his dissertation at the Department of Arts and Culture Studies at Erasmus University Rotterdam, further establishing his expertise at the intersection of popular music and academic inquiry.*

*Dina Nemirovsky is an Arts and Culture Studies student at Erasmus University Rotterdam. Alongside her academic work, she holds positions at Codarts University of the Arts as RASL (Rotterdam Arts and Sciences Lab) Coordinator and Project Leader for the Pop and Jazz departments.*

**Tom Parkinson**

Royal Northern College of Music, UK

### **Higher Music Education as Neoliberal Discipline**

Depending on context, *discipline* might refer to the training of subjects to conform to an established code of behaviour using mechanisms of reward or punishment, or alternatively, to a cohesive area of knowledge and practice with defined and accepted parameters. These usages are connected, however, in that they both describe ‘form[s] of the exercise of power within social organisations’ that maintain order and conformity (Gill, 1995, p.411). In this paper I argue that the academic sub-discipline of higher popular music education (HPME), which first emerged in the late 1980s and has proliferated across UK higher education, has derived its current form through the neoliberal disciplining of cultural and educational institutions.

I use Banwait and Hancock’s (2022) *Phases of HE Marketisation* as a chronological framework to chart how educational and cultural policymaking has shaped HPME from above and below, structuring its background conditions and disseminating a lexicon of neoliberal values that have become common sense. Through critical discourse analysis (CDA) of policy white papers, public debate, and interviews with HPME students and educators, I illustrate how HPME has emerged from neoliberal conditions that have simultaneously shaped the aesthetics and political economy of its object of study (popular music), its corresponding professional domain (the “creative industries”), and the curricula and institutional infrastructure through which it is taught.

I close by considering the validity of claims, made in the wake of recent global events, of neoliberalism’s end[ing], and their implications for the future of higher music education. I argue that far from signalling the end of neoliberalism, seemingly paradigmatic changes in political life simply reveal once more neoliberalism’s adaptive and recuperative resilience.

*Tom Parkinson is Head of Doctoral Programmes at the Royal Northern College of Music. His research interests include music in higher education, popular music in Turkey, songwriting, and education in the context of forced displacement.*

**Melanie Schiller, Romy Mennen & Valerie Knöpker**

Radboud University Nijmegen, NL

**The Soundtrack of Division: Protest Music and the Processes of Affective Polarisation**

This paper examines how music contributes to processes of affective polarisation in contemporary protest movements relating to climate change. Democracies worldwide are increasingly strained by affective polarisation, which manifests as a deep emotional divide between political groups marked by distrust and hostility (Iyengar et al., 2019). Unlike ideological disagreement, which is vital to healthy democratic discourse, affective polarisation—characterized by an emotionally charged “us versus them” mentality—can erode civic dialogue, deepen social fragmentation, and foster political extremism (Hetherington & Rudolph, 2015; McCoy et al., 2018). Focusing on the musical practices of two opposing climate-related protest movements in the Netherlands—Extinction Rebellion and the Dutch farmers' protests—the paper will explore the underexamined role of music in affective polarisation. While existing scholarship has highlighted music's power to express political ideas, mobilise protest, and foster solidarity (Denisoff, 1972; Eyerman & Jamison, 1998; Rosenthal, 2001), it often overlooks music's ability to generate negative affects—such as hostility toward opposing groups. Drawing on theories from music studies, political science, and social movement studies, this paper will analyse how music contributes to the mechanisms of affective polarisation, to understand music's role in social changes. The paper is based on a new 5-year research project (2025-2030) funded by the Dutch Research Council (NWO) and will present our research plans as well as preliminary case studies. The case studies will be examined using Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis. We will analyse music, lyrics, and visual elements within their socio-political context, to understand the themes, emotions, narratives, and identities expressed through the movements' music.

*Melanie Schiller is Professor of Contemporary Media Cultures at Radboud University Nijmegen in the Netherlands. She serves as chair of the Benelux branch of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music (IASPM) and is editor of the Music and Politics book series with Routledge. Her recent publications include the volume Popular Music and the Rise of Populism in Europe (with Mario Dunkel, Routledge, 2024), which emerged from her work in the international research consortium of the same name (2019–2022), funded by the Volkswagen Foundation. Her current research—funded by the Dutch Research Council (2025–2030)—focuses on protest music and polarisation in climate related social movements.*

*Romy Mennen is a PhD candidate within the NWO VIDI Project “Tuning into Tensions: Music and Affective Polarisation in Protest Movements” at Radboud University Nijmegen. Mennen's Master's thesis examined the construction of authenticity in Rolling Stone magazine. She is also the author of “Posthumous Narratives: How Janis Joplin's Authority Can Be Recovered Through Inner Child Theory” (DiggIt Magazine, 2024), which investigates post humous celebrity narratives and emotional framing. Her current research explores protest music and affective polarisation within the Dutch climate debate, with a particular focus on the Dutch Farmers Movement.*

*Valerie Knöpker is a PhD candidate within the NWO VIDI Project “Tuning into Tensions: Music and Affective Polarisation in Protest Movements” at the Faculty of Arts at Radboud University. Knöpker graduated in spring 2025 from the Research Master International Development Studies at Wageningen University (The Netherlands). Her thesis examined the emotional wellbeing of student climate activists in a neoliberal university. Her current research focuses on protest music in climate movements and affective polarisation in the Netherlands, combining the fields of music and cultural studies with political science.*

**Tomáš Jirsa**

Palacký University Olomouc, CZ

**Beyond a YouTube Spectacle: The Affective Politics and Platform Practices of Music Videos in East-Central Europe**

In an era where political conflicts increasingly unfold within the affective ecosystems of digital platforms, music videos have emerged as crucial sites for staging dissent. Probing this dynamic, my paper asks: How do contemporary East-Central European music videos deploy tactics of “audiovisual dissing” and specific platform practices to intervene in the region’s escalating culture wars? The analysis begins with a case study of the Czech funk group Monkey Business’ 2020 music video “Do It! (If You Don’t Have Any Children),” which stages a mock assassination against the backdrop of the region’s anti-liberal turn. From here, the paper broadens its scope to a comparison with recent Polish rap videos by chart-topping artists like Mata (“Patoreakcja,” 2021) and Quebonafide (“Matcha Latté,” 2020). These works, reaching tens of millions of views, utilize audiovisual sampling to repurpose hegemonic media discourses—from state television propaganda to tabloid outrage—into potent forms of symbolic critique amplified by the YouTube’s affective ecosystem. The paper develops a theoretical framework that bridges platform-focused music video scholarship (Jirsa and Korsgaard 2024, Vernallis 2023), cultural affect studies (Ngai 2020, Paasonen 2021), and politically engaged pop music studies (Garratt 2019, Gamble 2024). Methodologically, it employs digital hybrid methods (Burgess 2021), combining critical audiovisual analysis with a qualitative inquiry into their platform “afterlife,” tracking the circulation of dissent through user comments, reaction videos, and memes. Ultimately, the argument illuminates a paradox central to contemporary music culture: while these videos challenge political hegemony, their very form of dissent is simultaneously bound by the algorithmic logics and commercial imperatives of a platform that at once enables and constrains them, generating a potent tension between creative resistance and platform acquiescence.

*Tomáš Jirsa is Associate Professor and director of the PhD Program in Film, Television, and Theater Studies at Palacký University Olomouc, Czechia. Co-editor of *Traveling Music Videos* (2024), his work has appeared in journals such as *Music, Sound, and the Moving Image* and *New Review of Film and Television Studies*.*

## Sini Mononen

University of Helsinki, FI

### **On Being Kind: Popular Music, Prefigurative Politics, and Climate Activism**

Previous research on young people's engagement in the climate movement Extinction Rebellion Finland (XRF) has characterized the movement as having three core grievances: (1) many people have negative ideas on what it means to be an activist, (2) due to the negative preconceptions and a feeling that they have to do something, many people are participating in the movement reluctantly, (3) the reluctance of the activists is connected to the short time-span of the actions and the difficulty of engaging people in climate activism. On the other hand, XRF is characterized as a culture of prefigurative collective care where the emotions and experiences of activists are met with empathy. (Jokela, Kettunen & Luhtakallio 2024.)

In this presentation, I will ask how popular musicians active in XRF assume their role in relation to the grievances and prefigurative culture of the movement. I will focus on urban folk band Vimma, which employs popular music as prefigurative politics and affective organizing for climate activism (Dixon 2014). Prefigurative politics refers to being the change one wishes to see in the world. In the case of Vimma, the band harnesses popular music as an affective and performative art to lift the spirits of the activists and to construct an image of an activist that is focused on kindness, compassion, and encouragement.

Methodologically, my research is based on ethnography: I conducted a group discussion with the band Vimma in June 2025 and have observed the activism in XRF since 2022. This presentation is part of an ongoing research project where I study music as a tool of contention in the contemporary Finnish climate movement (Research Council of Finland 9/2024–8/2028).

*Sini Mononen is an Academy of Finland research fellow at the University of Helsinki. Her research interests span from music and sound in contemporary Finnish climate movement to audiovisual art. Mononen is a founding member of the Research Association Suoni, focused on activist and societal research of music.*

**Nathaly Yumi da Silva & Sjamme van der Voort**

Eindhoven University of Technology, NL & Free University Amsterdam, NL

**From Sertanejo to Agronejo: How Brazilian Agribusiness Constructs Imaginaries**

This paper examines the intersections of sertanejo music and agribusiness in Brazil, with a particular focus on soybeans. Building on archival, textual, and digital materials, it argues that sertanejo – and its sub-genre, agronejo – songs offer a cultural reflection of rural transformations as well as a medium through which futures aligned with agribusiness are actively imagined and promoted. The guiding question is: How can a study of the historical intertwining of soy cultivation and sertanejo music frame a critique of current imaginaries of Brazilian agribusiness? Adapting Walter Benjamin’s critique of the “loss of aura” in mechanically reproduced art, we highlight how the reproduction and circulation of sertanejo through mass and digital media undermined traditional markers of authenticity and enabled new, commercially viable forms of legitimacy. We investigate how sertanejo has historically navigated tensions between tradition and commodification. This resonates with the transformation of soy into a cash crop, whose appearance in sertanejo lyrics since the mid-1970s reveals how music not only reflects but also participates in shaping the imaginaries of agribusiness futures.

The study mobilises: archival research of sertanejo magazines (1960s–70s), highlighting disputes over media visibility, authenticity, and legitimacy; analysis of sertanejo lyrics that reference soybeans (1975 – 2025), tracing how soy emerges as a symbol of prosperity, modernisation, and social mobility; and digital ethnography of streaming platforms, to analyse audience reception and branding strategies linking the genre to agribusiness.

Preliminary findings suggest that soy-included sertanejo songs operate as symbols of rural transformation and as tools of agribusiness propaganda. Whereas traditional lyricists and composers, once condemned hybridity as a loss of authenticity, the contemporary “agronejo” blends sertanejo with rap, funk, and hip hop, incorporates English expressions and earworm refrains, and is celebrated as an authentic representation of the countryside, making it a medium through which agribusiness legitimises itself and projects rural futures.

*Nathaly Yumi da Silva is a doctoral candidate at Eindhoven University of Technology (TU/e), focusing on investigating agency and sustainable discourses within actors affected by soybean expansion in Brazil. Her research is part of a larger research project entitled “SoyStories: Connected sustainability histories and futures of the global Soyacene”. n.y.d.silva@tue.nl*

*Sjamme van de Voort is a cultural historian at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. His work explores how memory theory can enrich sustainability history, focusing on Brazilian–Dutch soy relations. With a background in oral history, migration history, and cultural memory, he applies these perspectives to teaching, supervision, and sustainability challenges.*

**Alex van der Hulst**

Radboud University Nijmegen, NL

**What We Write When We Write About Music**

Music critics, in their role as “informed fans” (Frith & Savage, 1993, 113), act as intermediaries between consumers and music. Critics select and evaluate music from the vast array of new releases. They – although this seems to be changing, in the past the majority of music critics were male, which influenced the tone and nature of the reviews - have various registers at their disposal to evaluate music. Among other things, the critic can describe music, position it in the cultural field, and attempt to add it to a canon.

But how do the critics do this? What words do they use and what methods do they apply to evaluate music? I have adapted the evaluation model for literary criticism by Esther op de Beek (2013) and Yvette Linders for music criticism. This has resulted in a model containing nineteen aspects and fifteen characteristics. Using this model, I coded reviews from Dutch music magazines in different periods. For example, if a reviewer writes that a drummer is going wild, the aspect of drums is combined with the characteristic of intensity. The magazines, periods and music styles examined in the study are nederbeat in Hitweek (1965-1969), punk in OOR (1976-1978), post-punk in Vinyl (1981-1982), dance in Bassic Groove (1992-1993), and hip hop in Hiphop In Je Smoel (2000-2002). In all these cases, I examined which aspects and characteristics predominate in the reviews. This enabled me to describe what was emphasized in each period and in each style. The results show how reviewers positioned themselves and their magazines, and how they described the quality requirements that music had to meet according to them.

*Alex van der Hulst (1977) is a freelance journalist and music critic. As a student he wrote his thesis on the deformed body in the music videos of Tool and Aphex Twin. As an external PhD candidate at Radboud University, he has been working on his dissertation on Dutch music criticism since 2018, under the supervision of Jos Joosten and Maarten Steenmeijer.*

## Kim Dankoor

Leiden University, NL

### **“Yeah, I love dem strippers”: U.S. Southern Women Strip Club Dancers as Promoters and Clout Boosters in the Commercial Rap World**

Southern strip club dancers play a pivotal role in the promotional processes of local rap artists, as Black rap-oriented strip clubs have become key hubs for the music industry. Within this context, dancers' stamps of approval and erotic performances can elevate songs and drive their circulation. The aim of our study was to explore dancers' musical selections and promotional strategies, and how they leverage these strategies to enhance artists' clout (i.e. recognition, credibility, cultural appeal) and overall success. Fifteen women dancers, with experience ranging from 3-26 years, participated in semi-structured interviews. Using a phenomenologically-oriented constructivist grounded theory approach, we found that music selection is tied to dancers' economic rewards, that they employ diverse in-club and online promotional strategies, and that they occupy roles as cultural gatekeepers and street A&Rs. We offer a model to conceptualize their negotiated power and situate their roles from a Hip Hop feminist framework.

*Kim Dankoor is a postdoctoral researcher in Hip Hop and Psychology and Hip Hop feminism at Leiden University, as well as a lecturer, media expert, and interviewer. She sometimes appears on Dutch and U.S. media platforms to discuss her research and share insights on recent events in U.S. Hip Hop culture. Due to visa guidelines, you can take Kim out of Atlanta every now and then, but you can't take Atlanta out of Kim.*

## Juan Escobar Campos

University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna, AT

### Call for Auditions: Typecasting Practices in Symphony Orchestras

Auditioning for an orchestra position is a decisive moment in the careers of classically trained musicians, who often spend more than twenty years preparing for the music labor market (Wagner, 2015; Bull, 2018). But before reaching the audition stage, candidates must pass a pre-selection process whereby, out of 100 to 120 applicants, orchestras invite only 40 (Sergeant & Himonides, 2019). This filtering process works as a type of cultural gatekeeping (Hamann & Beljean, 2021; Janssen & Verboord, 2015), which not only allocates opportunities but also significantly influences the careers of musicians. While literature has examined how musicians and gatekeepers deal with uncertainty in the labor market (Everts et al., 2022; Foster et al., 2011), formal selection and evaluation procedures such as orchestral hiring have not yet been properly studied. Asking about the role of gatekeeping in classical music involves examining the influence of prestigious educational institutions and teachers, long-standing schools of music practice, and gendered and racialized notions of artistic talent.

Using quantitative and qualitative data from four symphony orchestras (three in Austria and one in the Netherlands), this paper examines how orchestra committees pre-select musicians. I propose that pre-selection practices can be read as a form of typecasting (Zuckerman et al., 2003). Through typecasting, orchestral committees decide on candidates by categorizing them based on career credentials and ascriptive elements. The findings highlight the importance of experience, education, and social networks, as well as age, gender, and ethnicity. In order to assess these elements, orchestras follow two institutional typecasting logics: a logic of fit, which values artistic and social similarity, and a logic of excellence, which privileges merit and skill. In negotiating these two different logics, orchestras navigate between values of tradition, prestige, and excellence while reproducing social inequalities.

*Juan Escobar Campos is a PhD Student at the Institute of Cultural Management (IKM) University for Music and Performing Arts – Vienna (mdw), Austria. His research interests lie at the intersection between arts and society, with a primary focus on music. With a background in mixed methods, he works with both quantitative and qualitative methods. Currently investigating the field of classical music and how it reproduces social inequalities. Personally interested in AfroColombian music ecosystem, helping to increase the visibility of the Colombian music scene and its musicians.*

**Léna Lozano**

LiveDMA

**The Music Puzzle: Exploring Booking Practices in the European Popular Music Scenes**

In early 2021, while the whole live music sector was still shaken by the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, the network Live DMA, representing over 3200 music venues, clubs and festivals over 16 European countries, hosted a working group for bookers to share their difficulties facing the multiple gigs and tours cancellations and inherent rebooking patterns. A call for fairer, more transparent practices within the booking community was then acknowledged. To address this, Live DMA undertook a research process in 2023, aiming for a European Fair Practice Code, which implied a deep understanding of booking practices. As such, the Music Puzzle gives an overview of who the bookers from Live DMA are, describes their daily tasks, and highlight the main challenges of live music programming.

The methodology behind this study relies on both quantitative and qualitative perspectives. A survey totalizing 82 questions was shared within the Live DMA network, exploring six main categories: the bookers' sociological indicators, their musical background, educational and professional path, current job description, venue / club description, and their programme description. 30 full answers were collected, and furthered with 9 in-depth qualitative interviews.

The booking position brings along many romantic conceptions: being the trigger of a musical discovery / emotion, participating into the development of a musical career, shedding light upon a niche musical genre... However, the results put this idea at a distance, and unveil a darker "behind the scenes": participating bookers struggle with stress, frustration, pressure, low wages and hectic working hours. Their work/life balance, along with their physical and mental health are at stake since they carry a large set of responsibilities: the economic sustainability of the venue, the political and ethical guidelines, the audience expectations... which may not align well with the bookers' individual motivations. Recurrent feelings of pressure, isolation and / or disconnection with music are depicted throughout the study, along with a unified call for more initial training, professional certification, and booking collaboration.

*Léna Lozano received her PHD in Performing Arts in 2021 for her research about amateur and pro-am performances. As a research officer at Live DMA, she now investigates the roles of live music in artistic development, programming practices and contributes to the creation of data about European Music Festivals.*

## Music and Nightlife

### Tianyu Jiang

University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna, AT

#### **“Play something queer!” Constructing Sonic Queerness in Shanghai’s Electronic Dance Music Scene**

This paper explores how queer identity is sonically constructed through electronic dance music in Shanghai’s underground queer club scene. It asks how collectives and individual producers/DJs within queer club spaces negotiate their identities in the city’s cultural climate and manifest them sonically. What historical references, practices, and aesthetic strategies inform these constructions, and how are they circulated? How can we understand the situatedness of these sonic features? Drawing on my fieldwork (2020-2023) using interviews, participant observation, and digital ethnography, I explore how “sonic queerness” is perceived and enacted by DJs, producers, and partygoers. Specifically, I examine the club sounds of two queer club collectives: the gay men-targeted “Medusa” and the queer-femmeoriented collective “HTTP,” with the former rooted in house and techno music and the latter serving as a hub for deconstructed club music. A comparative analysis of their sonic practices shows how “genre”-specific sonic worlds intersect with collective identities and queer cultural politics. While music and sound form the core of this analysis, I approach them through the lens of performance and performativity to better capture the dynamic between music, body, and identity in the nightlife fields. The study suggests that ideas of “queerness” in Shanghai’s queer club scene are often linked to whether the music is experienced as rhythmic or “danceable,” emphasizing the embodied dimension of sonic identity. Overall, the paper argues that music, DJs, partygoers, and the thematic curations of the party, have jointly shaped the sonic identity of the queer club nights, revealing the entanglement of sound, performance, and other social dimensions in (re)defining “queerness” in the club scene.

*Tianyu Jiang (they/she) is a Vienna-based researcher and writer, currently a PhD candidate at the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna. Their main work interests include electronic dance music culture, digital culture, urban space/place, and time-based media research.*

**Timo Koren**

University of Amsterdam, NL

**Places Where Other Music Is Playing: How Non-Techno Promoters in Berlin Navigate the Touristification of Techno**

In cities across Europe, nightlife has become increasingly central in tourist promotion and city marketability. So far, studies on urban nocturnal tourism have mainly assessed the impact of the touristification of nightlife at the neighbourhood level, for example in terms of resident-visitor conflict and urban transformation. However, this paper seeks to understand the impact of urban tourism on a different scale: the internal dynamics of the night-time economy itself. In Berlin, nightlife tourism mainly revolves around its techno clubs, with 'Berlin Techno' recently being granted UNESCO intangible heritage status. How do Berlin nightclubs and promoters active in genres other than techno experience and understand the touristification of techno? This paper investigates this question using semi-structured qualitative interviews with 28 promoters in Berlin active in nightlife genres such as bass, afrobeats, hip-hop, funk, and indie, discussing how they perceive Berlin's techno-centric nightlife and if and how they adapt their cultural production practices and strategies. While promoters are critical of the direction of Berlin's nightlife and indeed experience constraints and forms of exclusion due to techno's hegemony, there is no straightforward 'crowding-out effect' where techno displaces clubs and parties in all other genres. Rather, by strategically making use of the city's available resources for music and club cultures, non-techno promoters seize opportunities for new creative directions and foster new forms of musical hybridity. Theoretically, this study builds on new urban tourism research which problematises simple dichotomies such as local vs visitor. This paper extends that idea to urban music economies, which are shaped by complex mobilities and various forms of (temporary) residence that, in turn, inform specific ways of explicitly and implicitly challenging techno's hegemony in Berlin. Taken together, this study expands academic understanding of the touristification of night-time economies by analysing these processes on a different scale, beyond impact on neighbourhoods.

*Timo Koren is an assistant professor in Cultural Economy at the University of Amsterdam. He holds a PhD in Geography from the University of Southampton (UK). His academic interests lie at the intersection of Cultural Studies and Urban Studies and his main research focus is the nighttime economy.*

**Sini Hassinen**

Leiden University, NL

**“The world might be on fire but so is our dancefloor”: Flows, Frictions, and Flames in Virtual Nightlife Spaces**

This paper deals with novel political expressions and informal knowledge production that arise from collective and affective practices in virtual nightlife spaces. The paper introduces a case study of a queer decolonial nightlife space, “*U-Haul*”, in Helsinki, Finland. By drawing on decolonial theory, queer approaches and elements of feminist new materialism, the paper explores emerging political articulations through empirically driven theorizing. The paper addresses the question: “*How is the political potential of nightlife conceptualized in virtual spaces?*”. The paper plays with the double meaning of the concept of *virtuality*, as it refers both to digital environments and interpersonal field of possibility (drawing from Tavia Nyong’o’s interpretation of Deleuze). Methodologically, the paper combines elements of online ethnography and critical archival studies. Through a close reading of social media posts, it tunes into conceptualizations of the political potential of nightlife spaces as practices of collective theorizing, thereby challenging the strict separation between data and theory. The initial findings of the ongoing research suggest that aspirations for building inclusive communities, playful political commentary, and affective practices of care assign hope for the future, and therefore address feelings of marginalization and societal anxieties. The paper contributes with empirical insight into the dynamics of informal political expressions at the intersection of virtual and nightlife spaces. Drawing on this insight, the paper proposes that these articulations are also practices of democratic theorizing and can broaden our understanding of political participation beyond the context of the case study.

*Sini Hassinen is a postdoctoral researcher at Leiden University Centre for the Arts in Society. Her research focuses on informal politics in nightlife spaces. Her doctoral research at the University of Birmingham combined anthropology, cultural studies, and political science to explore the dynamics of queer activism in Kenya.*

**Inka Rantakallio**

University of Helsinki, FI

**Feminism and Braggadocio: How the Finnish Lesbian Rap Group Bämä Is Queering Christianity**

This paper discusses a forthcoming book chapter about the Finnish lesbian rap group Bämä and their debut EP Jumala on muija (God is a chick). The group's name reclaims the slang word 'bämä' used by Finnish male rappers, which combines the English word 'bad bitch' and its Finnish equivalent 'ämmä'. Using gender studies, queer studies, and religious studies, I offer close analysis of how hip hop braggadocio is combined with Christian themes on the EP's songs, and how the secular release is queering Christianity through its representations of lesbianism and feminism. In my paper, 'representation' is defined in two ways: as the construction of meaning through description or symbolism in texts, sounds, and images (see Hall, 1997), and as the societal idea of being represented and having a voice, i.e., social and political power in society. 'Braggadocio' is a term used in hip hop studies to describe self-confident boasting typical in rap expression which often focuses on money, women, skills and success; as such, it is a discursive practice that rappers use to claim power. Through this practice, and their witty criticism of two conservative heteropatriarchal cultures, hip hop and Christianity, Bämä arguably constructs a new type of representation of feminist, queer hip hop. The paper concludes that Bämä and their music are empowering to many queer women as a subordinated group, as Bämä is the first and only openly lesbian group in the Finnish rap scene. Further, Bämä's message of self-acceptance is undoubtedly attractive to LGBTQIA+ people who have been ostracised and condemned by conservative Christians. Through their music, Bämä thus participates in efforts to advance social change.

*Dr. Inka Rantakallio is an award-winning music researcher affiliated with Musicology at the University of Helsinki and holds an MA in Study of Religions and a PhD in Musicology. Her research interests include feminism, gender, popular music, identities, race, and worldviews. She also works as an editor and DJ.*

**Keyi Chen**

University of Massachusetts Amherst, US

**Unfolding the Flag, Unfolding the Self: Politics of Performance in Chinese Rock**

At the climax of Chinese rock live, hundreds of handmade flags erupt from the crowd: shit on cruel reality, feminist and LGBTQ slogans, lines from rock anthems collide in the smoky air. Unlike Western rock scenes, such performances have become a distinctive ritual of collective expression among Chinese youth. This paper asks: Why and how has the flag become a uniquely powerful medium in China's rock live scene? Drawing on Hebdige's subculture theory and Maffesoli's neo-tribes theory, this study moves beyond the binary category and situates Chinese rock within the tension between rebellion and commercialization that has shaped its evolution since the 1980s. Using a digital ethnography of concert videos and multi-sited field observations, this study finds that the flag, historically a symbol of power and national unity, has transcended time and culture to become a potent political medium bridging power, emotion, and social action. In authoritarian China, this political charge is further amplified. Although rock lives operate within a commercialized cultural industry, fans creatively appropriate the flag's political and emotional connotations to articulate social critique, challenge ideological conformity, and construct ephemeral communities of affect, transforming these scenes into fleeting utopias. Through embodied acts such as "train-driving," lighting cold sparklers, and moshing with flags, fans convert anger into rhythmic collective energy, generating their own revolutionary discourse. Unlike the standardized emotional regime of light sticks in pop concerts, flags function as decentralized, grassroots tools of resistance, enabling plural and liberated affective expressions that reassert both individual and collective autonomy. Yet, the political significance of these flags has drawn increasing official scrutiny, leading to strict censorship and bans. Fans, however, continue to devise strategies to resist and keep their banners aloft. This study contributes to debates on rock music, politics, and cultural production under authoritarianism.

*Keyi Chen, 2nd year PhD student, Department of Communication, University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Research interests: resistance, music, subculture, digital platforms, Chinese studies.*

**Chiara de Dominicis, Manuel Garcia-Ruiz & Marco Roque de Freitas**

Universidade Nova de Lisboa, PT

**Deixa a Gira Girar: Navigating Lisbon Spatial Precarity with a Samba Collective**

Founded in Lisbon in 2022, Coletivo Gira is a women-led samba ensemble primarily composed of Brazilian immigrant women who identify as LGBTQIA+. Originating from the Encontro das Mulheres na Roda de Samba, the collective was established to foster inclusive musical practices and empower women and LGBTQIA+ individuals within a genre historically dominated by cis-men. Since its inception, Gira's rodas have operated as safe and welcoming spaces for migrants and marginalized communities, combining samba performance with cultural affirmation, solidarity, and mutual respect. The opening of Casa da Gira in Marvila in 2024 marked a significant phase, allowing the group to strengthen ties with a diverse public through weekly gatherings that reaffirmed values centered on women's, LGBTQIA+, and Black protagonism, zero tolerance for harassment, and collective responsibility for inclusion. In June 2025, increasing regulatory pressures on independent venues forced Gira to vacate Clube Oriental, initiating a nomadic period characterized by performances across diverse temporary locations as the collective sought a new permanent home.

This paper investigates how enforced spatial mobility reconfigures the social dynamics, audience engagements, and urban presence of grassroots cultural initiatives. Drawing on ongoing multi-sited ethnographic research (2024–present)—which includes participant observation, in-situ dialogues, semi-structured interviews, and audiovisual documentation—the analysis dialogically engages with theoretical frameworks of the right to the city, the production of mobile commons, and the formation of counterpublics. It highlights how each temporary venue becomes a contingent site for collective assemblages that assert marginalized voices, challenge dominant spatial regimes, and cultivate moments of shared social intensity and belonging.

Preliminary findings suggest that, although displacement disrupts established rhythms and intimacy, these mobile gatherings sustain an ethos of inclusion and adaptability, a real *communitas*, reconfiguring neighbor bonds and inscribing the collective's presence throughout Lisbon's urban fabric.

*With a background in Philosophy and Historical Musicology, Chiara De Dominicis is a PhD student in Musical Sciences – Ethnomusicology at NOVA FCSH. Her research focuses on urban ethnomusicology and nightlife studies, particularly the relationship between live music venues, gentrification, and cultural resistance.*

*Manuel García-Ruiz, PhD, is an Associate Researcher at CIES-ISCTE/IUL, specialising in the socio-spatial transformations of cities through culture-led events and nightlife. He is the founder of the International Night Studies Network and has published widely on nightlife, festivals, tourism, and grassroots cultural associations.*

## Hajo Doorn

WORM/MONO, NL

### Why We Exploit the Young to Feed Our Boomer Needs

Following my recently finished master thesis research at the European Graduate School 'Why we hate the young', I want to further develop the role popular music and culture plays in subjugating the new generation by their predecessors. While it proclaims freedom, (self)expression and fun, it also can be regarded as oppressing and exploitative by the moguls, industry and politics. However popular and meaningful the likes of Chappel Roan, Little Simz and Taylor Swift are for their fans, the cold truth is that they are part of a – what I call – ideology of youth, that replaced the Christian ideology and is fundamental to (neo liberal) capitalism or semiocapitalism (a term coined by Franco Berardi). This part – the specific role of music and its industry – I wanted to add to my thesis, but it went a bit too far oO topic. My thesis is built in four chapters; how it is to be young today, how it was during centuries, what happened in the sixties and why we forget we were young once. Music and popular culture (film, books etc) play a significant role in this.

As a person who first encountered the music industry by the age of 13 and subsequently made a career in music and organizing events – by ao. founding WORM and now owning the popular club MONO, I decided to dedicate myself to the question why we – as a society – are not able to make (almost) any decision in favor of the next generation by politicians, lobby groups, communities and civil society organizations. In times of climate change, polution, war, hedo capitalism, techno totalitarianism, it seems no one will take care of the younger generation. What marketing/propaganda role is being played by music and its protagonists?

*Hajo Doorn is a (cultural) entrepreneur, theatre maker, and artist/philosopher. He is (among other things) the founder of WORM and Stager, owner of MONO, chair of Operator Radio, and operator of the cafés Hensepeter (De Aanschouw) and Voorheen Voigt. He recently completed his Master in Philosophy at the European Graduate School with a thesis titled "Why We Hate the Young", a study on the exploitation and subjugation of youth, the numbing eOects of aging, and the fear of losing a comfortable life and pension security. Hajo studied with professors like Benjamin Bratton, Avital Ronell, Frank Ruda, Mladen Dolar, Alenka Zupančič and Slavoj Žižek. He advocates for a fundamentally diOerent approach to upbringing and education — one that finally takes the nature of youth seriously. He lives and works in the elderly paradise of RoOa (Rotterdam) and is a member of the artist collectives Coolhaven and Grande Loge.*

**Carla Pinochet Cobos & Sebastián Muñoz**

Universidad Alberto Hurtado, CL

**The Manager as Translator: Mediating Uncertainties and Building Careers in Chilean Urban Music**

This presentation explores the role of music managers in Chile's emergent urban music scene, where digitalization and platform economies have reshaped production, distribution, and career trajectories. Our research question asks: how do managers mediate between artistic creativity and economic imperatives in contexts marked by precarity, self-management, and viral success?

Theoretically, we draw on concepts of mediation and translation (Hennion; Callon) to analyze managers as cultural intermediaries who create a "common space" between heterogeneous actors—artists, platforms, labels, audiences, and brands. Methodologically, the study is based on 12 in-depth interviews with managers, participant observation in live and digital circuits, and the analysis of media and industry documents.

Findings show that managers operate at the crossroads of three main tensions: (1) self-management versus monetization, (2) predictability versus unpredictability in the digital marketplace, and (3) the gap between rising popularity and limited managerial capacity among young, often working-class artists. Far from being mere administrators, managers combine autodidactic skills, networking abilities, and flexible specialization to sustain careers, while also acting as emotional and social supports. They navigate informal economies, negotiate with global platforms and local labels, and translate data-driven metrics into career strategies.

By highlighting the figure of the manager as a translator, this presentation contributes to the sociology of music industries by situating labour and careers within the dynamics of digital capitalism in the Global South. It demonstrates how managers both absorb and reproduce the contradictions of neoliberal creative economies, while offering artists a fragile yet vital infrastructure for professionalization and social mobility.

*Carla Pinochet Cobos is Associate Professor of Anthropology at Universidad Alberto Hurtado, Chile, and Deputy Director of the Núcleo Milenio en Culturas Musicales y Sonoras. Her research explores sonic cultures, urban music, and cultural policy in Latin America.*

*Sebastián Muñoz is a sociologist (Universidad de Chile), PhD in Social Anthropology (Universidad Nacional San Martín), musician, and postdoctoral researcher at Universidad Alberto Hurtado (ANID Project N° 3220141). He coordinates Rap y Tecnologías, exploring rap and digitalization in Chile, and participates in CMUS, CLACSO's Hip-Hop Network, and international musicology groups.*

**Jo Haynes**

University of Bristol, UK

**Reconfiguring Cultural Work: Technical Intermediaries, Careers, and Futures in Live Music**

Five years after the global pandemic, the live music industry has resumed but within a challenging landscape shaped by economic decline and a cost-of-living crisis across Europe. In the UK alone, over 200 festivals have disappeared since COVID-19, alongside a sustained decline in grassroots venues, with at least 200 - 250 closures recorded between 2019 and 2024. Rising costs, inflation, supply chain disruptions, and limited government support have produced a fragile infrastructure, making careers in live music increasingly precarious. These challenges extend across the broader ecology of live events, where technical intermediaries – those working at the interface of artistic and production practices – play a vital yet often overlooked role.

This paper examines how such workers have responded to ongoing infrastructural change and uncertainty. It draws on qualitative ‘life-story’ interviews with UK-based technical intermediaries, conducted five years apart in 2020 and 2025, as part of a wider European project that also included musicians, producers, audiences, and ethnographic fieldwork. This paper explores how the pandemic destabilised not only employment but also imagined trajectories of cultural life.

Preliminary findings reveal that the outcome is less a singular crisis than a reconfiguration of cultural work. Post-COVID trajectories demonstrate exits from the sector as well as reinventions and adjustments, including hybrid career forms that combine cultural and non-cultural income streams. Workers describe a revaluation of their cultural labour – seen as simultaneously essential and undervalued (by some) – alongside generational shifts in how a ‘career’ in the cultural industries is conceived. This paper provides a preliminary conceptual lens to capture both structural conditions and imaginative orientations, highlighting how cultural workers negotiate disrupted temporalities in the aftermath of crisis. The paper argues that technical intermediaries, though hidden in live music debates, are central to understanding the evolving futures and conditions of performance and live events careers.

*Jo Haynes is Professor of Sociology at the University of Bristol in the School of Sociology, Politics and International Studies. Her research critically examines how race, work precarity, and forms of social responsibility are articulated within sites of music and cultural production. She publishes in sociology and culturally oriented peer-review publications including Cultural Sociology, Poetics and Social & Cultural Geography.*

**Lisa McCormick**

University of Edinburgh, UK

### **Musical Instruments as Iconic Objects**

How do some objects maintain iconic power over centuries? To answer this question, I consider an extreme case from western classical music: the violins and cellos made by Antonio Stradivari in the 17th century (Strads). Compositional styles and musical practices have changed dramatically since Stradivari's time, but the instruments he made are still widely believed to produce the ideal sound, and they maintain an unquestionable status as peerless creations. Repeated attempts have been made to determine whether the superiority of the Strad sound is real or imagined, including double-blind experiments that found that audiences and players have difficulty distinguishing Strads from modern instruments. Yet the reverence for Strads remains. String players covet them, and they are famous beyond the music world through press reports about their theft, recovery, and narrow escapes from destruction.

Drawing on a discourse analysis of interviews, media coverage, and archival materials, I argue that the exceptional longevity of Strads' symbolic power comes from their combination of material and sonic iconicity, and that their aura of sacrality is maintained through several mutually reinforcing social processes. To trace how Strads became iconic, I employ Alexander's (2020) model of the performativity of objects. Generations of musicians and instrument dealers established the Strad sound as the ideal tone and shaped the perception of these instruments as exceptionally precious and beautiful works of art. To explain how Strads remain iconic, I employ Whitaker and Greenland's (2021) concept of the dual nature of the artwork. I demonstrate how the market value of Stradivarius instruments continues to rise because it is anchored by their artistic value, which only increases as their discursive depth expands. By approaching musical instruments as objets d'art, the analysis suggests new directions for future research in icon theory and in music sociology.

*Lisa McCormick is Senior Lecturer in Sociology at the University of Edinburgh and a fellow at IAS-CEU in Budapest. She is the author of *Performing Civility* (Cambridge University Press, 2015) and editor of *The Cultural Sociology of Art and Music* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022). Currently, she is co-editing the *Oxford Handbook of Competition in Music* with Prof Tobias Werron (Universität Bielefeld) and Dr Christoph Müller-Oberhäuser (UdK Berlin).*

## Taylor Price

Amherst College, US

### **How “First Audiences” Shape Performance: The Facilitation, Calibration, and Actualization of Authenticity in Music Studios**

How do music producers help musicians achieve peak authentic performances in recording sessions? Drawing on 32 hours of fieldwork at music studio tracking sessions and 10 semi-structured interviews with professional music producers, I find that producers shape an in-studio performance through a three-phase process: facilitation, calibration, and actualization. At each phase of this socially and technologically mediated process, music producers act to align a performer’s artistic intent and performance capacity with their own capacity for cultural intermediation. Facilitation, the initial phase, involves cultivating an environment where musicians can focus and be vulnerable. Calibration, the middle phase, often entails technical choices about the recording process—and sometimes permanent technical compromises—to instill performers with sufficient confidence to realize a performance with authenticity and emotional weight. Actualization, the final phase, results in the creation of a discrete and consumable cultural object imbued with the artist’s authenticity or with authentic emotional expression. Through this three-phase process, music producers shift from cultivating ideal performance conditions to fostering conditions for audiences to experience a deep connection with the performer and the content of their performance. By analyzing the link between situational authenticity and the fabrication of authenticity, this study conceptualizes the “first audience” of a recorded performance and theorizes how this type of cultural intermediary shapes the interplay between creative ideation, performance, and cultural production. Ultimately, this study argues that recording studio performances are not simply captured: they are facilitated, calibrated, and actualized by “first audiences”—a type of cultural intermediary exemplified by music producers—so that they may be legible as authentic to future audiences.

*Taylor Price is a Visiting Assistant Professor of Sociology at Amherst College. His research contributes to the sociology of creativity and cultural production. His work has been published in Social Psychology Quarterly, Poetics, and Symbolic Interaction. His current research explores social dynamics in music studios and the situational genesis of vulnerability.*

**Magdalena Fuernkranz**

University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna, AT

**"Trauma looks good on me": Depression in Popular Music: An Interdisciplinary Case Study**

The precarious nature of work, especially the "gig economy", that is typical in the music industries affects the vulnerability of musicians, including psychological distress, depression, and anxiety. Gross and Musgrave describe the wider entertainment industries that musicians inhabit as "full of people struggling and suffering from a variety of overlapping economic, psychological and addiction issues" (2020: 1). Even though, depression became a subject in Austrian popular music in the late 1970s with songs of predominantly successful male musicians such as Ludwig Hirsch's „I lieg am Rucken“ (I lay on my back), Wolfgang Ambros' "Wia wird des weitergehen" (What's going to happen next), Georg Danzer's "Heite drah i mi ham" (Today I'm gonna kill myself), mental health became crucial during and after the Covid 19 pandemic. With her album *The longest day of my life* (2021), Sophie Lindinger intended to remove the taboo from depression by turning it into the main topic of her record and its promotion including social media posts and interviews. Another musician, who uses music as an expressive strategy for communicating her health-related transformation process, AENGL, repeats the sentence "Trauma looks good on me" in the track "Painted Pain" (2022), accompanied by hard guitar sounds. The musician describes the lyrics as a representation of her depression and healing processing with the music video depicting her reckoning with heteronormative ideas of the body and mental health stigmata.

Situated at the intersection of two distinct academic domains: popular music studies and public health, this paper provides a discourse-analytic approach to different perspectives on depression in popular music: How do musicians employ specific semantic strategies in popular music to represent depression, and how do these stylistic gendered and racially-coded conventions influence their (self-)representations across different media, as well as their relationships with critics and fans?

*Magdalena Furnkranz is a Postdoctoral Fellow and Senior Scientist at the Department of Popular Music at the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna. As co-leader of the projects "Performing Diversity" and "Female Jazz Musicians in Austria," her recent research has focused on performativity, gender and intersectionality in pop and rock music, Austrian music scenes, and New Jazz Studies. She is co-author of *Auffuhrungsrituale der Musik. Zur Konstituierung kultureller Vielfalt am Beispiel sterreich* (2021), co-editor of the *TheMA special issue Yugoslav Disco. Digging into an "excluded" musical culture of late socialism* (2024) and *Handbuch Jazz* (Metzler/Barenreiter, 2026).*

## Maartje Houtzager & Koos Zwaan

Inholland University of Applied Sciences, NL

### **Heal the Healer: Designing Caring Infrastructures for the Well-Being of Artists and Music Industry Professionals**

In *Can Music Make You Sick?* (Gross & Musgrave, 2020) and subsequent works, Musgrave reveals the paradox that while making and consuming music is therapeutic, pursuing a career in music can be traumatic. This resonates with Mark Deuze's broader critique of media work, where precarious labour conditions, structural inequalities and the "always-on" mentality erode well-being across creative industries (Deuze, 2025). The Heal the Healer project responds to this urgent challenge by reframing mental health in the music sector as a systemic issue rather than an individual failing. It asks how prevention and "amplification" interventions – aimed not only at coping with existing conditions but also at transforming them – can be designed, operationalised and embedded in both higher (music) education and professional practice. Using a design thinking approach, the project engages students, artists, managers, venues, and mental health professionals in co-creation processes to prototype new practices and micro-infrastructures of care, ranging from boundary-setting practices and "care contracts" to organisational changes around scheduling, communication and recovery. Preliminary findings show that small, visible interventions improve a sense of agency, foster healthier relationships, and increase awareness of the shared responsibility for well-being. By training future professionals to challenge exploitative norms and develop more sustainable ways of working, Heal the Healer aims to shift the focus from individual resilience to collective care, contributing to a broader rethinking of labour, health and sustainability in music and media ecosystems.

*Maartje Houtzager is lecturer-researcher at the Lectorate Innovation in the Music Industry, Hogeschool Inholland. She teaches at the Creative Business programme at Inholland, Haarlem, and is an independent performing artist. Within this project she explores how co-created interventions can support sustainable careers for musicians and industry professionals*

*Koos Zwaan is Professor of Innovation in the Music Industry (Lector) at Inholland University of Applied Sciences. His research connects design thinking, co-creation and popular music to explore how creative ecosystems can become more sustainable, equitable and caring. He works closely with various entities and organisations within the music industry.*

**Thomas Calkins & Pauwke Berkers**

Erasmus University Rotterdam, NL

**The Mental Health and Well-Being of Musicians in the Dutch Popular Music Sector:  
Findings from the Artiesten Monitor 2025**

Due in part to the collective experience of the Covid-19 pandemic, scholars have increasingly turned their attention to how people experience working life. Government surveys now include questions on mental health and the prevalence of harassment and bullying. These are useful for tracking broader populations, but less so for capturing specialized sub-populations like musicians in popular music. This is because on one hand, surveys are designed to cover major occupational groupings; specific kinds of musicians are not one of these. On the other hand, musicians in popular music often must work a non-musical primary job, which means their musical activity is “invisible” to these instruments. Because of this, we lack empirical evidence of how mental health and well-being shapes the lives of musicians. We often cannot identify them in national surveys. To address this, we conducted an online survey of Dutch popular musicians ( $n=280$ ) and compare these figures to the Dutch population. Levels of anxiety and depression are higher for musicians, and incidents of transgressive behaviors are second only to those in the healthcare sector. The percentage of women who have experienced sexual harassment in the music sector is more than double that of the next highest sector. We present these among other findings in this talk.

*Thomas Calkins is a lecturer at Erasmus University Rotterdam in the Arts and Culture Studies department. His research interests include the sociology of culture, urban sociology, and social stratification. He uses quantitative, qualitative, GIS, and mixed methods to explore the linkages between music and society.*

*Pauwke Berkers is professor Sociology of Popular Music at Erasmus University Rotterdam.*

**Dylan Thompson**

Erasmus University Rotterdam, NL

**Determinants of Generative AI Tool Adoption amongst Dutch Popular Musicians**

Generative artificial intelligence tools are increasingly being integrated into music production, with uncertain implications for creative labour. From an economic perspective, these tools can both complement and substitute for core creative tasks such as composition and production, as well as peripheral tasks such as promotion. As such, they represent both a promise and a threat to musicians' working conditions, and their overall impact depends on who adopts them and how they are used.

This study presents evidence from the *BAM Artiestenmonitor 2025*, a survey of Dutch popular music artists and related workers conducted by BAM! Popauteurs! and Rotterdam Popular Music Studies. Adopting a cultural economics approach, the paper documents patterns of generative AI adoption across worker types and tasks.

The findings provide evidence on which types of workers in the Dutch pop music sector are using generative AI tools and how they are used in practice, and offer tentative predictions about the future development of generative AI use among musicians.

*Dylan Thompson is an Assistant Professor at the Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication, Erasmus University Rotterdam, and a member of Rotterdam Popular Music Studies (RPMS). He is a cultural economist whose research focuses on the economic decision-making of consumers, workers and firms across a variety of industries, with a particular focus on the cultural and creative industries.*

## Hüseyin Serbes

Istanbul Technical University, TR

### **Precarious Labour and Algorithmic Visibility: Independent Music Careers in Türkiye's Platformized Ecosystem**

The global music economy increasingly relies on platforms such as Spotify, YouTube, Apple Music, and Bandcamp, where algorithmic curation shapes visibility, income, and recognition. While these dynamics have been widely discussed in Euro-American contexts, less is known about how independent musicians and small labels in the Global Majority negotiate such systems. This study examines independent music careers in Türkiye, where electronic and punk-oriented artists face volatile currency conditions, fragmented copyright enforcement, and platformized value chains that intensify precarious labour.

The research combines semi-structured interviews with musicians, producers, and label managers with analysis of platform policies, royalty schemes, and local industry reports. This mixed approach captures how artists respond to algorithmic pressures and financial insecurity through strategies of adaptation and resilience. Findings suggest that pragmatic tactics such as metadata adjustments, release timing, and playlist pitching generate episodic visibility, while financial experiments including crowdfunding, merchandise sales, and currency-sensitive pricing redistribute risks across artists and audiences. Informal networks of cooperation and care, including mutual-aid initiatives, mentoring, and local collectives, play a vital role in sustaining music-making, although access to these resources varies significantly across genres, genders, and regions.

These dynamics illustrate how algorithmic systems normalize precariousness while encouraging what has been described as hope labour, where musicians commit time and energy without guaranteed reward. At the same time, community-driven servers and open-source tools show attempts to establish digital sovereignty and resilience. Highlighting experiences from Türkiye contributes to de-westernizing music sociology and extends debates on the political economy of cultural production. The study emphasizes how careers in independent music are shaped by structural inequalities as well as practices of solidarity and resilience, and points toward policy measures that foster fairer royalty systems, greater inclusion, and more sustainable music ecosystems.

*Hüseyin Serbes is a postdoctoral researcher at Istanbul Technical University's Turkish Music State Conservatory and currently a Visiting Fellow at Middlesex University London. His doctorate examined punk culture in Türkiye, and his current research explores platformization, creative labour, and data governance in independent music. He is a lecturer at Gebze Technical University.*

**Eva Dieteren & Chloe Kirson-Jones**

Kingston University London, UK

**Towards an AI Cyborg Manifesto: Voice, Resistance, and the Politics of Popular Music?**

Debates on AI in music have largely centred on creativity, authorship, and copyright, with discussions often framed in terms of innovation or threat. Yet this focus sidelines a crucial dimension: the politics of the voice. Vocal technologies are not neutral; they are entangled with histories of power that shape how voices are coded, gendered, and racialised. From the marginalisation of women's voices in music to the feminisation of digital assistants and the erasure of non-Western vocalities, AI vocal systems extend and reconfigure these inequalities. At the same time, they carry cracks and glitches, unruly moments where dominant structures falter, which open space for imagining resistant and hybrid forms of vocality.

This paper asks: How can popular music debates on AI voices be re-imagined through a feminist reworking of the cyborg? And what new possibilities do the cracks and glitches of AI voices open up for feminist practice and critique? In exploring these questions, we develop an AI Cyborg Manifesto, re-imagining Donna Haraway's *A Cyborg Manifesto* (1985) within 21st-century popular music. Our manifesto is not a celebration of AI, but a situated feminist framework for thinking with and against it, attentive to both exploitation and imaginative possibilities.

Methodologically, our intervention emerges from diffractive conversations between two researchers, combining practice-based experimentation with an AI singing voice clone and analysis of feminist popular music. This collaborative situated method is itself integral to the manifesto's politics.

Drawing on feminist theory and voice studies, we argue that AI voices can be understood as ambivalent cyborg sites: assemblages that reproduce inequality while also opening possibilities for resistant, hybrid futures in popular music. By shifting attention from authorship and copyright to the politics of voice, we offer a conceptual intervention for sociological debates on music and technology, imagining alternative ways of listening, creating and becoming with machines.

*Eva Dieteren is an AHRC-funded PhD researcher in Music at Kingston University London, researching the intersections of feminist theory and popular music.*

*Chloe Kirson-Jones is a producer, vocalist, and PhD researcher at Kingston University London. Her work explores the intersection of AI, voice, and identity in music.*

**Elias Berner**

Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, AT

**Authenticity, Affect, and AI: Genre, Identity, and the Re-Emergence of the Inauthentic Other in AI-Generated Music**

In her influential 2011 essay, Georgina Born described music's "capacity to form aggregations of the affected": In her influential 2011 essay, Georgina Born described music's "capacity to form aggregations of the affected": collective affective alignments in which individuals entrain with others and transmit these affective intensities among the group. Through these dynamics, musical genres materialize social identities, "naturalizing" the link between a musical style and a particular group while obscuring its historical and cultural contingency.

Popular music studies have shown that genre affiliation plays a crucial role in the marketing of music. This suggests that music's commercial viability is tied to its ability to create affective communities. At the same time, aesthetic discourses—for example in rock (and folk) criticism since the late 1960s—have upheld "authenticity" as the expression of "real" emotion, opposing it to commercial, shallow, or calculated forms of music. Historically traceable well into the 19th century, this claim has depended on the construction of a devalued "other" that merely imitates emotion and thus lacks legitimacy.

This paper explores how such discourses of authenticity and projections of an inauthentic "other" are rearticulated in public debates around AI-generated music. It further asks whether AI systems themselves rely on and reinforce an essentialist understanding of the relationship between musical style and identity—despite their seemingly limitless generative flexibility.

Methodologically, the first part employs a discourse analysis of current German-language feuilleton debates on AI and music. The second part uses a media-analytical close reading of select AI-generated musical examples, including material produced through the author's own prompting and iterative interaction with generative AI tools.

By examining both public discourse and technical output, the paper aims to contribute to broader discussions about authenticity, identity, and creativity in platformized, AI-mediated music ecosystems.

*Elias Berner studied musicology at the University of Vienna. From 2022 to 2024 he has been co-director of the interdisciplinary Digital Humanities project "ACONTRA: The Affective Construction of National Temporalities in Austrian Postwar Radio (1945-55)". His monograph at Music in Films about the Shoah at Palgrave in 2024. Currently he is postdoc at the Institute for Culture Studies at Austrian Academy of Sciences.*

**Caroline Nagy**

DePaul University, US

**Melomaniacs: How Independent Musicians Influence West Hollywood’s Cosmopolitanism**

This project brackets the sociology of music and urban arts by exploring how independent musicians derive creative meaning and connections within the musically diverse place of West Hollywood, California (WeHo), and describes the existing municipal conditions that enable professional musicians to experience their career trajectories as authentic to their selves. Findings from in-depth interviews and ethnographic observations with 23 local, professional musicians emphasize (i) the artists’ authentic expression through innate musicality and live performances; (ii) feelings of acceptance and validation from connections to culturally hybrid audiences; and (iii) appreciation for the city’s diverse musical stages with storied histories. In further analyses, original insights are generated into how musicians continue influencing WeHo’s cosmopolitanism through their cultural omnivore attitudes and postmaterialist lifestyles. I conclude that the interconnectedness between these individual musicians and the structure of West Hollywood coevolves moral capital, contributing to a more legitimate and musically equitable urban space for artists to be recognized.

*Originally from Chicago, Caroline Nagy earned an undergraduate degree in Music from DePauw University’s School of Music. She obtained her graduate degree in Sociology from DePaul University where her thesis on the gigging lifestyles of freelance musicians in New York City received distinction. Caroline is fiscally sponsored by Fulcrum Arts and was a 2024 West Hollywood Artist grant recipient for her latest project: “Melomaniacs: How Independent Musicians Influence West Hollywood’s Cosmopolitanism”—a study that triangulates arts research, advocacy and live performance by showcasing the stories and musicianship of 23 independent musicians living and working in Weho (publication pending.) In August 2025, she and her partner produced a show at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival titled Los Angeles: Fake Friends and Real Stories where she performed her spoken-word and live violin show: “How to Murder the Family Dog... in the Style of Peter and the Wolf.” Caroline is an advisory board member of The Creative School at DePauw University and The Fairfax Park Advisory Board in Los Angeles, and serves as the co-leader of the DePaul University Southern California Alumni Chapter. She volunteers weekly at Jewish Family Services through their SOVA food pantry for homeless/unhoused individuals and their Senior Meals program, where she enjoys calling Bingo.*

## Rainer Prokop

University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna, AT

### **Young Classical Musicians: Entering the Music Labour Market**

This presentation explores the careers of a younger generation of classically trained musicians in Austria in the context of the neoliberal transformation of higher music education and music labour markets. Drawing on 60 interviews with predominantly white middle-class students and graduates of the three public, state-funded higher music education institutions in Austria, I examine how these artists seek to advance their careers as orchestral musicians, chamber musicians or soloists and manage the entrepreneurialism, competitiveness and precariousness that underpin the classical music labour market. Theoretically, my presentation is informed by a neo-Foucauldian understanding of neoliberalism. Neoliberalism is thus not only a political and economic project but also a new form of governmentality (e.g. Brown 2015) that encourages individuals to become an 'entrepreneur of the self' (Bröckling 2016). This includes to invest work in the self and to engage in competition, strategic planning, self-management and various forms of self-optimisation. My presentation shows that these young classical musicians cultivate an entrepreneurial ethos: They evaluate their artistic education and musical skills with regard to the demands of the music labour market and deploy various forms of self-optimisation to compete professionally on the labour market. Moreover, the majority of the study participants talks partly at length about social inequalities on the classical music labour market but hardly takes any political actions to protest against the increasing precarisation of their careers and lives. However, some of the musicians adopt alternative cultural practices. These practices include a disruption of the neoliberal logic of competition and self-interest by orienting themselves towards collegiality and solidarity, the affective attachment to teaching activities and the foundation of small-scale music projects that seek to establish new forms of community and more just and fair working conditions. My presentation suggests that creative labour cannot be understood solely as individualised, self-expressive and passionate work but should also be considered as a collective cultural practice.

*Rainer Prokop is a Senior Scientist at the Department of Music Sociology at the mdw – University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna, Austria. His research focuses on the sociology of higher music education, (e)valuation practices at higher music education institutions, and music labour markets and musicians' careers in neoliberal times.*

**Helleke van den Braber**

Utrecht University, NL

**Great Expectations? How Pop Musicians and Their Patrons Perceive Reciprocity**

RQ and theoretical approach. I have examined the perception of reciprocity in gift exchange by investigating gift relationships between musicians and their individual donors. What types of reciprocal gifts do pop/jazz/world musicians feel prepared to offer their (prospective) patrons in return for a gift? And what types of reciprocal gifts do pop/jazz/world donors expect to be offered by the musicians they support? Building on gift theory, the concept of patronage is operationalized as the practice of one-on-one donation of material or immaterial resources to artists, with the donations serving as catalysts for cycles of sustained, reciprocal gift-giving that provide both parties with important material, social or symbolic rewards and benefits (Komter 2007, Gouldner 1960).

Method. First step: 16 in-depth qualitative interviews with pop/jazz/electronica artists (both early career and established); respondents performed a 'ranking exercise' of 12 hypothetical reciprocal gifts to potential donors as part of the interview. Second step: 2 focus group meetings with 2 musicians and 2 donors per meeting.

Findings. Pop/jazz/electronica musicians feel positive about offering their donors either small material tokens or privileged access to knowledge about their career and artistic choices, or gifts that bring their donors a sense of valuation and recognition. Offering proximity to their work space or creative process is controversial; some respondents propose putting limits on the interference and intrusion that, they feel, comes with proximity, while others feel that allowing their donors close fosters involvement and loyalty. Pop musicians feel uncomfortable with reciprocal gifts that involve offering their patrons impact on their artistic or professional choices. My findings show that pop/jazz/electronica donors, on their part, appreciate reciprocal gifts that offer them either privileged knowledge, a sense of valuation and recognition, or proximity. They do not much value material tokens, and feel uncomfortable with the offer of impact gifts.

*Helleke van den Braber is professor of Cultural Value, Patronage and Society at Utrecht University; she publishes on the dynamics and cultural function of post-Romantic arts patronage, focusing on contemporary and historical exchange patterns between artists or cultural institutions and their patrons.*

**Yoline Bourdon**

Independent Scholar

**Rap, Cinema, Fashion, or the Street: Youth and the Promises of the Industry of the Street amidst Marseille’s Economic Restructuring**

In response to the growing scholarship on so-called “immaterial labor” this research foregrounds the very material relations of production that constitute creative industries, and namely the rap industry. Focusing on Marseille’s post-industrial transformation and its rebranding as a “capital of culture and rap” since the 1990s, this study situates working-class youth within the city’s evolving economic landscape.

Based on 42 interviews—21 semi-structured and 21 unstructured—with individuals occupying entry-level positions within the rap industry and related sectors of the creative economy, this research draws on a 6 months ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Marseille in 2024. Interviewees were recruited through Instagram using a virtual snowball sampling method.

In my analysis, I draw from the labor theory of value, social reproduction theory, and literature on racial capitalism, bridging notions of race, gender and class. I conceptualize “the street” as a physical (working-class districts of Marseille), symbolic (racialized and stigmatized), and social space (shared experiences of age, class, race, and gender) that is mobilized by creative industries—or what I refer to as “the industry of the street”—to valorize their products.

I analyze how the socialization of working-class, racialized, masculine youth both within state-sponsored socio-cultural associations, and at the level of “the street”, contribute to reproducing their labor power. Rather than countering racial stereotypes, my participants strived to mobilize stigma into a profitable enterprise: the “industry of the street.” This industry emerges as a promise of emancipation for working-class youth, who reject traditional working-class occupations and aspire to “success”. Finally, I examine how the “industry of the street” mobilizes (past) colonial hierarchies, forms of dominance, and control in the service of capital. Despite its glamorous aesthetic, the “industry of the street” reveals an increasing precarization of work, characteristic of post-Fordist economies.

*My name is Yoline Bourdon. I am an Anthropologist, currently not affiliated with any institution. I graduated from my Masters in Sociology and Social Anthropology at Central European University in July 2025. My research interests pertain to studies on labor, youth unemployment, gender & race, deindustrialization & post-industrial cities, and social reproduction.*

**Kim Ramstedt**

University of Helsinki, FI

**Between an Epistemology of Failing and the Politics of Naming: Activist Music Research from a Northern European Perspective**

In this paper, I examine methodologies of activism in music research. The central question guiding this paper is: What are the political and epistemological implications of naming activism in music research and harnessing research as a tool for change?

Three theoretical levels frame the analysis. First, drawing on queer theory and participatory research traditions, failure is understood as a productive epistemic category. Activist research frequently encounters obstacles and rarely fulfils all its intended goals, yet these moments also generate valuable knowledge, revealing what works, what does not, and how researchers themselves learn and grow. Second, informed by debates around public sociology, the politics of naming is examined. Labelling music research as “activist” can enhance its visibility and legitimacy, but it can also position the field at the margins of academia. Third, drawing on social movement scholarship, activism in research is conceptualized as collective organization. Beyond individual projects, activist research relies on building networks and collaborative structures that support shared learning and political engagement. Methodologically, the paper is based on my ethnographic research on racism in nightclub contexts, alongside practical experiences from Suoni, an independent research association founded in 2017 in Finland to advance activist approaches in music research.

The paper shows that, while activist scholarship has been criticized for instrumentalizing research for political purposes and jeopardizing academic freedom, transparency about both political commitments and failures provides a more holistic and realistic understanding of freedom as a collective commitment that demands equity and inclusion. Labeling research as activist can enhance legitimacy within the broader academic community, but it also risks positioning the field at the margins, encouraging performative gestures, and facilitating the extraction of knowledge from marginalized communities. Finally, collective structures such as Suoni, with explicit political commitments, offer spaces for shared learning and collaborative action that challenge academic and social hierarchies.

*Kim Ramstedt is a researcher and educator specialized in music, media and social justice. Currently, he explores how the category of race is constructed in scholarship and the compatibility of research practices with anti-racist activism. He is affiliated with the University of Helsinki and founding member of research association Suoni.*

**Lisa Gaupp**

University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna, AT

**Urban Music Studies and the Politics of Solidarity**

Music shapes how urban life is experienced and negotiated, from the use of public space to questions of identity and power. This paper positions Urban Music Studies within the sociology of music to explore how musical practices intersect with struggles over recognition, resources, and social change. The focus lies on the activation of vacant sites for cultural use and on solidarities formed within urban music networks.

The theoretical framework draws on critical sociology, postcolonial theory, and feminist epistemologies, conceptualising solidarity as contingent and contested rather than as a stable consensus. Music is understood as a practice that engages with regulatory structures, spatial hierarchies, and uneven opportunities for participation, while also opening possibilities for dialogue and exchange. Using qualitative methods, the study investigates how musical practices interact with urban spaces. This includes collective initiatives to reconfigure vacant spaces as cultural venues and the ways in which music networks negotiate inclusion, conflict, and difference. Preliminary findings suggest that music can contribute to processes of participation and recognition, while at the same time exposing the fragility of solidarities when confronted with structural inequalities.

The paper argues that urban music practices can contribute to understand how solidarity is enacted, contested, and sustained under conditions of inequality. Music appears here both as a means of resisting dominant structures and as a practice of care, collaboration, and commoning. Positioning Urban Music Studies as a critical lens of music sociology, the paper shows how music not only reflects urban activist struggles but actively reshapes them.

*Lisa Gaupp is professor of Cultural Institutions Studies at mdw-University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna, with degrees from universities in Barcelona and Lüneburg, a doctorate in ethnomusicology from Hanover University of Music, Drama and Media, and a habilitation in sociology of culture and the arts from Leuphana University of Lüneburg. She co-founded the Urban Music Studies Scholars' Network and focuses her teaching and research, among other things, on urban music policies and the role of solidarity in challenging or reinforcing asymmetrical power relations.*

**Carla Pinochet Cobos & Laura Jordán González**

Universidad Alberto Hurtado, CL

**Resonances and Dissidences: Musical Affairs and Public Controversies around Urban Music in Latin America**

This paper examines two recent controversies (affaires) that illuminate how urban music in Latin America becomes a site of moral panic, cultural negotiation, and public critique. The first case is the polemic surrounding the invitation of Mexican singer Peso Pluma to the 2024 Viña del Mar Festival in Chile, widely condemned by commentators as the public endorsement of “narcoculture.” The second case is the release of +57 by Karol G and other Colombian stars, which triggered intense debates in Colombia and beyond about sexual exploitation, national representation, and the global reach of reggaetón.

Our research question asks: how do such affaires enable us to understand the social lives of popular music, not merely as entertainment but as catalysts of collective indignation and arenas where aesthetic, ethical, and political values are disputed? Theoretically, we draw on Luc Boltanski’s conceptualization of the affaire as a public test of legitimacy, in which singular events become generalized moral issues. Methodologically, the paper combines media and social network analysis (op-eds, news, institutional statements, online debates) with participation in the public sphere as engaged scholars.

Preliminary findings suggest that both cases exemplify how urban music is entangled with questions of class, morality, and cultural legitimacy. In Chile, Peso Pluma became a figure onto which anxieties about youth, violence, and state responsibility were projected. In Colombia, +57 revealed fractures within academia, politics, and the music industry over the normalization of violence and exploitation in reggaetón. Together, these cases show how controversies around urban music do not only express pre-existing conflicts but actively shape the public imagination about art, responsibility, and social change.

*Carla Pinochet Cobos is Associate Professor of Anthropology at Universidad Alberto Hurtado, Chile, and Deputy Director of the Núcleo Milenio en Culturas Musicales y Sonoras. Her research explores sonic cultures, urban music, and cultural policy in Latin America.*

*Laura Jordán González is a musicologist and Head of Research at the Instituto de Música, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso, Chile. Her work focuses on popular music studies, sound and listening practices, and the cultural politics of music in Latin America.*

## André Rottgeri

University of Passau, DE

### **More of the same!? Interpretations & Conflicts in Popular Music**

Mais do Mesmo (More of the same) is the Portuguese title of a compilation-album by one of the most iconic Brazilian Rock bands (Legião Urbana). On the one hand, this title represents the repetitive character of compilation albums in general. Yet, it also points to the notion that popular music might repeat itself over and over again through different interpretations of already / previous existing ideas. This idea was central to the author's latest publication *Interpretationen & Konflikte in der Populären Musik* (Opus Passau, 2025). In the context of the Rotterdam conference, the paper will present the research results for international audiences in English. Yet, with special focus on the relevant term "More". Trying to explain how quantities in Popular Music come into existence and touching on the research-question: How can different interpretations of popular music be classified? In this context, the paper also touches shortly on the relations to conflicts, which can serve as a catalyst during the on-going production of "more and more" interpretations / variations of a song. Examples will include different interpretations of national anthems (Germany, France, USA and Brazil), which were subject matter to the above-mentioned publication.

*Dr. phil. André Rottgeri (Dipl. Kulturwirt) received his PhD at the University of Passau (Germany). He has worked for various academic institutions in Germany (Universität Passau, Paderborn, Lüneburg, Frankfurt am Main), HfM Karlsruhe as well as in the Netherlands (Universiteit Utrecht) and is currently working as an independent researcher.*