



# What is Urban Music Studies (UMS), and what could it be?

## Workshop Documentation

### October 20-21, 2017

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#### I. Participants

**I.1 Participated:** Rosa Reitsamer, Paula Guerra, Lisa Gaupp, Alenka Barber-Kersovan, Andy Bennett, Fabian Holt, Giacomo Botta, Martin Cloonan (partly via Skype), Volker Kirchberg, Robin Kuchar

**I.2 Invited / interested colleagues:** Geoff Stahl, Richard Lloyd, Will Straw, Michael Ahlers

**I.3 Potential members:** Asya Draganova (suggested by Andy), Keivan Aghamohseni (suggested by Lisa), Kayla Rush (suggested by Lisa)

#### **I.4 Contact information:**

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## II. Questions & results re content

### II.1 'Urban Music Studies' as a *discipline* or as a *distinct field of research*?

#### ➤ General Views / Paradigm

As a general point of departure, the participants understand the research of UMS as the study of the many relationships between music and the city. It is based on the assumptions, that

- there is a vital exchange between music and the city
- music is a part of the intrinsic logic of cities
- music contributes to the image design of a city
- music is an important part of the economy of cities and urban regeneration
- music can become an issue of urban politics and policies
- music is an essential component of the cultural heritage of cities

Taking into account the discourses on space and place, UMS do not understand the “city” as a container, where musical events happen, but as a complex negotiating process between all agents involved, making the city a social construct of these relations. Therefore the research in this field includes topics such as urban politics and policies, the political economy of urban structures, conditions and processes, the political economy of music, spatial and educational policies, new urbanism, tourism, ethnologies of music, and the management of musical heritage. Further, since there are enormous (spatial, geographical, economic, social, political) differences between cities, esp. between cities of the “Global North” and the “Global South”, UMS require theoretical and methodical approaches from different perspectives. Another objective concerns the importance of the historical background of musical phenomena; as a consequence UMS has to include all music throughout space and time, not only the classical one which is (at least in Europe) still the subject of the major and hegemonic discourse on culture and music, or pop music which is predominantly discussed in connection with ‘creative industries’.

Within the UMS, and in terms of this multidimensional and interdisciplinary system, the borders of disciplines and methodologies are blurred, with many overlaps. There is thus no manifest UMS paradigm but a variety of interdisciplinary (if not transdisciplinary) perspectives and approaches.

## ➤ The 'Urban' in Urban Music Studies

As an outcomes of our brainstorming sessions at the UMS workshop in October 2017, UMS are divided into two different systems that represent the macro spheres (the general urban condition, at the left of figure 1 below) and the micro sphere (contexts of music production, distribution, and consumption, at the right of figure 1 below) spheres of research. The two spheres are divided by the "barbed wire" of macro and micro, or institutional (bureaucratic) organizations and ephemeral (entrepreneurial) projects.

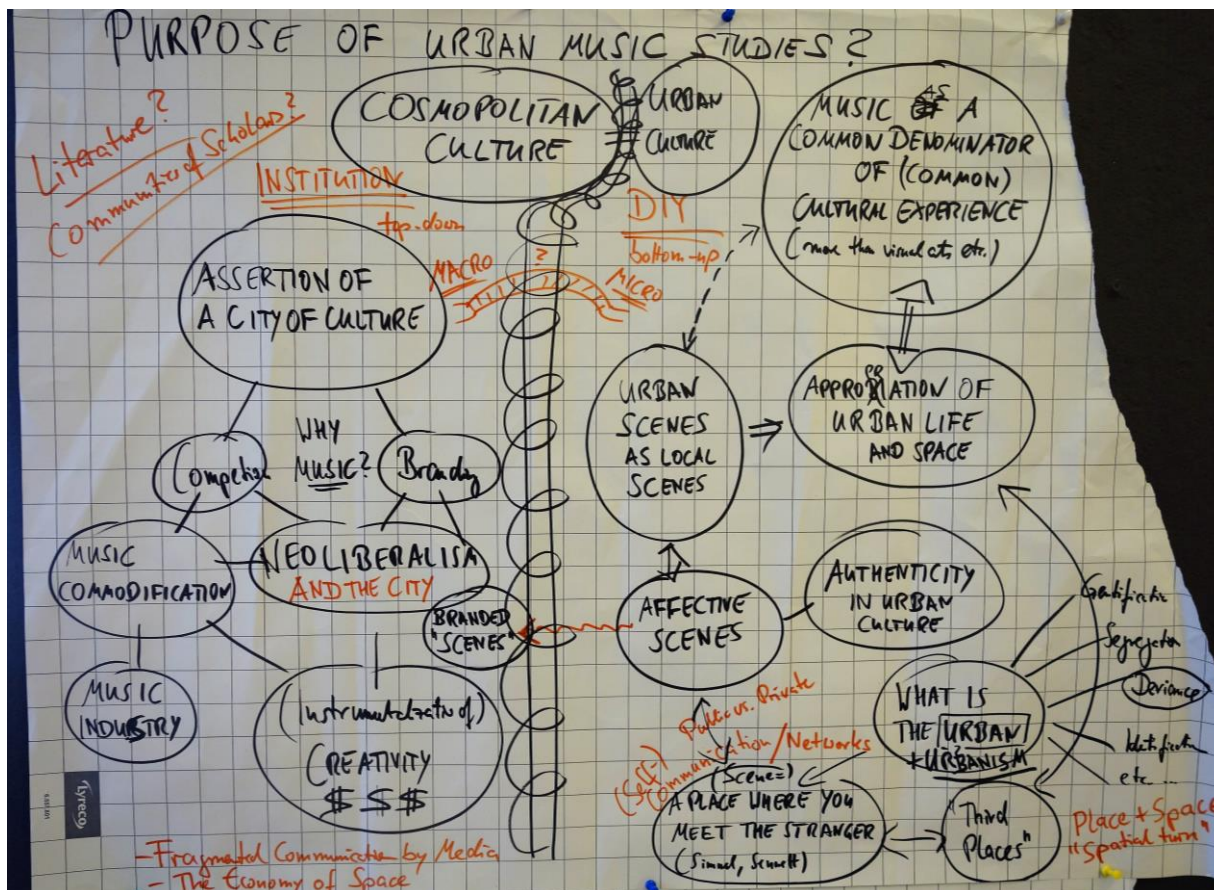


Figure 1: The Urban in "Urban Music Studies"

In the former figure, the economically and policy orientated system of a critical urban theory (left) and the culturally and socially orientated system of localities, communities and smaller spaces (right) seem to be divided; however, they are rather entangled and just represent different (macro and micro) aspects of music production, distribution, consumption and reception.

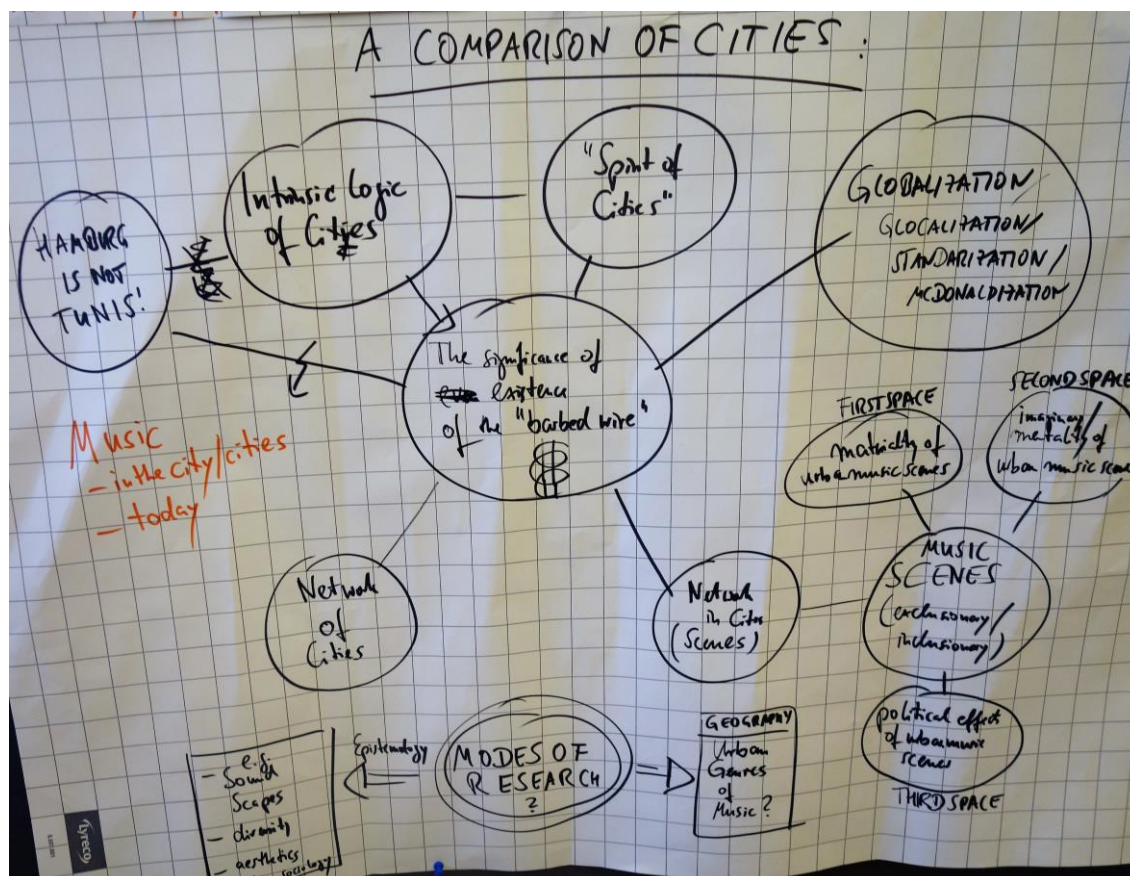


Figure 2: A Comparison of Cities

1. The comparison of cities and urban contexts depends on the relationships between the macro and micro levels of operations, respectively the division or exchange between them ('significance of the barbed wire'). A strong orientation on macro tendencies leads to the standardisation of urban structures and has a negative effect on the cities' identity and intrinsic logic.

2. As a matter of principle, micro systems such as scenes and the cultural production (right half of the graph) are better suited for comparative studies though at the moment neither the epistemology nor the space related perspectives can be precisely formulated.

### ➤ ‘Music’ in Urban Music Studies

If the study of urban issues (“urbanism”) can be considered as a comparatively well-defined and interdisciplinary subject matter, the role of music in UMS is less obvious. However, the participants agreed that music can be analysed from a wide range of angles.

At first, we proposed functions of music in urban contexts as follows

- as practice
- as commodity
- as imaginaries
- as history and heritage
- as agent
- as translocal and glocal cultural form, and
- as an object.

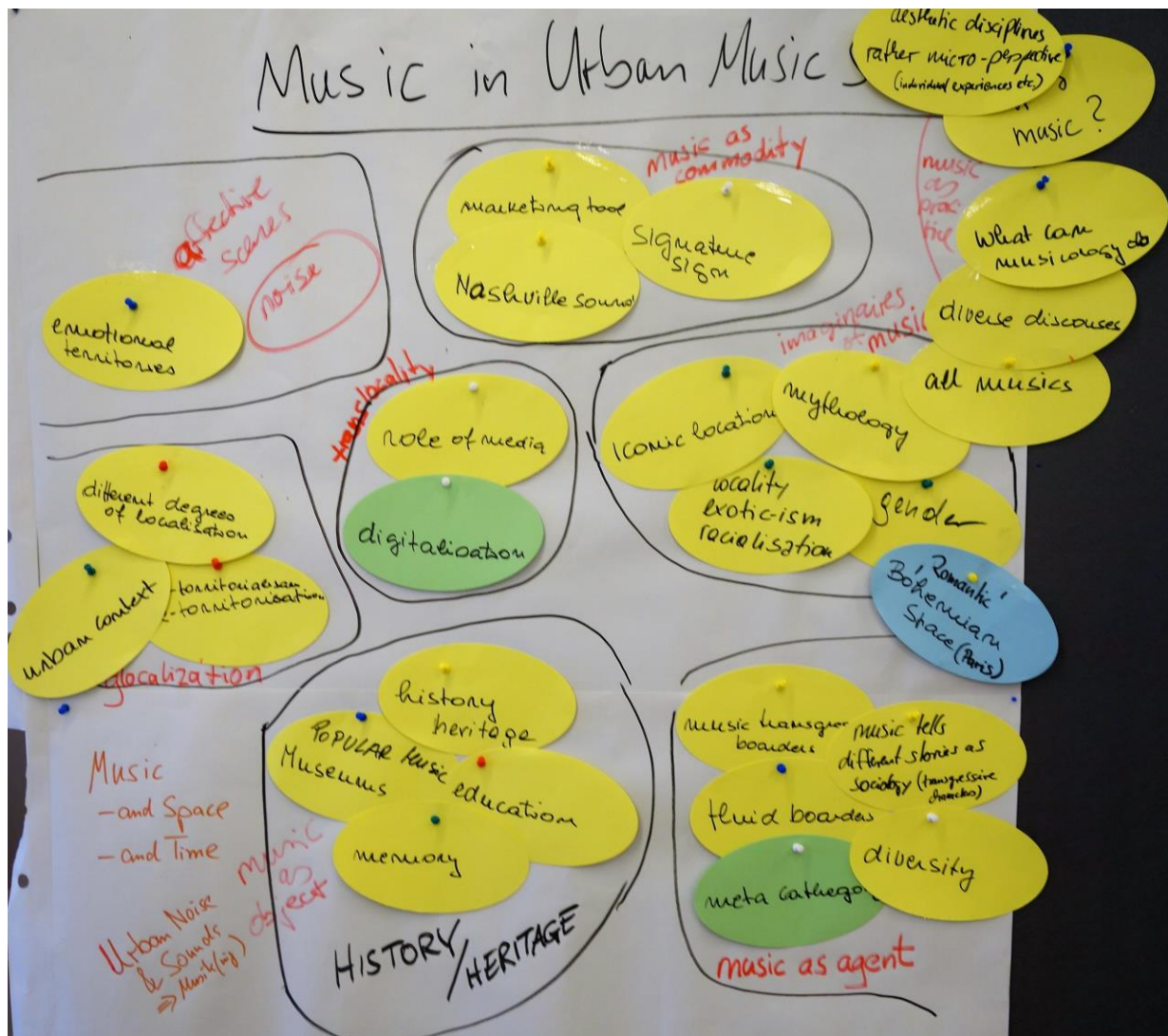


Figure 3: Music in “Urban Music Studies”

We then clustered these issues in ten more detailed sectors:

- Music as affective and emotional scenes
- Music as commodity
- Music as practice
- Music as imaginaries
- Music as trans-locality
- Music as (glocality) locality
- Music in space and time
- Music as noise and sound production (musicking)
- Music as heritage object
- Music as agent

### ➤ **Dimensions and Topics of Urban Music Studies**

On the basis of the above discussion about the ‘urban’ and ‘music’ the participants developed a list of disciplines involved, and potential topics to be studied:

- The interdisciplinary agenda of the UMS includes at least
  - Historical Musicology
  - Urban Sociology
  - Music Sociology
  - Policy Studies/ Political Science
  - Geography
  - Ethnomusicology
  - Popular Music Studies
  - Humanities & Social Sciences (Kulturwissenschaften)
  - Cultural Studies
  - Architecture
  - Media Studies
  - Intersectionality & Diversity Studies (Gender, race, age etc.)
  - Anthropology
  - Psychology
  - Aesthetics
- Proposed topics and sub-fields of research include among others
  - Networks
  - Diversity & hybridity
  - Branding & commodification
  - Authenticity & cosmopolitanism
  - Appropriation of urban space
  - History & heritage
  - Sound, senses & performativity
  - Night-time (economy)
  - Global South & former peripheries
  - Street musicians

- Musical spaces
- Policies & politics
- Music institutions
- Methodology of UMS

An important question that appeared during the workshop was the significance of the study of music in relationship to broader social and political issues such as the city or the society in general. Music is – due also to the rapid development of the media - omnipresent and makes itself noticeable on different levels (spatial, visual, auditive).

Simon Frith states: “...something specific to musical experience, namely, is its direct emotional intensity. Because of its qualities of abstractness (which ‘serious’ aestheticians have always stressed) music is an individualizing form. We absorb songs into our own lives and rhythms into our own bodies; they have a looseness of reference that makes them immediately accessible.” (Frith 1987: 139)

Music is highly emotionally charged and accompanies individuals and groups through their everyday *urban* life. As such, music has numerous functions that influence the social, cultural, political and economic aspects of the urban experience. In terms of a sonic painting, music is a place maker, linking particular sounds or musical forms to particular cities (e.g., Viennese waltz) and effecting the individual and collective issues of cultural memory. It provides insights into cultural conventions, routines and social practices and hence into the society as such. Thus, the flexibility and precarious working conditions in cultural and music production reflect the ‘new spirit of capitalism’ (Boltanski & Chiapello 2017) and anticipate future working conditions.

Therefore the participants agreed that studying music goes far beyond the analysis of its sounding material. As a “moral maxim”, UMS differentiates between the scientific ethics and the rather ‘rational’ approach of the urban macro system.

### **III. Questions & results re realisation**

In order to establish UMS as a distinct field of research and as a research network, the following topics were discussed:

#### **III.1 Urban Music Studies-Blog ([www.urbanmusicstudies.org](http://www.urbanmusicstudies.org))**

The urban music studies blog went online in January 2017. Workshops participants proposed an enlargement of the existing content and structure

- by a project section, which should document the thematic range of UMS and present the ongoing research in this field
- by a courses section, providing a global overview of UMS in higher education
- by giving the workshop participants author accounts, so that they can publish their own contributions and intensify the exchange of ideas via the blog site.
- by keeping the bibliography updated. For further tasks see the To Do section.

#### **III.2 Possible Partners**

A possible collaboration with the Music Cities Network and Sound Diplomacy was critically discussed. On the one hand this partnership could help to acquire financial means, but on the other hand Music Cities Network and Sound Diplomacy are commercially oriented, promoting only the economic aspects of the ‘music city’ as a brand. The proposal of the potential partners however, refers to the paid access to the UMS data bank only, especially to studies and documents about music cities. Alenka was commissioned to clear the details, before any decisions can be made.

#### **III.3 Book Series**

The initiators of the workshop reported about the negotiations with the Peter Lang publisher considering the set-up of a publication series called Urban Music Studies. The series should include monographs as well as edited volumes. The workshop participants remarked that the German practice of paying for publishing is questionable, that Peter Lang’s books are too expensive and that the distribution is far from optimal. Further, to their opinion international visibility can be achieved only through a renown international publisher such as Emerald (Oxford Independent), Bloomsbury or Routledge. Therefore the participants agreed that next to further negotiations with Peter Lang also other options should be considered. Andy promised to make the appropriate contacts.

Further there was also consent that the first international book of the series should be an edited volume. All participants expressed their willingness to work in the editorial board and to contribute articles for the edited volume. Also colleagues who were prevented to participate in the workshop should be invited.



An alternative idea would be to start the series with Peter Lang (in German, PhD theses) and then to switch as an already established series to an international publisher. A big problem however, represents English proof reading which is very expensive.

The “Leuphana UMS crew” agreed on writing a proposal for both the planned book series as well as for the first volume of the series in order to be able to negotiate better conditions with Peter Lang or to investigate options with Andy’s contacts at the mentioned publishers. All workshop participants agreed on submitting an abstract for their respective book contribution once it has been clarified which publisher will be strived to work with.

### **III.4 Network / Association**

The participants discussed whether it would make sense to found an UMS association. Strong arguments for the foundation are the institutional independence from the universities and the possibility to manage its own finances. However, it was agreed that the start of the book series has a higher priority and that the set-up of an association should be postponed to the international conference planned.

Until then, the UMS should stay an informal network, inviting colleagues to contribute their experiences via the blog.

### **III.5 UMS Symposium/ Workshop**

A UMS symposium or workshop is planned for 2018. As a date, the participants favour November 23-25, 2018. The conference should take place right after the conference of the Working Group “Sociology of the Arts” of the German Sociological Association (Section Cultural Sociology) in Lüneburg. Both symposia would be organized by the “Leuphana UMS crew”, and in conjunction, in order to increase the UMS’s visibility in the field. Most of the presentations of the “Sociology of the Arts” symposium will be in English; the tentative topic of that meeting is “The Arts between Power and Authority”.

Ideas on topics and further funding opportunities for the UMS symposium are welcome.

## **IV. Possibilities for promoting the UMS**

A brainstorming yields the following steps for promoting UMS:

- note/s about the workshop should be published on the blog
- short note/s should be distributed via existing networks
- the UMS network should be presented at the next KISMIF conference 2018
- the UMS network should submit a panel proposal for the next ESA midterm conference of the Research Network Sociology of the Arts (September 4-7, 2018, Valletta, Malta). Topic of the meeting: Creative Locations, Arts, Culture & the City. The call is open until February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018, Conference website: <http://www.um.edu/events/10midconf2018>
- Please consider other conferences and meetings for promoting UMS

## V. To Dos / time-line

### V.1. Task for publishing an edited UMS volume

<b>Tasks</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
Renegotiate Peter Lang	Alenka, Lisa, Volker, Robin	Jan 2018
Invite other network members (Richard, Geoff, Will, Asya) to write vacant chapter proposals	Alenka, Volker	End of Nov. 2017
Complete book proposal	Alenka, Lisa, Volker, Robin	End of Dec. 2017
Contact other international publishers	Andy	Jan 2018

### V.2. Topics for the edited volume

<b>Chapter</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
General ideas	Alenka, Lisa, Volker, Robin	
Branding & commodification	Giacomo	
Authenticity & cosmopolitanism	Paula	
Appropriation of urban space	Volker	
History & heritage	Rosa	
Night time	Volker	
Global South & former peripheries	Andy	
Street musicians	Alenka	
Musical spaces	Robin	
Policies & politics of diversity & hybridity	Lisa	
Methodology of UMS	Fabian	
Sound, senses & performativity	?	
Networks	?	
Music institutions	?	
No topic discussed, but a contribution promised after the workshop	Will	

### V.3 Blog & networking

<b>Task</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
Write a short note about the workshop and distribute it through existing networks	Alenka, Volker, Robin	End of Nov. 2017
Invite colleagues to UMS	All	Ongoing
Add a project section to the blog	Robin and blog admin. team	Dec 15 <sup>th</sup> 2017
Add courses section to the blog	Robin and blog admin team	Dec 15 <sup>th</sup> 2017
Collect courses related to UMS	All	Ongoing
Collect research projects related to UMS	All	Ongoing
Install blog-author accounts for workshop participants	Robin and blog admin team	Dec 15 <sup>th</sup> 2017