



isaScience 2022  
Interdisciplinary Conference of mdw –  
University of Music and Performing Arts  
Vienna



**Conference date:** 31 August - 4 September 2022

**Conference venue:** Hotel Marienhof, Reichenau/Rax, Austria & online

**Academic Board:** Andrea Glauser, Marko Kölbl, Stephanie Probst

**Organisers:** Therese Kaufmann, Karoline Feyertag

**Keynote speakers:** t.b.a.

## Call for Papers

### Un/Learning: Norms and Routines in Cultural Practice

Cultural practices rely on routines, whether consciously habituated through effortful practice or ingrained as habitual actions. These practices are shaped, perceived, and received by norms – pertaining to the bodies involved, aesthetic paradigms, locations, historical contexts, societal and economic valuation. Norms and routines thereby tend to perpetuate hegemonic structures and power relations, classifying groups and individuals within confined identities. Through the lens of “**un/learning**”, isaScience 2022 invites you to critically examine these dynamics and the impetus for change.

In discourses on emancipatory and decolonising processes and in struggles against imposed forms of expression, unlearning has recently been highlighted by scholars and practitioners alike as the basis for substantial transformation. The potential of unlearning also applies to paradigm shifts and the renewal of **critical frameworks in scholarship**, as becomes apparent in recent reconsiderations within research on cultural practices. Calling out the colonial, racist, and gendered logics of disciplines like ethnomusicology ([Brown 2020](#), [Tan 2021](#)), music theory ([Ewell 2020](#), [Hisama 2021](#)), and music history ([Morrison 2019](#)) entails more than conventional canon critique. Since the foundations of music research itself are shaken, radical reinventions of disciplinary fields and epistemological traditions are in demand. But how exactly might these be achieved? What strategies, techniques, and technologies help facilitate these processes? And what might be lost in undoing established models of analytical and historiographical work?

Such considerations are equally relevant in **artistic practice**. Western classical art music, for example, depends on normative standards of musical excellence as well as **class-based and racialised expectations** towards personas and performances. What would an unlearning of these habitual codes lead to? Globally circulating forms of popular music often sell a seemingly disruptive potential in contesting social norms while following the very logic of

economic marketability. What are the dialectics between norms and the **non-normative** in popular music practice? Around the globe, imaginaries of routine and heritage inform practices of traditional music, often justifying “traditional” norms, such as cultural identity, religious virtue, gender behaviour, and sexual morals, while at the same time traditional musics are omitted, deemed unworthy of cultural recognition. How, then, do sonic signifiers of traditionality gain potential in countering cultural canons and geopolitical hegemonies? Performative arts and diverse musical cultures are essentially based on **repeated practice** and gradual training of **embodiment** as the foundation for constant (re)production and (re)enactment, yet many creative pursuits are compelled by the desire for change and renewal. How can we mediate between these poles?

Established concepts are also embedded in the design of (musical) instruments and technologies ([Walden 2019](#)). Defamiliarisation might, therefore, require us to reconceive the **material and immaterial interfaces** of the objects that performers interact with and the normalising models that they impose onto their users. How does the (material) infrastructure of the performing arts determine inclusion and exclusion in cultural participation?

The disruption or irritation of routines plays an essential role in various artistic practices, not least in **interventions in public spaces**, which aim to make prevailing norms visible, question knowledge incorporated through routines, and thus provoke social change ([Klein 2012](#); [Sachs Olsen 2020](#)). What techniques do artists or researchers use when they aim to challenge established patterns of action and to subvert predominant norms? Which concepts of un/learning do such interventions rely upon? How might they be applied to a revisiting of familiar spaces, for instance, in listening to cities? How does the understanding of spaces themselves change when approached through different methodological and sensory perspectives, such as soundscape studies or sonic ethnographies?

Beyond the focus on artistic practices, this conference also sheds light on the broader dynamics of un/learning in societal and cultural relations. Around the world, cultural practices are measured by reference to Eurocentric norms – often unmarked and seemingly universal. How do routines of the Global North foster implicit norms and dictate logics and aesthetics of cultural interaction? How might un/learning relate to **decentring** or **provincialising** Europe ([Chakrabarty 2000](#)) in order to break cultural norms and routines and dismantle imperialist structures?

What is the relevance of rituals and routines in cultural practices for groups and individuals in precarious situations, for example, in the context of forced migration? How can un/learning and aesthetic agency mitigate the experience of **disrupted everyday practices**? The establishment of new routines of living and working in exile and diaspora evolves within the complex fields of tension between political and legal conditions and everyday racism, between cultural agency and precariousness, between (infra)structures of solidarity and restrictive border regimes ([Ataç/Rygiel/Stierl 2021](#); [Kubaczek/Mokre 2021](#); [Picozza 2021](#)).

Finally, the conference seeks to scrutinise certain prevailing **(symbolic) economies** in the performing arts and other cultural and societal spheres, such as the ritualised awarding of prizes and publication of rankings ([Buckerman 2020](#); [Heintz 2018](#)). These practices create a peculiar “economy of prestige” ([English 2008](#)) based on contingent normative assumptions

and worldviews. What effects do these practices have? How do they shape social reality and (re)produce inequalities? And how can these routines and the related reward systems be challenged?

We welcome proposals from a wide range of disciplinary perspectives – from Dance Research to Cultural Sociology, from Musicology to Media Studies, from Queer Theory to Ethnomusicology. Contributions can include paper presentations (20 minutes plus discussion), panels, lecture performances, workshops, and innovative formats.

**Abstracts should include theoretical framework, methodology and a “keyword” line.**

**Please submit your abstract in English (max. 300 words, including literature), a short biography (max. 100 words) and your institutional affiliation or location, by 31 March 2022 to [isascience@mdw.ac.at](mailto:isascience@mdw.ac.at).**

**Decisions on the acceptance of proposals will be announced by late April 2022.**

**Complimentary funding** will be available to students and scholars in academic precarity after acceptance of the proposal. Please refer to our website or write to [isascience@mdw.ac.at](mailto:isascience@mdw.ac.at) for further information regarding the application process!

Registration is free of charge. mdw – University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna covers lunch and coffee breaks on-site.

Websites: <https://www.isa-music.org/de/isascience/> & [mdw.ac.at/isascience](https://mdw.ac.at/isascience)