

## 音楽社会学におけるメデイエーションの理論

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This essay will trace various theories of mediation in relation to the sociology of music. It will examine the ways in which these theories are deployed in the struggle to move away from the hard technological or sociological determinism of the binary categories of technology-human, society-individual, and more specifically technology-music and society-music. After briefly defining the concept of mediation, I will primarily focus on the theories of Georgina Born and Antoine Hennion as jumping points from which we can conceptualize contemporary usages of mediation as a theoretical framework in the study of music. I will argue that theories of mediation have predominantly been developed in an attempt to get away from the tendency to think of society and/or technology as determining cultural forces—that it is an attempt to complicate the understanding of the processes embedded in music creation, production, interpretation and dissemination. I will then elucidate how contemporary scholars of the sociology of music utilize theories of mediation to conflate the social into music and the human into technology. I do this by looking at the ways in which theories of mediation have been employed in specific case studies of technology and society in music. Specifically, I will look at how digitization and other technologies have complicated the notion of mediation, and how concepts like assemblages, embodiment and digitization have been used to produce a more nuanced understanding of the embedded sociotechnological relationships at play. In doing so, I aim to draw attention to potential shortcomings in theories of mediation, and highlight some suggestions for going forward.

As the concept of mediation has a long history in media studies and critical theory, this essay will not attempt to review the implications of its usage in general terms but will specifically look at theories of mediation in relation to the sociology of music. Nonetheless, a working definition of the term is needed before looking at more specific theoretical applications. Nick Prior defines mediation as “a process of conducting one thing through another and the resulting effects of that conduction” (Prior 2018,

18). He posits that mediation is the active and contingent change of an object in response to what is being mediated. For him, the discourse of music's mediation must be negotiated through "music's changing ontology", while understanding that "music's very essence changes as a result of its dissemination through the act of recording an reproduction" (Prior 2018, 18). Here we can see that the trend for music mediation to be concerned with subject-object relations that Born (2015, 360) posits as imperative to the sociology of music informs Prior's position. That is, in recording, or reproducing music, the subject-object relationship of a musical 'work', its producers, and listeners are mediated through the practices of music itself. Mediation in relation to music is therefore the process by which sound, emerging as music, is produced through assemblages of subjects and object interactions. But this interaction is not simple—as Born puts it, "music is...the paradigmatic, multiply-mediated, immaterial and material, fluid quasi-object, in which subjects and objects collide and intermingle" (Born 2005, 7). So, where is the 'object' in the sociology of music?

### **Objects and Materiality in the Mediation of Music**

As noted above, mediation is about how subjects and objects interact, and specifically how one 'thing' mediates itself through something else, but both Born (2015) and Hennion (2016) argue that the 'object' of music is elusive. Music, for them, is greater than the sum of its parts, but must be located within and of the social and material milieu from which it emerges. Born, in saying "music indicates that there need not be a physical artefact or visual object or symbol at the centre of the analysis of materiality, mediation and semiosis," (Born 2015, 359) is essentially arguing for the uniqueness of, and differentiation between music and other visual or object-centric art and cultural theories. Hennion too, argues that the "object of music...cannot be located in matter" (Hennion 2015, 1), that is, music is always already in the process of being mediated, whether through instruments, listeners, or recording, listening and broadcast technology. Here it is interesting to note that both Born and Hennion contemplate the necessity of mediation in making the object of discourse come into being. Hennion (2016, 1-2) for example argues that this creates a situation whereby, for social sciences looking at other more concrete objects, the goal of the social scientist is often to obscure objects through discourses of mediation. Objects in that respect are used as a means to get at the social through interpreting the object. Yet in a sociology of music, since the object is already in a constant process of mediation, a more nuanced response to the question of where the object lies is needed. Likewise, Tia DeNora, in her research

on music as it is engaged with in everyday life notes that interpretation, as a vector of mediation, “makes it possible to speak of the content or effects of musical works, but never to speak of those matters in relation to...‘the work themselves’” because “the work ‘itself’ cannot be specified; it is anything, everything, nothing” (DeNora 2000, 30-31).

Hennion (2015) further postulates that while the object of music resists traditional sociological and critical discourse in its ambiguousness, it is precisely because of this property that mediation becomes a key site of discourse moving forward. He argues that the “the point of mediation, which from the inception of sociology was at the heart of the sociological interpretation of culture, is that it raises the question of the relationship between the principles of collective action and the role of objects” (Hennion 2015, 3). The object of music is such that critics often turn to the materiality of its production, the “instruments, scores, media, languages, institutions, interpretation and teachers” in an attempt to “establish its reality beyond the overbearing presence of its intermediaries” (Hennion 2015, 3). Hennion strives to show that music’s object is not located in its materiality, but instead in the very process of mediation—indeed, he vouches for art historians ability to “focus on the complexity of mediators without turning them into puppets in the service of an overarching cause, a means to an end or an external rationale” (Hennion 2015, 3). For Prior, however, the process of mediators mediating mediators, the fuzzy reclusiveness of a discourse where subject and object are intimately interwoven, necessitate a further level of extrapolation if they are to be used in critical analysis. The notion of assemblages, as informed by Actor-Network Theory, he argues, serves that purpose by drawing attention to the complicated processes by which actors align themselves in functioning. For him, assemblages get at what Hennion was reaching for—a language that encompass the “aggregates of heterogeneous elements” (Prior 2018, 20) at play in the complex and always-already emerging process of music, whose objects and subjects are inextricably tied up into each other.

David Novak, in his study of noise music in Japan, notes how “Noise became a musical discourse of sounds, recordings, performances, social ideologies, and intercultural affinities...[connecting] a spatially and culturally diverse network of musicians and was embodied through the affective experiences of listeners” (Novak 2013, 5), alerting us to the presence of social ideologies in these assemblages as well, something other authors do not specifically locate. He also argues that Noise is itself the object, and further that “[i]t was exchanged as an *object* of transnational musical circulation that

touched down in particular places and eventually came to be imagined as a global music scene” (Novak 2013, 5, my emphasis). For him, though, Noise-as-an-object is a metaphor that decontextualizes and deconstructs knowledge and experience, whose oppositional nature requires the subject of “a stable and continuous culture against which it can take shape as an interruptive force of creativity and change” (Novak 2013, 230), showing that the subject/object relations of Noise are intrinsically complicated, contingent, and constantly engaged with a socially mediated normative culture.

### Planes of Social Mediation

In her chapter *Mediation Theory*, Born makes the observation that the microsociology employed by DeNora and Hennion is lacking in its ability to fully grasp the social mediation of music, arguing instead that “music necessitates an expansion of the conceptual framework of social mediation” (Born 2015, 360). Here, she identifies four planes that allow a further conceptualize social mediation in this context. She lists first the plane of diverse social relations, where the labor of performing and practicing music constitutes ‘intimate socialities’. One might conjure up groups of musicians, whether in bands or DJ collectives, or amateur performers meet to practice, perform, and talk about music. Novak, then, finds that Noise perhaps blurs this plane, as Noise “does not settle in a distinct place or group of people, and its fragmented mediation makes it difficult to depict its ethnographic terrain, even as global or multisited” (Novak 2013, 6-7). Second, borrowing from Anderson, Born posits that music engenders ‘imagined communities’ by organizing listeners into collective, public entities through its identity-creating mechanisms. Here, we can imagine communities of fans based around certain genres or artists, ‘imagined’ in the sense that they are spatially and sociologically disparate, but form virtual communities through their interactions with music. Third, Born posits that music refracts and implicitly reflects the “hierarchical and stratified relations of class and age, race and ethnicity, gender and sexuality” (Born 2015, 360). That is, for all its ability to inform identity, music is always already interacting with (informing and informed by) the categories sociology is traditionally concerned with. Finally, she locates the fourth plane in the social, institutional structures in which music is intimately implicated within—the structures of a cultural economy within the confines of late capitalism, and of the milieu of sociopolitical and economic institutions necessary for the production, performance, reproduction, dissemination and consumption of music (Born 2015, 360).

While she employs a four-layered topology that would at first glance seem reduc-

tionist, Born notes that each plane is irreducible to itself, all are interdependent and interlaced—and all are embedded in the assemblage we call music. Extrapolating its complicated nature further, she maintains that the planes are “articulated in contingent and non-linear ways through relations of synergy, affordance, conditioning or causality” (Born 2015, 360) thereby rendering them as non-hierarchical yet simultaneously autonomous and interrelated. She does, however, identify a problem with the metaphor; namely that does not take into account music practices’ “fleshy, demotic nature as well as their dynamic and temporal qualities” (Born 2015, 361). She responds to these perceived shortcomings by employing genre theory as a means to account for “the mutual articulation of cultural production and publics” showing that “genre works by projecting temporally, into the unruly, ongoing cauldron of alternative socio-cultural formations, potential moves and reconfigurations of those formations coded materially as aesthetic moves and transformations that are proffered as analogous to the social” (Born 2015, 363). For Born, genre works as a catalyst capable of disrupting and distorting the perceived cleanliness and smooth continuity of society in music or music in society that might be suggested by mediation alone. Further, she suggests affective theory can get at the potential of corporeal, lived experiences—embodiment and emotion—that are necessarily a part of the assemblage of music. Where mediation alone, as a theoretical framework must take leaps of logic to get at the messiness of music, genre and affect more easily untangle this enmeshment. Born remains critical, however, stating that

[T]he perspectives...[of affect and genre]...provide only part of the answer to theorizing music’s mediation of social identities. For when detached from the analysis of larger social formations and enduring musical, cultural and historical processes, they are reductive in the literal sense of the evasion of ineluctable complexity (Born 2015, 365).

So, for Born notions of embodiment and affect alone, are themselves unable to account for the full social complexity of music—planes of social mediation might serve better grasp the significance of sociological factors in its becoming. Nonetheless, I would perhaps agree with DeNora’s (2000) stipulation that while the body is a thoroughly socialized entity, it is also necessary vector of mediation worth considering. Specifically, Born’s notion of planes of socialized mediation fail to account for, as DeNora explains “a theory of culture as something much more than a decorative overlay for bodily phenomena, but as intrinsic to the constitution of the body and its physical processes...[that] with regards to music...extends well beyond the usual concern with the

meanings of art objects as it conceptualizes their power at a more existential level of human being, where body consciousness and feeling intertwine” (DeNora 2000, 76-77). Indeed, the body, as well as affect and further, human agency should also be bound up with any consideration of music as a form of culture, even in all its sociologically mediated complexity.

### Technological Mediation

The academic study of music has frequently been engaged with the question of technology—whether that technology be instruments, recording devices, or sound amplifiers—histories of music are often concerned with the ‘impact’ of technology on the production, consumption and performance of music. Meanwhile, popular critiques of music often have a tendency to overemphasize the importance of artists and composers, or their artistic ‘works’ as standalone artistic objects to be analyzed in and of themselves without a concern for their sociological context. Here, Born’s planes of social mediation are useful in conceptualizing the ways in which music is not reducible to either the technological objects of production, playback and recording, nor the socioeconomic factors of the market, late capitalism, or gender/race/sexuality. For DeNora again, looking at the ways in which music is a part of everyday life, shows how technologies of listening too, are processes of mediation whereby the self is actualized, identity forms, and pleasure emerges. Music playback, in its increasingly portable forms, helps people achieve focus, psychological comfort, energy etc., where self-formulated narratives of the ‘power of music’ are permeable (DeNora 2000, 48-51). So while technology can on the one hand be perceived as separate from the body, discourses of mediation allow for the body and technology to intermingle, to be always already entangled, affecting and being affected by each other. Further, music as something that has always needed to be mediated (for how can it exist if there is no object, but through mediation?) provides an exemplary case for the body-in-technology and technology-in-body, a milieu from which music emerges.

David Novak’s study of Noise music in Japan, precisely because of its positionality at the “edge of circulation” (Novak 2013), provides a salient example of the ways in which society, technology and music are intertwined, and how resistive practices of the musician can also be read into them. He traces the history of noise in modern communications and recording technologies, where its categorization as something separate from signal “was essential to the ‘discourse networks’ of mechanical reproduction” (Novak 2013, 123). In recording technology as well, where music was made

preferable and repeatable, recorded layers of noise “demanded that listeners reframe their perception of sound in the context of technological mediation” (Novak 2013, 123). Noting role of these recording technologies in the recontextualization of music listening practices, he goes further to suggest that music’s becoming a physical commodity, an object as it were, signaled that noise too would take on material forms that were new, and could be discussed in aesthetic, affective terms (Novak 2015, 123). The notion of feedback is of particular significance to Novak both as a metaphor, but also as a physical process of the noise resulting from looped, electronic, technical structures of performance. He goes further to say that “the technical conditions of feedback performance powerfully embody Noise’s nonlinear representations of music history” stipulating that the very transformation of sound technology is the apex of aesthetic performance (Novak 2013, 141-142). It is interesting to see how, for many Noise musicians, digital technologies of laptops and digital audio work stations are shunned, not because of their inauthenticity, but because in their process of remediating sound, take away the embodied, affective practice of grappling with, and struggling against analog equipment. Analog technology, for them, is a more direct form of mediation with the body—where “the physical act of creating the system” is essential in emotional performance of Noise (Novak 2013, 144-146).

Yet, the process of mediating music into data, into digital code in the process of digitization must be considered as yet another vector by which the technology-body-music assemblage is complicated. In the face of technology’s perceived rapid progress, particularly in the realm of digitalization, it is necessary to relocate the sociological factors embedded in their development, so as not to overemphasize its ‘impact’ or power in shaping the sociocultural dimensions of music. Paul Théberge argues that digitalization should not, however, be misconstrued as a revolution—that it “has been, in fact, a relatively long, transformative process of economic, technological, social and cultural change” (Théberge 2015, 329). To some extent, however, digitization can be seen as one of the ways in which mediation in music has fundamentally been altered—not that digitization *caused* change per se, but that it has been a long historical processes rooted in the social, pointing towards other social changes. Théberge suggests that this “process of re-conceptualizing music from an art of instrumental sound, performance and compositional technique to one of mathematics, digital technologies and algorithmic operations...[redefines] the role of the musician from that of a composer or performer to more closely aligned with that of the computer scientist” (Théberge 2015, 330).

The change in the materiality (or lack thereof) in the process of digitization, however, has not been engendered totally and equally across all planes of music as culture—the ways in which its processes are shaping musical practices are still yet to be sufficiently understood. Still, much effort has recently been made to trace the position of the digital in popular music. Prior makes mention of the “multiple spatial and temporal foldings characteristic of digitalization — where distinctions between here and there, now and then, production and consumption, body and machine, original and reproduced, live and recorded, are fuzzier than ever” (Prior 2018, 25), pointing to a process similar to the one Born and Hennion posit, where we have come to see the demarcations between these binaries as superfluous. For Prior then, digitalization, and digital technology in general are tremendously important vectors by which music is understood today. Brøvig-Hanssen and Danielson (2013) for example, examine particular kinds of digital production and recording techniques, looking at how they affect perceptions of sound. They are cognizant that technological mediation has always been a part of making music, with instruments, scores and so on, but note that digital technologies allow for a different sort of mediation, where the physical spaces sound inhabits can be emulated and manipulated through digital effects processing. That is, the ‘reality’ of technological mediation previously present in all forms of music has been emulated in virtual reality in the processes of digitalization, further implicated in sound as virtual space-forms (Brøvig-Hanssen, Danielson 2013, 6-11). Returning to Théberge, we see that the changes that emerge from processes of digitalization are apparent in not only music, but also in other spheres of cultural practices, in media and other institutions. He informs us that the phenomenon of digitization, while it tends to be viewed as a recent, linear trend, should be conceptualized as “numerous, intersecting histories that cut across a range of social, cultural, institutional and industrial practices” (Théberge 2015, 337). In its permeability then, it might also be thought of as an additional plane in Born’s conception of social mediators—one defined by digitalization’s ability to thoroughly embed itself in nearly every aspect of music. Music, as it has been mediated through other, older technologies, has then also acted on the process of digitization, shaping and informing some of its paths and vectors, while simultaneously being shaped by its processes since their emergence.

## Conclusion

This essay has attempted to explore theories of mediation, and how they are used to construct a more nuanced understanding of the ways in which music is produced,



consumed, performed, dispersed and interpreted. I have shown that mediation, as it is informed by Born, Hennion and others, works to locate the object, or lack of object, in musical practices. Mediation is a process of transmission, and in the case of music, Hennion posits that music is itself a theory of mediation. (Hennion, 2015). In the sociology of music, where sociologists were perhaps keen to locate the social mediators of music as the subject, the key point of agency in the creation of music as culture, mediation theories allow for the process to be privileged, without constraining the study of music to either sociological factors or artistic determination. This sentiment can perhaps best be summed up with Hennion's words:

*Highlighting the work of mediation consists of descending a little from this slightly crazy position of attributing everything to a single creator, and realizing that creation is far more widely distributed, that it takes place in all the interstices between these successive mediations. It is not despite the fact that there is a creator, but so that there can be a creator, that all our collective creative work is required (Hennion, 2002).*

The creator(s) of music, therefore are not locatable in a single entity, but its emergence is precipitated on a distributive network, an assemblage if you will, of mediators and the spaces between them, including but not limited to musicians, instruments, producers, listeners, CDs, scores, digital audio software, speakers and everything in between.

I have also explored how Born, in her conception of planes of mediation, has provided a framework which allows the process of social mediation to come through as the dominant category of analysis, while showing how notions of the body, agency, affect, technology, and assemblages complicates this framework. Finally, I traced the ways in which digitalization, as a process of mediating reality into data, has further shaped and been shaped by the cultural practices of music. In line with the messiness of the mediation of music, the digitization of music as a complicated process of remediation that has permeated nearly every aspect of those cultural practices too must be considered in further studies in the sociology of music.

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