

Call for Papers

“Groove the City – Move the Streets”

3rd International Conference of the *Urban Music Studies Scholars’ Network* in cooperation with the *Thematic Group for Public Spaces and Urban Cultures of the Association of European Schools of Planning* (AESOP TG PSUC)

Date: September 17-19, 2026

Location: Vienna, Austria

Abstract Submission Deadline: October 5, 2025

<https://www.mdw.ac.at/ikm/events/groovethecity/>

<https://skuor.tuwien.ac.at/events-groovethecity/>

The field of Urban Music Studies has emerged as a vibrant interdisciplinary arena, exploring the dynamic interplay between music and urban life. At its core, this field recognizes sound as both a reflection and a constitutive element of urban life, deeply embedded in the spatial, social and cultural fabric of cities. Music shapes and is shaped by the rhythms of urban spaces, from bustling streets and quiet courtyards to iconic concert halls and underground clubs. This field draws upon and contributes to diverse academic disciplines. By engaging with a variety of perspectives from across the globe, it challenges dominant narratives and highlights the diverse ways in which music resonates within urban settings.

In the realms of planning, urban design and architecture, the development and envisioning of cultural organizations have traditionally been concerned with grand works of opera houses and theatre buildings. Since the 1970s, however, the focus has shifted towards the inclusion of informal and more circular cultural agencies, many of them linked to relational conceptions of space, or to the further development of immersive and acoustic technologies. Public space researchers have embraced socio-cultural aspects of urban life to cultivate hope, yet have only randomly engaged with the power of urban music subcultures and scenes, and the study thereof, to contribute to neighborhood solidarity, collective work practices when building music spaces, or to the deep democratic aspects of a diversity of music cultures, and the intermezzos and crossovers between them, in the city.

Against this backdrop, the third international conference of the *Urban Music Studies Scholars’ Network* **Groove the City – Move the Streets**, taking place from **17-19 September 2026 at mdw – University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna and at TU Wien – Technische Universität Wien**, in combination with the 2024-2026 event series of the Thematic Group for Public Spaces and Urban Cultures of the Association of European Schools of Planning (AESOP TG PSUC), seeks to deepen this research field by examining the manifold mobilities that shape and are shaped by sound in urban contexts. This includes a critical engagement with the concept and materiality of “the street” as a multifaceted and symbolic terrain where social, cultural, and political processes unfold.

Streets, in their diverse manifestations, act as stages for buskers and political movements, as sites of vibrant musical scenes and cross-cultural learning, and as contested spaces where the rights to public access and representation are negotiated. The street is not merely a passageway or backdrop; it is a lived, embodied and performed space, as well as a space for hope, resistance, and transformation. It holds different meanings for various groups —

whether as a cultural hub, a zone of in- and exclusion, a site of democratic everyday practice, or a canvas for reimagining the city towards more hopeful futures. From protests and demonstrations to public celebrations, cultural rituals and everyday rhythms, from marginalized communities reclaiming public spaces to ordinary performances of belonging, the relationship between music and the street reveals profound scholarly insights into urban life.

In this conference, we adopt an expansive concept of (spatial) “movement” that encompasses social, cultural, and political dimensions. We are particularly interested in how “the street”—as a site of daily life, as a stage for artistic expression, as a realm of activist contestation, and political negotiation— becomes a focal point for musical practices. This conference seeks to explore how music mediates these relationships, foregrounding the tensions, solidarities, and possibilities **that move the city when grooves meet the streets.**

To this end, we invite scholars, practitioners, activists and artists to contribute to the conference by investigating how sound interacts with, transforms, and reimagines the streets as spaces of movement, resistance, belonging, and creativity. In doing so, we also shed light on the potentially democratizing and liberatory aspects of new sonic socio-technical approaches, and create bridges to architectural and planning practices that engage with infrastructural claims for musicians’ practices such as jamming, rehearsal, grooving and improvising.

Possible Topics

We encourage submissions that address, but are not limited to, the following themes:

1. **The Street as Stage:** Street performances, busking, and national-, city- and time-specific policies and power dynamics that shape(d) access to public spaces for musical expression. Mobilities and repertoires in street musicians’ biographies; the street as workplace; experiences of inclusion and exclusion in public space in relation to intersectional categories of social inequality (gender, ethnic and social origin, age, disabilities, and others); the audiences of street music and its role in urban everyday life; democratic impact and social-transformative potential of street music and performing music together in public spaces.
2. **Soundscapes of the Street, Acoustic Territories:** How urban soundscapes reflect and shape rhythms of city life; politics of sound in urban contexts; historical and current social conflicts related to sound; text sources and archives of acoustic phenomena, media narratives of music in the streets as a “social problem”; artistic interventions in public space and conflictual soundscapes; the roles and impacts of sound technologies.
3. **Protest and the Streets as Contested Spaces:** Music’s role in protest movements, demonstrations, and social activism. How music interacts with struggles over urban space, between claims for the right to the city, urban justice and collective care, the re-appropriation of vacant spaces, and processes of exclusion and inclusion.
4. **Street Cultures and Commoning:** Collaborative and grassroots musical practices that foster shared urban cultures, solidarity, and a reimagining of public spaces as

commons. Planning and design strategies and participatory interventions to activate groundfloor and post-industrial building vacancies and find a continuous place to rehearse, play and thrive.

5. **Migrating Sounds, Shifting Streets:** How migration and mobility reshape the cultural geographies of urban streets, and how music fosters belonging or underscores displacement. Aspects of urban citizenship and the activating role of social and cultural infrastructures in facilitating a politics of difference for new forms of urban citizenship.
6. **Urban Music Scenes as Catalysts for Hope and Solidarity:** How urban music scenes transform interim uses, vacant brownfields (where former businesses or factories resided) or public spaces into vibrant cultural hubs, fostering places to live and work in solidarity. From the practice of self-building in music clubs to new or untypical places for old and new music, refurbished in sustainable and climate-friendly ways by architects and planners which focus on the existing urban fabric, rather than building anew.

Submission Details

We invite abstracts of up to **300 words** for individual papers, panels, or e.g. performances, workshops etc. Talks on theory and methodology are appreciated, as well as empirical case studies and art-based research, or music-related urban pedagogy accounts with spatial focus. All musical genres and building typologies, as well as different concepts of sound(scapes) can be subjects for debate; historical reconstructions and observations of current structures and processes are welcome. We particularly encourage contributions that provide insights from the Global South or other underrepresented contexts and perspectives in Urban Music Studies, Urban Culture and Public Space-related Research in Planning, as well as from early-career and senior researchers, or from urban practitioners.

The conference language is **English**.

Proposals can be submitted for

- panels on a specific topic (with up to 3 or 4 presentations: 60/80 minutes + 30/40 minutes discussion)
- single papers (20 minutes presentation + 10 minutes discussion)
- poster presentations of projects
- workshops, possibly with an artistic orientation (60-120 minutes)

Please include

- your name,
- your academic (or other) affiliation,
- title,
- an abstract of max. 300 words,
- five keywords,
- which of the research streams you see in your presentation (choice 1 and choice 2),
- a short biographical note of no more than two sentences, and
- your contact information (including full postal and email address).

Please submit your proposal via the online registration system <https://www.conftool.org/groovethecity2026/>. All submissions will undergo double-blind peer review to ensure a fair and equitable selection process that does not exclude non-mainstream ideas.

The **deadline for the submission** of the proposals is **5th October 2025**. Notification of acceptance will follow before 30th November 2025. An independent but thematically related book publication of selected papers is planned.

We aim to make the conference as accessible as possible while covering essential costs. The conference fee will cover materials, coffee breaks, and artistic performances. Therefore, we propose a three-tiered registration model:

- A **solidarity fee of €100** for participants in full-time employment and/or with institutional support. This category helps subsidize participation for colleagues who may not have access to sufficient funding.
- A **standard fee of €50** for all other participants.
- **No fee** for individuals with limited financial means; these participants will be supported through the solidarity contributions. In addition, we are actively seeking external funding to support participation for individuals who might otherwise be unable to attend due to financial constraints. If you would like to be considered for this support, please let us know.

Join us in exploring how grooves shape the city and how streets inspire movements!

Steering Committee

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