'MUSIC AND ONLINE CULTURES IN A CHANGING PLATFORM ECOSYSTEM' WORKING PAPERS: CONFERENCE REFLECTIONS AND REMARKS ON REPOSITORY PUBLICATION

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Following its launch in January 2022 and previous events facilitating methods training and research development, the Music and Online Cultures Research Network held an international conference at NOVA University Lisbon in June 2025. It was not always apparent that this was on the cards for MOCReN. We (the steering committee) designed the network to be more focused on collective and community resonances, especially among early career and precarious scholars, than on events reminiscent of a formal academic society. We have also heard cautionary tales about new scholarly communities over-extending and burning out after a landmark event. Yet conversations among various network members seemed to be anticipating a large-scale opportunity for research presentation and knowledge exchange. With tremendous support from CESEM (Centre for the Study of the Sociology and Aesthetics of Music within NOVA's Faculty of Social and Human Sciences), the conference began to take shape.

Over the course of three days, 'music and online cultures in a changing platform ecosystem' featured over 60 presenters from every inhabited continent, tackling interdisciplinary topics including streaming platforms, fan practices, artist entrepreneurship, music and media production, patronage, online communities, online

concerts, generative artificial intelligence, transmedia, digital ethnographies, and digital music economies. In the open roundtable which closed the conference, delegates emphasised the ongoing value of the network, celebrating its inclusivity, anti-hierarchical nature, and opportunities for relationship-building. We were pleased to hear various comments praising the emphasis on open dialogue and exchange, reflecting our intentions to build a supportive space which can nurture research excellence. While there is continued work to be done in terms of supporting all corners of our community and monitoring labour practices, the committee has reaffirmed its plans to continue supporting research development in this maturing and important area of study.

Like our approach to event design, our thoughts on publication conventions are a little different. We have politely turned down offers to develop more traditional publications, such as a selective proceedings. Our thinking is that the conference papers have already sparked debate and conversation among delegates, and they have also been subject to peer review both during the development of the conference programme and via audience reception. This work therefore merits online publication in its pre-existing or partially edited form. While repository publication may seem to lack the prestige associated with traditional publishers, it holds significant value in terms of author rights, free and easy open access, and the speed of turnaround to publication. This is a light-touch first engagement with this kind of publication, but we hope that it provides an effective way to share recent and in-progress research widely, taking influence from the culture of pre-prints and post-publication review that is standard in computer science and other fields. These practices may well become normalised in our own field.

We invite responses, comments, and questions for authors, who deserve recognition. We thank them for being early adopters of this trial approach. If there is significant interest in such conversations, we will consider ways of creating and sustaining this kind of dialogue above and beyond the infrastructure that Zenodo provides. As an open research repository supported by the European Union, our choice to host this work via Zenodo indicates that we are looking to further develop the relationship between research on online music cultures and international policy priorities, including algorithmic transparency, fair creative labour, and sustainable digital infrastructures. Conversations about such matters are always welcome on our Discord server, which is presently the conversational hub of the network, and we invite you to join us there.

FUNDING