Abstract

This thesis examines the workings and functions of contemporary jam sessions in Oslo. Jam sessions first emerged in the first half of the 20th century and were events organized by musicians, for musicians. They were places in which jazz musicians could reaffirm their aesthetic standards and establish hierarchies of skill and competence. Today, however, jam sessions have taken different forms, appealing to amateurs as well as professionals, and are no longer exclusively a jazz phenomenon. Firstly, by researching contemporary jam sessions in Oslo through field observation at three different jam sessions and four semi-structured qualitative interviews, this thesis argues that jam sessions constitute important leisure music activities in the live music ecology of Oslo. Secondly, Through an understanding of music based in performance studies and the concept of musicking, this research examines the ways in which contemporary jam sessions in Oslo enable participants to develop and communicate personal identities, develop their musical craft, connect and network with other musicians, and feel a sense of belonging to a community of likeminded musicians. Thirdly, by identifying and examining the values of musical creativity, talent development, networking, cultural vibrancy, and identity, this research shows how contemporary jam sessions contribute to our understanding of leisure music activities in the live music ecology of Oslo. Lastly, this thesis argues for the continued use and strength of scenes as a conceptual tool that enable us to communicate the social powers of music and explain the copresence of people through shared cultural practices and affinities, thus arguing that the contemporary jam sessions in Oslo constitute a leisure music scene.

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Introduction

Imagine the following scenario. The clock is past 10 in the evening on a weekday and you're at a local bar with a couple of friends. You sit at a table in the middle of the room, all facing in the same direction, your attention directed at the stage at the end of the venue. A moment ago, you were on that same stage yourself alongside some other people that you do not really know, you might have met them once or twice before, but you are not intimately familiar with them, you might not even know their names. You do know what instruments they play, and from what little interaction you have had with them you have a sense of what kind of music they like. You just played a funk version of Ray Charles' "Georgia on my mind" even though you did not really know the song that well, but it all worked out because one of the other musicians in the band fed you the chords as you were playing and before long you had it figured out. You even played a solo which was greeted with excitement, applause, and cheers from the audience. After you have finished the song, which lasted at least twice as long as the original because there were three more solos, you got a voucher for a free drink at the bar as a thank you for participating and quietly sit back down with your friends as someone else takes the stage and prepares to perform their own rendition of a song they have agreed upon with the rest of the band. It did not take them long to agree on a tune that people knew well enough to play, or that enough people knew how to play well enough so that the rest of the performers could competently pay along as well.

On the table to your right sits an older couple, they have not played themselves, but they have been there all night. You hear them talking about how fun it is that apparently anyone can join and that there is so much different music being played. You think to yourself that you agree to a certain degree, while at the same time you feel like you heard several of the same songs the last time you were here, maybe from other people than tonight, but nevertheless the same songs. The house band is getting ready to play another song, they ask the audience if they are ready for another one to which the audience responds with the expected applause, cheering and the occasional "WOO!". At another table sits a group of young people, some with their instruments at their side waiting eagerly for their opportunity to take the stage, others are enjoying their drinks, singing along from their seats and cheering. At a table further back sits a young man by himself, he has been there all night, nursing his drink and watching attentively. He does not have an instrument with him, only watching and occasionally exchanging a few words with a group of adults sitting at the table adjacent to his.

The house band plays one final song before announcing a 20-minute break. People go to the bathroom, freshen their drinks, go outside for a cigarette, and talk to each other. Some people approach the leader of the house band to suggest songs and sign up to play themselves as they have been encouraged to do, while others remain at their table, scrolling through their phones, waiting for the music to resume. The house band comes back on stage after a while, they spend a couple of minutes discussing among themselves. Through the murmurs of other simultaneous conversations, you hear mentions of different songs, the guitar player is demonstrating the chord progression to the pianist while the vocalist is discussing the beat with the drummer and bass player. The music resumes without warning and the audience slowly but surely direct their attention at the stage again, at least for the most part. The rest of the evening continue in the same manner with different people joining the stage. At one point, none of the original members of the house band remains on stage, the band leader is managing the logistics from the side, encouraging the singer who appears to be a regular to do another song, handing out vouchers for free drinks in the bar to participants, and providing backing vocals from time to time. The house band resumes control of the stage nearing the end of the night. After they have finished their last song, they welcome everyone back next week, thank all the participants and announce that some of them are heading out to another bar for more drinks should anyone wish to join them.

What has just been described could very well be a typical evening at one of the several jam sessions that occur in Oslo every week, or at least at the performance events that have adopted the term "jam session". These events are in fact quite diverse in a number of ways, which we will get more into later, and while they share similarities with the jazz jam sessions that emerged in the USA in the 1930s and 1940s, they are also reminiscent of other types of informal performance events such as the open mic and karaoke sessions. These are all musical performance events existing as a part of Oslo's live music ecology (a concept that will be dealt with further below) (Cloonan, 2011; Behr, Brennan, Cloonan, Fristh & Webster, 2016; van der Hoeven & Hitters, 2019), along other performance events we might call traditional concerts taking place in established music venues ranging in size from small club scenes to large arenas that house everything from local performances of up-and-coming bands to the international superstars making a stop during their international tours. The live music ecology of any given city also includes such live music performances as people busking in the streets, pop-up concerts, various festivals, and musical performances in bars and pubs. The more informal musical events on the other hand are not always situated in established performance venues but

might take place at local bars or venues whose primary function is not musical performances, but that nevertheless have some musical infrastructure necessary to support a musical performance of some sort.

The contemporary jam sessions all uphold and promote a narrative and an ideal of inclusion and community or "openness", not as an exclusive musical event reserved only for the most skilled professional musicians or those whose musical endeavours have made them a household name, but for professionals and amateurs alike. Whoever you might be, you are encouraged to join on stage and participate in any way, shape, or form. It is about *participating in* and *contributing to* the jam session. These sessions offer opportunities for learning and developing musical skill and stage behaviour, opportunities for social interactions and networking among musicians and music lovers, they provide individuals with opportunities to negotiate, develop, and communicate their identities, and as participatory performance events have the power to generate strong social bonds and collective identities and communities. These jam sessions are both spatially and temporally bound, being bound to specific venues, while also being historically situated within a specific point in time. They are also permeable by new social actors and other cultural impulses of change, and as a collection of similar cultural practices with common roots in the jazz jam sessions of the 1930s and 1940s, together constitute a specific leisure music scene within the live music ecology of Oslo.

Research questions

The contemporary jam sessions that take place in Oslo differ in certain aspects from other events one might think of as jazz jam sessions, as well as from other performance events that might be considered traditional concerts. The research presented in this thesis is an effort to map the contemporary jam session scene in Oslo today and see in what ways it may differ from the events described by scholars such as Howard Becker (1951), William Bruce Cameron (1954), Scott DeVeaux (1989; 1997), Dana Gooley (2011) and Ricardo Pinheiro (2012; 2014). This research, through qualitative interviews with participants at various jam sessions in Oslo as well as participant observation, will also attempt to shed some light on how different musicians experience these events in order to say something more general about the workings, functions, and values attached to these events, the value of a thriving jam session scene for musicians of various levels of musical competence and backgrounds, and their importance for the live music ecology of Oslo. These events will be viewed through the lens of performance

studies and the concept of musicking, arguing that musical meaning is generated through the act of performance, and that performance and musical participation in itself is not restricted to behaviour and actions that are directly contributing to the musical sound. Rather, this perspective argues that actions and behaviour that happen in conjunction with the musical occasion, such as audiences clapping and singing along, also carries meaning. Performance and musicking does not only have the power to generate musical meaning, but also to generate and strengthen relationships and musical collectivities and develop and communicate both personal and collective identities. These are key traits in musical collectivities that might be designated as scenes which as a concept is able to encapsulate and communicate the significance of music as a social force. This concept explains how shared cultural practices can be a driving force in community creation and identity formation.

While these events base themselves on ideologies of inclusion and tolerance, participants represent a largely homogenous group, raising the question of whether these events actively practice inclusion, or if they are passively excluding. By designating the contemporary jam sessions in Oslo as a scene based in a specific leisure music activity, and highlighting values and functions such as musical creativity, identity formation, cultural vibrancy, and talent development, this thesis argues that leisure music activities deserves closer attention in research on live music ecologies, and that social and cultural values are important metrics to consider when researching them. Thus, this thesis will attempt to answer the questions of what these events called jam sessions are, what their functions and values are, and more importantly, what these events can contribute to our understanding of the concept of scenes, and how these leisure music performance events contribute to our understanding of the live music ecologies of metropolitan cities. These question covers a variety of different things. In short, however, this thesis is about an informal, musical performance event and how they work, what their values and functions are, and how they fit in the larger ecology of live music in Oslo.

The layout of the thesis

The first chapter of this thesis will present the reader with the methods that was applied for this research and the methodological reasoning and considerations behind the specific methods that were used. The research was conducted through participatory observation at various jam sessions in Oslo and four semi-structured qualitative interviews with jam session participants. The unfortunate circumstances of the global pandemic restricted my research to

some degree, meaning I was not able to attend all the jam sessions I had originally set out to, and three out of four interviews conducted also needed to be conducted via a video-chat service as opposed to face-to-face which was the original intention. Thus, a portion of the methodology section will be devoted to discussing potential limitations or benefits of conducting digital interviews. Also, given the fact that the research was conducted in this manner, with digital interviews and with less time observing at various jam sessions, a small portion will also be devoted to the discussion of the idea of *patchwork ethnography* as a way of conducting social research.

The second chapter of the thesis will be devoted to the discussion of various theoretical perspectives that are crucial to the way the contemporary jam sessions are understood. These theoretical contributions will shed some light on ideas about performance, and the concept of musicking, as these are theoretical concepts that are useful in understanding how musical meaning is constructed. The two most notable contributions that will be examined through this portion of the thesis is Christopher Small's ground breaking work on the concept of musicking through his book *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (1998), and Thomas Turino's work on the concept of performance through his book *Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation* (2008). These together constitute the main body of work that inform this thesis' understanding of social music making and the social construction of musical meaning and identities. In addition, some attention is given in this section to Robert Stebbins' work on leisure music activities (2017). By invoking musicking, this thesis is arguing for an understanding of music in which musical meaning and value are created through the act of performance, that musical performance and activities actualize social relationships, and that the venue in which a performance takes place (or lack of venue) imposes structure on the performance and the meanings it generates. Adding to this, Turino's distinction between presentational and participatory performance further illustrates the ways in which musical performance can actualize and develop personal and collective identities and will aid in illustrating the social workings of the contemporary jam session scene. Through Stebbins' concept of serious leisure, this thesis demonstrates how contemporary jam sessions work in powerful ways as a mechanism for self-improvement, development, and expression in the lives of those that participate in these performance events.

Chapter three will examine some ways in which music aids in the formation of social collectivities, and in what ways music becomes a signifier for musical communities. In short, there are many ways of conceptualizing social formations through music, and many names

given to these conceptualizations, such as musical communities, scenes, tribes, subcultures, and live music ecologies. This thesis will mainly focus on the concept of scenes, while also taking into consideration the contributions of other scholars who have worked on concepts such as musical communities. Chapter four will end with a discussion of live music ecologies, as it more so is a concept that discusses the role various live music events play in the cultural environment of urban metropolitan areas. Key contributions to this chapter comes from scholars such as Will Straw, who has written substantially on the concept of Scenes (1991; 2006; 2015), as well as other contributions on the concept such as from Daniel Silver and Terry Nichols Clark (2015). Other contributions that are devoted special attention is Kay Kaufman Shelemay's work on musical communities (2011), and Gillian Howell, Lee Higgins, and Brydie-Leigh Bartleet and their work on community music practice (2017). Lastly, this section will devote some time to the discussion of live music ecologies through the work of Martin Cloonan (2011), Matt Brennan, Adam Behr, Emma Webster, Simon Frith, and Martin Cloonan (2016), and Arno van der Hoeven and Erik Hitters (2019).

The fourth chapter of the thesis will be devoted to a review of existing literature on jam sessions and open mic nights in order to historically contextualize the findings of my fieldwork and interviews. Considering the fact that not much literature has been written on jam sessions specifically, this narrows it down to a handful of important contributions. Becker's "The professional dance musician and his audience" (1951), Cameron's "Sociological notes on the jam session" (1954); Deveaux's "The emergence of the jazz concert, 1935-1945" (1989), and "The Jazzman's True Academy" from DeVeaux's book *The Birth of Bebop: A Social and Musical History* (1991); and more recently, Pinheiro has written a couple of articles, among them are "Jam sessions in Manhattan as rituals" (2012), and "The jam session and jazz studies" (2014). These are all concerned mainly with what we might call a traditional jazz jam session, and what I am proposing with this research is that these do not adequately represent all the various types of events that have adopted the term *jam session*. However, these contributions constitute a detailed body of works that historically contextualize and describe the origins of jam sessions and the status these events maintain in the jazz environment.

Chapter five concerns the other forms of leisure music events to which we will compare the contemporary jam session scene in Oslo. The two main types of events the contemporary jam sessions will be compared to other than the jazz jam sessions are the open mic night and karaoke. The main contributions to this section are Marcus Aldredge's article on an open mic night in Brooklyn, New York (2006), and Adam Behr's account of open mic nights in

Edinburgh (2012). The contributions on karaoke that will be devoted most attention is Robert Drew (1992) and Julia Peters, Koen van Eijck and Janna Michael (2018), with some mentions from Thomas Turino (2008). What I am proposing by bringing these types of events into the mix is that these leisure music events are similar to the contemporary jam sessions that are the main subject matter for this research.

The sixth chapter of the thesis will be concerned with mapping out the workings and values of the contemporary jam sessions in Oslo through detailed descriptions from my four informants and my own observations as a participatory observer. Throughout this chapter, statements from informants will be connected to the various theoretical concepts that have been presented in earlier chapters, and the events will be compared to the other performance events described in the preceding two chapters.

Moving on from this, the seventh chapter will be concerned with using what has been learned so far about the jam sessions in Oslo to argue in favour in the concept of scenes. The main argument of this chapter is that the collection of contemporary jam sessions at which I observed, and others that I was not able to attend, but of which my informants gave rich descriptions, together constitute a scene. Additionally, this chapter will argue for the strength of the use of the concept of scenes when trying to understand these various music events, their workings, and their values.

The eighth and final chapter of the thesis will be devoted to a discussion of the social and cultural values of these events and how they contribute to our understanding of live music ecologies. The values that are examined in this part is taken from the study of live music ecologies by van der Hoeven and Hitters (2019). However, as will become clear, the contemporary jam session scene in Oslo constitute different types of live music events than the ones that van der Hoeven and Hitters' analysis is concerned with, and thus these values take different shapes and work in different ways. This chapter argues that leisure music activities are important parts of live music ecologies because of the parts they play in the lives of musicians, particularly amateur musicians, and because of the musical variation they offer. This chapter also argues that the social and cultural values of these activities are especially important to consider when researching them and arguing to maintain them.

1. Methodology: Qualitative research and patchwork ethnography

Researching social and musical phenomena such as a jam session require a good deal of hands-on experience with the phenomena in order to grasp their intricacies and nuances more completely. Following prior research into jam sessions and other musical performance events, I found it fruitful to adopt a qualitative research methodology, combining field observation at various jam sessions with semi-structured qualitative interviews with jam session participants, more specifically with performers. As alluded to in the title of this thesis, *experience* is a keyword, and we want to get a good sense of how different performers at a jam session in Oslo experience these events, how they value them, and what draws them to these events, the qualitative interview is a good tool for uncovering these things. This way of conducting social research is common, combining the insider perspective that might be granted through immersing ones' self in the community by way of participation and observation, as well as talking in depth with other community members. This research, however, did face some challenges as the Coronavirus pandemic shut down most of the culture and night life industry in Oslo for long periods of time, and so my ability to actually attend jam sessions and recruit informants was diminished. Thus, not all jam sessions in Oslo are covered in this thesis, and my number of informants was decreased compared to what was originally intended. The data that constitutes this research is made up of in total eight visits to three different jam sessions, as well as my own experience as a participant at these sessions in the past, both as a performer and as an audience member. In addition to this, I conducted four semi-structured, qualitative interviews with four different informants which were recruited at the various jam sessions I attended. Out of these four informants, two are members of a house band at two different jam sessions, while the other two are performers I met at the same sessions. All informants will be given a pseudonym in order to maintain their anonymity, and because two of them are house band members at different jam sessions, the sessions will also remain anonymous in order to avoid revealing the identities of any of my informants. I would like to briefly point out that three out of the four interviews conducted for this thesis were conducted and recorded digitally through a video chat service, and I would like to dedicate a brief moment to discuss some of the potential shortcomings and advantages of conducting interviews in this manner. Also, because the scope of this research was reduced, I will also bring the notion of *patchwork ethnography* (Günel, Varma & Watanabe, 2020) into the methodological discussion, which we will discuss at a later point.

1.1. Field observation as researcher and participant

Experiencing the jam sessions in Oslo entails that we experience them for ourselves, not only that we engage with participants in order to hear about their experiences with the events. Jam sessions had already been a significant part of my musical endeavours before engaging with it academically, and so I already was quite familiar with the events. However, it became necessary to engage with it in a more critical manner and attempt to approach it with a sense of critical assessment as a researcher in order to avoid falling into the common discourses and tropes surrounding these events. This does not mean, however, that you cannot participate at these event in normal ways, it rather means that you have to be aware of your role as a researcher and the ways in which your involvement may affect the event and the other participants. Field observation is a good way to "acquire knowledge through first-hand experience" (Fangen, 2017: 15, my translation), it allows you to access the realities of other people in the field and through these experiences improve your understanding of it. In particular, we are talking about participant observation as a technique of acquiring data, of subjecting yourself to the life circumstances of the people you are observing (Goffman, 1989: 125). Katrine Fangen argues that participant observation can make you more sensitive and attuned to the less obvious sides of the field you are studying that you might not pick up on through interviews alone (Fangen, 2017: 15). You might get access to certain information that informants might not want to talk about during an interview, and you get to compare statements with actual behaviour in specific situations and contexts.

Fangen further distinguishes between different types of participant observation with different implications. The degree of participation can vary from what Fangen calls a fully participating observer, to a partially participating observer, to a non-participating observer, and even as a non-observing participant (ibid: 74-80). The ideal while doing fieldwork and observation is to obtain as intimate knowledge as is possible, while still maintain a scientific and analytical distance (ibid: 72). Whether you adopt an inside or an outside perspective hinges upon the type of participatory observation you choose, or the degree to which you participate in the activity you are observing. Taking an insider perspective grants access to information otherwise unobtainable exclusively through observation, it is still important, however, to maintain the balance between participation and observation in order to understand what is happening as an insider, while still being able to describe what you observe in a manner that an outsider can understand (ibid: 73). This prevents you as an observer from becoming a megaphone for the discourse and narrative of the field and the people you are observing, by not

fully taking on the attitudes of the "natives" (Loc. cit.). Goffman (1989) argues that full participation is necessary in order to obtain good enough information and a good understanding of the thing you are studying. "One thing is, you should feel you could settle down and forget about being a sociologist. … You should be able to engage in the same body rhythms, rate of movement, tapping of feet, that sort of thing, as the people around you" (Goffman, 1989: 129). While an insider perspective such as the one Goffman is advocating is valuable, it should not be the only perspective you take while gathering data (Fangen, 2017: 76), rather, it should be a pendulum between an outside and inside perspective, between fully participating and fully observing and all the nuances in between.

Nevertheless, while conducting this type of fieldwork, it is common to switch between different levels of participation. This was true in my case as I would be fully participating at some occasions, performing alongside other jam session participants on stage, while other times staying further away, observing the people around me, taking notes and participating in certain activities such as singing along, clapping, and talking to other performers and audience members. As I have been going to jam sessions since long before it attracted my scholarly interest, I have also been a non-observing participant. In some situation, while talking to other audience members, I would mention to them that I was writing a thesis on jam sessions, to which people seemed genuinely interested and voluntarily offered up their opinions and thoughts on the matter. I was careful to do this, however, as it is important that your presence is not disturbing or uncomfortable to other participants (Fangen, 2017: 74), and for this same reason I did not inform publicly at the various sessions that I was there as a researcher as this could potentially have affected the behaviours of participants.

Observation and participation alone is not all it takes in order to perform field research. You also have to take notes of the various things you observe and hear. It is equally as important to do this in a manner which does not cause discomfort to those around you, at least if they are aware that you are an observing researcher. Fangen makes a point to this, saying that a rule of thumb is to do this as discretely as possible (ibid: 107). This can be accomplished by taking notes in between songs, between sets, or after each session, during what is called *field breaks*. These can be important in maintaining the analytical distance that is necessary (ibid: 124). By taking these short breaks, I was also able to reflect on the things I had seen and heard and write more comprehensive notes later. These field breaks can also be longer periods of time, such as the days between different jam sessions. Field breaks are more relevant in fieldwork that are more time consuming and where a researcher is constantly and every day involved with and

spending time with individuals and groups of people they are observing, nevertheless, shorter field breaks during a jam session was helpful in gathering my thoughts.

1.2. The qualitative research interview

Complementing my field observations, conversations at jam sessions and my overall experiences with jam sessions over a number of years, four qualitative interviews with jam session participants were conducted. Again, I stress the importance of the keyword "experience", which is why qualitative interviews are preferred in this context. The qualitative interview is a good method for "understanding sides of the interview subjects' life, from his or her own perspective" (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2018: 42, my translation). These types of interviews can be a good way of accessing information about the experiences of different people with regards to specific events or phenomena, they also allow the researcher to guide the conversation into the topics with which they are concerned (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2018; Weiss, 1994).

> Interviews that sacrifice uniformity of questioning to achieve fuller development of information are properly called *qualitative* interviews, and a study based on such interviews, a qualitative interview study. Because each respondent is expected to provide a great deal of information, the qualitative interview study is likely to rely on a sample very much smaller than the sample interviewed by a reasonably ambitious survey study (Weiss, 1994: 3, italics in original).

The informants that make up the study should be relevant to the topic of interest. Tellmann and Leseth (2014) explain that it is not necessarily representativeness that is the guiding criteria when choosing informants (as Weiss noted the sample is smaller than in a larger survey study), the informants are rather chosen for their relevance and their potential for providing useful insight into areas of interest in order to support the internal validity of the research (ibid: 52), or as Weiss puts it: "people who are uniquely able to be informative because they are experts in an area or were privileged witnesses to an event" (Weiss, 1997: 17). Choosing the right informants depends on the aim and substantive frame of the study (ibid: 15-17). Thus, I recruited my informants at various jam sessions I attended.

1.2.1. A traveller or a miner? On constructing knowledge

There are different ways of approaching a qualitative interview study that will inform the questions that are asked, the answers you receive and the information that you construct in

cooperation with your informant. These are epistemological considerations regarding the construction of knowledge. Kvale and Brinkmann (2018) presents two different metaphors for the construction of knowledge in an interview study, one that suggests the interviewer is a miner, and one that suggest the interviewer is a traveller (p. 71). If we consider the interviewer as a miner, we imply that knowledge is something that lies dormant in the mind of the informant and is waiting to be extracted by the interviewer. Knowledge is like hidden metals, pieces of gold, and it is the job of the interviewer/miner to bring it out into the daylight, and to extract and uncover the meanings of these unsullied renditions of their experiences (Loc. cit.) The other metaphor on the other hand, in which the interviewer is considered a traveller, suggest that knowledge is not this pre-existing, independent, objective entity that needs to be discovered. Rather, knowledge is something that is constructed in conversation with the informant. The interviewer is wandering about with the informants, asking questions, and encouraging them to tell of their own experiences and stories (Loc. cit.). Conceiving of knowledge as something that is constructed, not pre-existing, can lead not only to new knowledge, but also inspire change in both the interviewer and the informant as well as inspire reflection and new insights in the interviewer, and crucially, uncover presupposed values and traditions the informant may possess (ibid: 72).

With the traveller metaphor, interview and analysis is not seen as separate activities where knowledge is extracted, purified, and presented. Rather, they are tightly interwoven phases in a construction of knowledge and is more closely connected to anthropology and a postmodern, constructivist understanding associated with a conversational approach to social science (Loc. cit.). Kvale and Brinkmann (2018) also mention several different types of qualitative interviews, among these are narrative interviews, discursive interviews, factual interviews, focus group interviews, and interviews with the goal of uncovering the meaning of specific concepts. The narrative interview approach focuses on the stories the informant is telling, these can appear spontaneously throughout the interview or be induced by the interviewer (ibid: 182). These stories can uncover narratives, meanings, and presupposed understandings on the side of the informant. This approach was useful in the context of this research, and I started my interviews by asking the informants to tell me about their musical backgrounds and how they started playing music. This quickly led to colourful stories about early experiences of musical interactions and was an easy gateway into questions about jam sessions. This also provided ample opportunity to ask follow-up questions and probe for elaborations and explanations. The traveller metaphor is especially fitting for this research as it

argues that knowledge is constructed in a process along with informants, the same way that the main theoretical concepts of this thesis argues that musical meaning is constructed in processes of performance. Thus, the epistemological backbone of this thesis conceives of both knowledge and meaning as socially constructed.

1.2.2. Digital interviewing

Going into the interview part of this research, I was prepared to have to make sudden changes as new public health measures were looming. Because one of the interviews was conducted in person, I have grounds for comparing the two different types of interviews in hindsight. However, going into the digital interviews, some challenges appeared that needs reflecting upon. One positive aspect of video chat services is the fact that I was still able to see my informant, their facial expressions, and some gestures, and so it might very well be comparable to a normal in-person interview. A drawback, however, is that the absence of actual physical proximity to my informant might have limited my vision of other non-verbal ques and body language which might have been more readily available during a face-to-face interaction (Janghorban, Roudsari & Taghipour, 2014: 1; Lo Iacono, Symonds & Brown, 2016). Conducting interviews through a video chat service did however help in scheduling the interviews, as there was no need to find a suitable location at a suitable time, and maintaining privacy was easy as we would each sit in our own homes. The one interview I conducted in person required more preparations in terms of finding a suitable and private location, providing directions, and providing friendly gestures such as making sure the informant had something to drink. Video chat interviews provide a great deal of flexibility in this regard, as they can take place in more convenient conditions for the informant.

The informants having the chance to participate from the comfort of their own homes might make some informants more inclined to open up to a greater extent than they would in a face-to-face situation as they get to stay in their own personal space. However, some might view the technological aspect of this interaction as a loss of intimacy, which might counteract the convenience and comfort (Lo Iacono et al., 2016). Despite potentially more convenient conditions, another potential challenge becomes obvious, technological difficulties. Internet connections are not always stable, microphones do not always work, recordings can be warped and broken, all of these things have to be considered. Such disruptions as loosing internet connection or having either the video freeze or the audio choppy and unclear might disturb what should be a natural flow of conversation, as well as make the recording inaudible.

In hindsight, conducting interviews through a video chat service provided more convenience and opportunity than challenges. Scheduling was easier, time constraints were less so a factor when conducting them, recording was simple as the service I used already had the function built-in, removing the need for any third-party recording software. This function also recorded the video, which allowed me to go back and view the actual interview, the facial gestures and body language (to a certain extent), as opposed to the in-person interview where all I had was the audio recording. I concede that audio delay a few times caused some unnecessary disruptions as we would talk over each other before realising the other one was also talking, which was a situation that was more easily glossed over and handle face-to-face. Nevertheless, I would argue that there are few, if any, reasons to suggest that conducting interviews this way was an obstacle or a hinderance to the research.

When transcribing the interviews, I wanted to do so in as much detail as possible in order to best preserve the verbal qualities of the interviews. However, all interviews were conducted in Norwegian, and as this thesis is written in English, that meant translating the excerpts and quotes from the interviews when presenting them here. Thus, in order to have them make sense in English, sentence structure and words were changed and carefully selected in order to best represent their original meanings, while still rendering them understandable and easier to read, as opposed to a word-by-word translation of the actual statements. All research conducted for this thesis was registered and carried out in accordance with the rules and regulations of the NSD (Norwegian Centre for Research Data).

1.3. Patchwork Ethnography

While the Coronavirus pandemic has affected this thesis, preventing me from attending more jam sessions and recruiting more informants, it has also raised questions about traditional anthropological conceptions of fieldwork. They are not necessarily new questions, but ones that have become increasingly visible as a result of the pandemic. Anthropological fieldwork was in question before the pandemic hit, argues Günel et al. (2020), further explaining that ethnographers for some time have been questioning various truisms of the notion of fieldwork such as the separation of "field" and "home", and the idea that a field researcher must always be available and up for anything. Before Covid-19, other factors such as family obligations, precarity, childcare, health concerns, and environmental concern have also made the long-term, in-person fieldwork popularized in anthropology difficult. This pointed to a need for a rethinking of fieldwork that is more adaptable and available to most researchers with their

everyday personal and work conditions. Günel et al. (2020) give mention to several works by various scholars who all have innovated ethnographic research and argue that it is "imperative to conceptualize a new methodological and theoretical approach to ethnography we are calling *patchwork ethnography*" (Loc. cit., italics in original).

This new conceptualization of fieldwork would recognize that field and home have to be recombined, seeing as the long-term stays are not always feasible. Patchwork ethnography does not, however, mean short, one-time visits. Rather it means short-term field visits spread out over a long period of time, and research efforts that maintain the long-term commitments, contextual knowledge, and slow thinking that is typical of so-called traditional fieldwork, while also resisting "the fixity, holism, and certainty demanded" (Loc. cit.). Patchwork ethnography broadens the idea of what is acceptable materials, tools, and objects of our analysis. Why do I bring this up? Even without the constraints and challenges posed by the pandemic, my field work would still have consisted of short visits stretched out over a longer period of time, as the events with which this thesis is concerned are of this nature, and it is not a type of field that demands full time commitment in the way that traditional anthropological fieldwork would. Additionally, I, like many others work a part time job, have other personal commitments, and had other university courses to attend in the time span of my rather shortened fieldwork. I thus find this conception of patchwork ethnography fitting for my work. It is not a shortcut or an excuse for the way the research was conducted, rather, this re-conceptualisation of what constitutes traditional fieldwork works well with this research, and in turn, this research helps further the conversation of the necessity for this re-conceptualisation.

2. Theory: Musicking and performance

> To music is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing (Small, 1998: 9).

This statement summarizes Christopher Small's (1998) concept of *musicking*, that music and performance is intimately tied together, not separate things. It argues that its meanings reside not in musical texts, but in the act of performing music in various ways and that it is through the act of performing music that musical meaning is constructed, which brings music and the social together. This idea of musical meaning residing in performance and in the social relationships that are generated through social music making is central to understanding the

significance of the jam sessions that were researched for this thesis. At their core, these jam sessions are social events in which music is used as a tool for generating collective and personal identities and communicating cultural preferences. In Small's work on this concept, a great deal of different activities and actions are regarded as musicking, as the first two pages of his book illustrates: musicians performing in front of an audience in concert halls and stadiums, a young man with a Walkman walking down the street, a congregation singing a hymn in unison, people in a supermarket performing various tasks while music plays over the loudspeakers, a woman humming the melody to a popular song while making the bed, the thunderous applause and cheers of the audience at the end of an opera. All are different actions in various settings that organize sound into meaning and is called music (ibid: 2). This thing called music has been deemed many things, attempted to be explained by many people, and ascribed different meanings for literally thousands of years. The ancient Greeks claimed that all humans had a musical core and considered music as something fundamentally and generally human. Music had a strong experiential anchoring, was tied into most other aspects of human life and organization, and was even assigned great significance as the key to a comprehensive understanding of reality (Sundberg, 2000: 8-9). The field of musicology and the Western classical tradition, however, originally conceived of music as text, as an object and a product of great minds, and any performance of music was simply an interpretation or a reproduction of a text, relegated to a subordinate position (Cook, 2012; Small, 1998). Both Nicholas Cook (2012) and Small (1998) argue against this old notion of the reified musical work and argue for a shift to a performance-based understanding of music, to consider music *as* performance rather than music *and* performance as it has often been (Cook, 2012: 185). Another influential contribution that argues for an approach to music that emphasizes performance is Thomas Turino's *Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation* (2008). He too argues that musical meaning resides in the act of performance, that this can take different shapes, and that it is an important part in the construction of individual and collective identities, and community formations. We will start this section by taking a closer look at Turino's performance perspective and the different types of performance he outlines.

2.1. Performance

Turino talks more generally about how ordinary people, the music consumers, conceive of music and argues that their conception of music has shifted from music being regarded as an activity and performance, to being regarded as a thing, an object that can be owned and

purchased. "When North Americans download a song or go out to buy a CD they believe that they are purchasing music. This belief points to a culturally specific conception of what music is" (Turino, 2008: 23). In other words, music became reified in the minds of ordinary people, not just scholars of the western classical tradition. He contrasts this to musicians he had come to know in Peru who, when listening to recordings they had made of music at a festival, would view these recordings as "representations of a celebration and of social interactions in a special way realized through playing music" (Loc. cit.). This reification of music in the western world has in part to do with the mass mediated forms of music through radio and recorded music. Turino argues that for the ordinary person (at least in the west), their conception of music used to be intimately bound to music making, which involved active participation with music "hardware" such as sheet music and instruments, this later shifted towards a conception of music as an object as recordings of music were played on the radio and on audio playback devices in the home, instead of playing themselves (ibid: 24). Turino further illustrates this shift by pointing to night clubs that hire DJs that "perform" by playing and manipulating recordings, rather than hiring live bands. "Yet this illustrates a strange reversal among these young people in their very conception of what music is as compared to an era when recordings were considered a *representation* of live music and would have been considered a poor substitute to a live band" (ibid: 25, italics in original). However, there are still events in which performance is still at the forefront, where its more about "*the doing* and social interaction than about creating an artistic product or commodity" (Loc. cit., italics in original). Turino argues that these events of participatory music making are not just informal or amateur, which is to say a lesser version of the "real music" made by professionals, rather they are something entirely different and should be conceptualized and valued as such.

Expanding the scope of what constitutes performance and moving away from the notion of performance as the reproduction of a text, also brings with it "the idea that it generates meaning, rather than simply reproducing a meaning that resides elsewhere" (Loc. cit.). Small (1998) exemplifies this by saying that when he, an amateur pianist, performs a piece of music written by Josef Haydn, in the town where he lives for a group of people of various socioeconomic backgrounds without charging admission, the performance generates different meanings than a performance of the same piece of music by a famous virtuoso pianist to a paying audience in a concert hall. "It seems obvious to me that performing these works under certain circumstances generates different meanings from performing them under others" (Small, 1998: 17). This implies that meaning is constructed through performance, through

negotiations between performers, and between performers and audiences, that it resides in processes, not in text. It also implies, as Small later elaborates, that physical surroundings and conditions have bearing on the types of meanings the performance generates. "To understand music as performance, then, means to see it as an irreducibly social phenomenon" (Cook, 2012: 186).

According to Turino, music (and other performance arts such as dance) are essential parts of identity formation, because these artistic expressions often display deep and meaningful feelings of a group that make them unique, and thus generate feelings of community and shared cultural values. "Through moving and sounding together in synchrony, people can experience a feeling of oneness with others" (Turino, 2008: 2-3). These instances of social music making can lead to a state of heightened concentration around the activity that facilitates a fuller integration of the self, a state of *flow*. This mental state requires there to be a balance between the difficulty of the task and the skill level of the individual performing the task, but when these conditions are met, it can enhance "concentration and that sense of being at one with the activity and perhaps the other people involved" (ibid: 4). Since this flow-state is pleasurable, people often return to the activities that produce such a feeling. Another requirement for this flow-state is the continual and real-time responses and feedback on how one is doing. The activities also need to be bounded in place and time so that performers can more fully concentrate on the task and tune out "the everyday" (ibid: 5). This is reminiscent of what Alfred Schutz calls the *mutual tuning-in relationship* (Schütz, 1951) in which musicians engaged in a performance together share a stream of consciousness and inner time and share in the experiences of their fellow musicians. They also share a sector of physical space and outer time in which they can observe and react to the gestures, reactions, and other activities of those present, both musicians and audiences. These impressions given by others can be grasped in immediacy by the performers and help guide their actions, and this relationship is what enables musicians to make music together and is a state of mind in which they are tuned in to each other and the activity.

2.1.1. Participatory and presentational performance

Musical performance can take different shapes that have different end goals in mind and be motivated by different factors. Turino differentiates between two different forms of performance which he calls *presentational performance* and *participatory performance*. As the terms would have you believe, presentational performance is about presenting something, while participatory performance is about having people participate. When Turino talks about

participatory performance, he is talking about a distinct type of artistic practice in which the distinction between artist and audience is removed entirely, and there are only participants and potential participants performing different roles (p. 26). On the other hand, presentational performance is described as situations in which a performer or a group of performers prepare and play music for another group of people (an audience), and this group does not participate in the music making. Here is where the performance framework proposed by Turino differs from Small's concept of musicking, as Turino views participation in the sense of contributing to the musical sound (or dance) in some way, shape of form. Small (1998) on the other hand, tries to reach wide with his concept of musicking, arguing that all activities that involve music in some way are musical activities, not necessarily activities that are directly contributing to the musical sound, but that are conventionalised and situationally conditioned activities and behaviour that carries meaning and significance themselves. These activities can be conditioned by the architecture and purpose of the building in which a performance is taking place, or the layout of a specific venue or room, such as behavioural conventions in the foyer of a concert hall building. Nevertheless, Small is arguing that all those present are contributing to the musical occasion, while Turino is more strictly applying the term "participation" to mean actively contributing to the musical sound.

In the participatory frame Turino describes, it is the interactions among participants that are in focus, and the primary goal is to involve as many people as possible in some kind of performance as it is the activity itself that is the primary objective, rather than an end result or the product of the activity (Turino, 2008: 28). Framed as interactive social occasions, the types of events that can be considered participatory performance events are built on the idea that everyone present can and should participate in the creative activity. Turino argues that the people who attend these kinds of events are aware of the centrality of participation and are motivated to perform (ibid: 29). However, cultures vary, and participatory performance events might be more prevalent and commonly enjoyed in cultures and parts of the world in which such activities as playing music or dancing have not become specialized activities to the same degree as it has in much of western capitalist cultures. Gillian Howell, Lee Higgins, and Brydie-Leigh Bartleet (2017) makes the same distinction and calls these types of events *community music*. They argue that these events refer to amateur rather than professional music making, "to organized approaches to music making that encourage community participation in one-off, short-term celebratory events" or events in which music making is used to "enhance community cohesion and shared identity in the face of increased individualism" (p. 2). As mentioned,

anyone that attends such events are welcome to and encouraged to join in the performance, this in turn creates a situation in which the individual investment in the activity and the individual skills and abilities can vary widely, which creates unique dynamics as well as both constraints and conventions as to what can or should be done musically (Turino: 2008: 30).

Considering that the participatory performance framework is based on the active participation of as many people as possible, it becomes increasingly important that the activities cater to wide range of people with different skill levels as to not discourage any performers from participating. Turino argues that this can be tied to the idea of the *flow* state in that the activity needs to include the proper balance between individual skill and the challenges of the activity (Ibid: 30-31). When these conditions are met, each performer might enter the flow state, which is a mental state of heightened concentration and pleasure. When this is facilitated, people are more inclined to return to the activity, and their skills increase each time they attend, and at events where participation is at the centre, "opportunities to improve one's skills are common" (ibid: 31). This aspect of inclusion is important in order to facilitate a social environment which encourages participation from aspiring performers, as the presence of others with similar skill levels makes participation more comfortable. An instance where only virtuosos perform would likely not seem including for less competent and confident performers and might serve as an intimidating and discouraging factor. However, if activities are not challenging enough, it might dissuade the more technically proficient musicians from participating as it will not provide the possibility of the flow state. Because the activities are varied and cater to a wide range of performers, this means that roles are plentiful and diverse, making it so everyone, regardless of individual skill, can participate according to their own skill level. Turino explains how these roles can be differentiated as either *core roles* or *elaborations roles* which refers to the relative necessity of the contribution to the overall event (Loc. cit.). Core roles can be such as comping in a rhythm section or backing band, while the elaboration roles can be that of a lead singer or a solo instrumentalist. Core roles are essential to the coherence and continuation of a performance and are typically carried out or guided by the most skilled performers, with some exceptions. The elaborative roles on the other hand provide more room for a wider range of skill levels as these do not carry the same responsibilities of coherence and continuation, however, a skilful elaboration on the part of a more technically proficient performer might very well enhance the spirit of a performance all on its own (ibid: 32).

Another key aspect of various performance events that distinguish them as either participatory or presentational concerns issues of value and on what basis and criteria a

performance event is deemed successful. In distinguishing these two events, Turino argues that participatory events are judged more so on the degree and intensity of participation than on some abstract assessment of the quality of music that is being performed (ibid: 33). Presentational performance events, at their core, are about presenting a musical product, such as when a symphony orchestra performs a piece of classical music in a concert hall or a famous rock band plays a show in a stadium arena. The perceived success of these types of performance events might hinge upon how well the music was presented, on how detailed and well executed it was. It is not uncommon to hear people who have attended a rock show comment on whether the band sounded as good live as they do on the recording, others might judge the performance on how well the artist or group was able to connect with and engage the audience. The criteria for a successful presentational performance are unclear and can vary depending who you ask, what relationship they have to the performers or how well they know their music before attending the show. The musicians might judge the success of the performance in other ways than their audiences do.

In the case of a participatory performance event, the success of the event might be judged on whether or not people are dancing. If people dance, then the musicians have accomplished the goal of the performance, to engage as many participants as possible. During a presentational performance such as a rock show, dancing might not be a common occurrence. What is a common occurrence at these events, however, is audiences engaging in mosh pits, circle pits, or a wall of death, and bands often facilitate this with dedicated instrumental parts. These events have quite clear performer-audience distinctions, the same way as a symphony orchestra performance, but these kinds of audience behaviour undoubtedly contribute to the spirit of the performance in an important way, the same way in which dancers at a participatory performance event contribute to the spirit of those events. The participatory and presentational frames certainly can overlap in some respects, while still retaining the primary ethos and core values of each type of performance.

Seeing as participatory performance events include such a wide range of performers with varying skill levels, it is not unreasonable to suspect that it might cause some friction or conflict. However, Turino argues that the different performers have a responsibility to perform in a manner that is not uncomfortable to other performers or in ways that will exclude or discourage the participation of others (2008: 33). Personal expressions of individual skill are not outright discouraged in participatory events but are not granted the same priority or praise as it might do in a presentational performance situation. This does not mean that individual

performers cannot be disgruntled or displeased by other performers' lacking ability or clumsy contributions, but these concerns and judgements are rarely, if ever, voiced. Turino argues that this is the case because of the encouragement of new performers, and because a local scene needs new performers in order to remain vibrant. "In highly participatory traditions, the etiquette and quality of *sociality* is granted priority over the quality of the sound per se." (ibid: 35, italics in original). This again is tied to the different performance roles and facilitates the possibility for the flow state, as it is more important that the skilled performers carry out the core roles and sustain the coherence of the performance in such a way that everyone can participate and enjoy it, connect with each other and experience flow. Turino again argues that the prevalence, visibility, and common acceptance of such events vary from culture to culture. In capitalist-cosmopolitan cultural formations (i.e. western cultures), these types of events are less prominent because they do not coincide with the established values of competition, hierarchy, and profit making. Thus, they are often relegated to certain social groupings that stand in opposition to the broader, more mainstream cultural formation, "some people seek them out or create them because they offer special resources for individual and social integration and experience, flow, and fun" (ibid: 36).

The participatory performance framework also includes very particular modes of performance, musical forms, and ways of structuring the performance. They often have heightened degrees of repetition of melodic and harmonic materials and genre-specific formulas that makes the music predictable, easy to learn, and makes it easy to join a performance quickly (ibid: 38). You can think in terms of the standard AABA form in jazz, or the intensely repeated rhythmic patterns of funk and disco. In western musical cultures you could also think in terms of the standard chord progressions of jazz such as a II-V-I (Dm7 – G7 – Cmaj7 in the key of C major), or the four-chord songs (I-V-VI-IV) in various popular music genres (C major – G major – A minor – F major in the key of C major) that people with at least some knowledge of western musical theory can easily recognize. "The heightened repetition of forms and melodic material in participatory music provides *security in constancy*" (ibid: 40, italics in original) argues Turino. This also creates social synchrony, when people "lock in" to the same groove, harmonic or melodic pattern, or "stylized social interaction" as Turino calls it (ibid: 41). Social synchrony also involves mirroring the behaviours and gestures of other performers and responding to their reactions as this helps in creating feelings of security and comfort. Erving Goffman (1959) has made similar points in his work on social interaction. This act of responding to others and mirror their behaviour in order to create social synchrony can be

likened to what Goffman calls *impression management*. Impression management are strategies employed by an individual performing a role in order to avoid discrediting situations that might harm the credibility or validity of the performance. Goffman argues that during these role performances, we are trying to convince our audience that we are in possession of the qualities and attributes that the role would imply we have, and that the performance will have its implicitly claimed consequences (Goffman, 1959: 28). Should the performer not be able to do so, it might lead to these types of discrediting situations. Such instances might lead to a weakening of the social cohesion and the interaction in general.

Unlike presentational performances, participatory performances are not scripted, and participants thus need to pay close attention to what is happening, to the musical contributions of other performers. This increases the potential of flow, and when attentiveness is high and the performance goes well, the differences among performers become obscured (Turino, 2008: 43). Knowing and performing appropriately in the correct style is a sign of belonging and of social identity, "because performance competence *is both a sign and simultaneously a product of* shared musical knowledge and experience" (Loc. cit. highlights in original), again echoing Schutz and the idea of the mutual tuning-in relationship. The repetitive and rhythmic grooves and the predictability Turino mentioned as a significant part of participatory performance are essential to for the social synchrony which becomes "a crucial underpinning of feelings of social comfort, belonging, and identity" (ibid: 44). The same musical features mentioned that strengthen social bonding and synchrony in participatory traditions can lead to boredom in presentational performances. However, this does not mean that one is better than the other, simply that they are different, with different values, responsibilities, and social functions.

Turino also distinguish between two types of participatory performance which he calls *simultaneous* and *sequential participation* (ibid: 48). The former meaning that everyone participates at the same time, and the latter meaning that all performances happen in sequence. Simultaneous participation usually coincides with the types of music he discussed in which security in constancy is created, and this also provides cloaking mechanisms for individual performers as individual contributions are not singled out, making participation more comfortable for each individual (Loc. cit.). Sequential participation, on the other hand, might include certain aspects of presentational performance, as each individual performer takes turns performing, this simultaneously create a strong social pressure to perform, while also creating a sense of security in ones' own performance because it is expected that others will do the same,

and people will have varying levels of technical proficiency (ibid: 49). In short, it creates a sense of camaraderie.

The form of performance maybe most familiar to most people in the west is the presentational performance framework. It involves an artist or a group of musicians providing music for another group of people, and there is a distinct separation between these two groups of people as performer and audience (ibid: 51-52). While participatory performance events have as its core objective to engage as many people as possible in the performance, presentational performance events are for listening, not doing, as they are prepared by musicians so that others can listen to them. Preparation is an important part of the distinction, as performers at participatory performances, according to Turino, rarely have had preparations and practice before the performance. Since audiences at presentational performance events more often than not will sit in silent contemplation of the performance that is unfolding before them, the performers thus have different social responsibilities than their participatory counterparts, and this also leads to different criteria as to what can be deemed good music or a good performance. Musicians must provide a performance that will sustain the interest of a non-participating audience, while it is the role of the audience to grant full attention (ibid: 52). Generally, participatory performers will not have had much preparation, and since it is the goal of a participatory performance to have as many people participate as possible (and people are expected to participate), they might steer away from pre-planned arrangements, as the shape and form of the performances and pieces of music will depend on who is performing and what they contribute at that particular time (ibid: 53). Presentational performances, however, are much more goal oriented in their preparations as they want to make the performance interesting, coherent, and varied to ensure quick smooth transitions that sustain the attentiveness of the audience.

The amount and type of preparations made for a performance will also affect performers responsibilities and the values of the performance. Participatory performances tend to be unpredictable as individual contributions and the skill levels of participants can vary and change from moment to moment, this is somewhat counteracted with the repetitive rhythmic figures and harmonies intended to make participation more inviting, but the nature of the performance is still unpredictable. Musicians in a presentational performance, however, are usually more equally skilled, and the constellations of performers are more or less fixed, which grants the performances more predictability. However, since there is more room (and desire) for more detailed preparations, band leaders and conductors are able to make use of a wider variety of

structuring elements, contrasts, and variation to make the performance interesting for an attentive audience, while not constraining skilled musicians from playing to their potential (ibid: 56).

Musical performance can have significant impact on the lives of those who participate in it. Whether you are a professional or an amateur, given the necessary conditions, a performance can provide great opportunity for the development and strengthening of personal identity, as well as group identity and feelings of community. Although participatory performance might not be as widespread in western cultures, they do occur, and they might be significant in establishing local music communities and offer a unique musical and social experience for both musicians and audiences. It can be argued that meaning is constructed through the act of performing, and that the music does not exist on its own outside of performances, that a recording of music is simply a representation of the actual performance and the meanings that it created. Conventions of performance and behaviour vary among different cultures and might also be affected by physical surroundings and rooms, and these might also imbue the performance with meanings of its own. Small (1998) at least argues that different venues carry conventions as to what behaviour is expected and possible, and that all activities that happen in conjunction with musical sounds are in fact musical activities, or musicking as he calls it.

2.2. Musicking

Crucial to Small's conception of musicking, as is the case with both Turino and Cook as well, is the argument against the reification of music, against the abstractions of things as more real than the actual thing, against thinking of music, love, hate, good and evil as more real than the act of performing music, loving, hating, performing good or evil actions (Small, 1998: 61). It is important to remember that all these are more than mere abstract categories, categories we use to describe the action. In this sense, music is only an abstraction of the act of doing music. To further this argument, if we compare a piece of music to something like a building, we can gather some idea about the meaning of that building by reference to the outside world of it, whether it be an office building, a cathedral, or a barn. The same can be said of a movie, a novel, or a painting in which we can gather information about it by reference to the outside world, and thus understand, at least partly, its meanings. A piece of music, however, does not seem to have a reference to anything outside its own sound world. Where, then, does its

meanings come from? What is it about? This is the crucial part of Small's argument, that we need to think of music as more than a thing, rather as an activity, and more importantly, as an activity that is concerned with relationships. "Then we see that whatever meaning a musical work has lies in the relationships that are brought into existence when the piece is performed" (Small, 1998: 138).

Small takes the classical concert hall performance by a symphony orchestra as his main example, but his ideas about performance occasions as rituals that shape interaction and produces meaning carries significance for other areas of musicking as well. The term *ritual* is a complicated one as it has been used far and wide to the extent that in common speech, it is taken to mean any type of action that through constant repetition has become devoid of any meaning it may have possessed at some point (ibid: 94). Small argues this is not the case, and that even actions that have become heavily ritualized are still meaningful. In his view, a ritual means any type of organized behaviour undertaken by humans in which they use the language of gesture in order to affirm, explore, and celebrate "their ideas of how the relationships of the cosmos (or a part of it), operate, and thus how the relationships should relate to it and to one another" (ibid: 95).

If we consider these performance situations as rituals, their significance in the creation and continued maintenance of social relationships and identities become more apparent. During the enactment of the ritual, time is experienced directly, and relationships are brought into existence between participants in the ways they imagine them to be. The participants experience these relationships in their bodies and learns about them, and through this enactment of the ritual affirm the relationships and their identities as individuals and as a community or a group. In other words, the rituals, and the relationships they bring into being, are ways of ensuring social cohesion and stability (ibid: 96). Small argues that every single musical performance articulates a set of values that are particular to a specific social group at a specific point in its history (ibid: 133). This also points to the fact that social groups change over time, their members change, and their values change. That is why this temporal dimension is also important, and why each performance occasion is different, articulates different values, and brings forth different relationships, even when it is the same piece of music that is being performed. The people that then partake in any musical performance is effectively saying to the world that this is who we are, these are our values (ibid: 134). The "who we are" and by extension "who *I* am" are not fixed categories argues Small. Rather, since we all belong to different social groups simultaneously, who I am is a matter of who I choose to be or imagine

myself to be, and who we are is how we relate. "The relationships articulated by a musical performance are not so much those that actually exist as they are the relationships that those taking part desire to exist" (Loc. cit.). This points to the idea that whatever meaning a piece of music might have is not some intrinsic meaning that resides in the music itself, rather, the meaning resides in the relationships that any specific performance of that piece of music brings into existence (ibid: 138).

Small also argues that the notion that music is the most abstract of all the arts is wrong (Small, 1998: 143). Rather, to music is to take part in the most concrete and least mediated of all artistic activities. The relationships we most deeply desire is brought to life all around us by the people taking part in musicking, whether it be a jogger with a Walkman, a lone flutist, a rocker on a stadium stage, a busker on the subway, or the audience at a jam session.

Robert Stebbins (2017) discusses musical leisure activities and how they relate to notions of space. He distinguished between three different categories of leisure activities which he calls *serious leisure, casual leisure,* and *project-based leisure*. He argues that people who participate in serious leisure activities develop "a strong attachment to and identification with the space in which they pursue their core activities" (Loc. cit.). He references Sam Elkington (2014) who has stated that the strength of this attachment to space is determined by its capacity to "facilitate skill and knowledge and to generate desired experiences, among them, that of flow" (Stebbins, 2017: 3).

Stebbins described serious leisure as "the systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer activity sufficiently substantial, interesting, and fulfilling for the participant to find a (leisure) career there acquiring and expressing a combination of its special skills, knowledge and experience" (2017: 4). He identifies six defining qualities of serious leisure activities that are common to those who partake in them. One of these is the need to persevere, to stick with the activity and overcome adversity, which leads to positive feelings about the activity. He argues that a necessary quality is finding a career in the serious leisure role which is shaped by achievement and involvement in the activity. These careers necessitate a significant personal effort based on the knowledge, training, skill, and experience which is acquired through it. Serious leisure can also lead to benefits such as self-development, self-enrichment, self-expression, feelings of accomplishment, social interactions, a feeling of belonging to a social group, and an improved self-image. Another quality of serious leisure he mentions is the unique ethos that emerges around each instance of such an activity, such as a specialized social world in which the participants can pursue their free-time interests. The sixth quality, he says, is that

participants in serious leisure activities often strongly identify with their chosen pursuit, as opposed to casual leisure activities which is too fleeting and mundane for people to find a distinctive identity there (ibid: 6-7).

Music, the act of performing it, or musicking as we might call it, has the power to engender powerful emotions in us, enable us to connect with ourselves and affirm our values and identities through performance, and negotiate and articulate values and relationships that connect us to others and form social groups. Whether the musical activity is professional or amateur, vocational, or leisure-based, it facilitates the formation of strong social bonds and identities, an opportunity for experimenting with personal expressions and musical ideas and can create significant ties to physical locations through association with the activity undertaken there. Other scholars, like Dick Hebdige (1979), has talked about how music can be a source for collective identity formation through style and subculture, where the performance of counter-culture style and music becomes an important signifier of a shared cultural identity, culminating in what might be called a "scene". But how can we imagine these musical communities that are brought into existence through performance?

3. Social formations through music: Scenes, communities, ecologies

There are several ways of conceptualizing these various collectivities that are created through performance. Several terms have been used in order to conceptualize these, such as *communities, scenes,* and *live music ecologies*. They all deal with the ways in which people come together through musical activities, the ways in which knowledge is organized in powerful ways, the ways in which the relationships between different musical practices unfold within a given geographical space, or how different practices, actors and systems interact in order to sustain cultural practices. The first two of the terms has gained favour not only in academic circles, but also media and in common speech. Kay Kaufman Shelemay (2011) argues that "community" is one such term that has attained status as a keyword in various disciplines, but sometimes employed uncritically and without definition, while at other times being outright discarded (p. 349). Kaufman argues for a rethinking of the way we conceptualize musical communities in a way that opens opportunities to explore musical transmissions and performance "as an integral part of processes that can at different moments help generate, shape, and sustain new collectivities" (ibid: 349-350). Of singular importance to this framework, she

says, is Turino's monograph. While Turino does not explicitly dwell on the concept of communities, it is a common theme throughout his book, and he mentions early that "music, dance, festivals, and other public expressive cultural practices are a primary way that people articulate the collective identities that are fundamental to forming and sustaining social groups" (Turino, 2008: 2).

The term "scene" has been discussed to great extents by Will Straw, who argues that it is "distinct, in significant ways, from older notions of a musical community" (Straw, 1991: 373). In his view, "community" implies that the social group that make up the community is relatively stable and that the term is too heavily associated with notions of space and nation, in other words with a geographically specific historical heritage. "Scene", on the other hand, "is that cultural space in which a range of musical practices coexist, interacting with each other within a variety of processes of differentiation, and according to widely varying trajectories of change and cross-fertilization" (Loc. cit.). The point of this distinction is not to designate different spaces as one or the other, rather, the notion of scene can help in examining the workings of different musical practices and how they produce a sense of community within the conditions of a metropolitan music scene. Discussing live music ecologies, Behr, Brennan, Cloonan, Frith, and Webster (2016) argues that live music events are part of a wider network of venues, social actors, and policy officials that constitute live music performances. They propose an understanding of the ecology of live music events in a city in which you have to consider the surrounding material culture (venues in which events can take place), the negotiations with people outside of the ideological construct (such as local authority officials), wider issues of local infrastructure (such as public transport and licensing for venues), and issues of sustainability. Arno van der Hoeven and Erik Hitters (2019) argues that since economic profit often is at the forefront when researching or making policy decisions about live music ecologies, not much is known about their social and cultural values. Thus, they pose the question of what social and cultural values are attributed to live music ecologies.

Straw argues that the reason for the persistence of the term "scene" in popular music studies, cultural analysis, and media alike is that it is "usefully flexible and anti-essentializing, requiring of those who use it no more than that they observe a hazy coherence between sets of practices or affinities" (Straw, 2006: 6). It makes it possible to disengage certain social phenomena from the more overarching and fixed unities of class or subculture, while also evoking "both the cozy intimacy of community and the fluid cosmopolitanism of urban life" (Loc. cit.). This makes it an easily available term when constructing abstract communities on

both a local and global level such as an "international hard rock scene" or a "local hip-hop scene", it conveys a sense of shared values and identity through geographically dispersed cultural activities, or it can convey a sense of a tight knit community of individuals through a set of related musical practices. David Hesmondhalgh (2007), however, is critical of this defence of the concept of scenes, arguing that the term has been used for too long in too many and imprecise ways to be truly useful. The term, he argues, has gone beyond the point where metaphorical associations can aid in the analysis of the spatial dimensions of popular music (p. 30). Straw on the other hand, seems to think that this multitude of usages is a strength of the concept, and that if it has a future in academic research, it is because of its abilities to be pulled in different directions (Straw, 2015: 484). Daniel Silver and Terry Nichols Clark (2015) argues the same, that it is in the grounded mobility of the concept that its attraction lies. When designating a space as a scene, what we are trying to accomplish is to "capture the experiential attractions rooted in the on-going public life of its businesses, people, places of worship, activities" (ibid: 426). Scenes have been used to mean, among other things, the recurring congregations of people at specific places, the movements of these people between these places, all the practices and locations which surround and nourish particular cultural preferences, and the more geographically dispersed phenomena of which these congregations and practices are local examples (Straw, 2006: 6). As will become clear, the contemporary jam sessions work in ways similar to this as they represent a common cultural practice that is continuously recurring at specific locations, that share many of the same patrons and performers who congregate at these locations and move through them, and that these events represent local examples of a more geographically dispersed phenomenon which in this case is jam sessions in general.

Musical performance, especially participatory performances, can engender strong feelings of affinity to a particular social group through the realization and experience of the relationships that are brought to life through them. Straw argues that scenes connect certain affinities and relationships to physical locations, and thus extend the spatialization of city cultures. They regularize these various cultural activities within "the rituals of drinking or dining, or subject them to the frequency of accidental encounters" (ibid: 12). In other words, scenes create association of cultural practices to physical locations in which individuals can connect through shared preferences and participation in a common cultural activity. Shelemay argues that music is a particularly powerful mechanism in the creation of what she calls "affinity communities" (2011: 373). These communities are based primarily in individual preferences, while also pointing to individual's desire for social proximity to others with similar cultural

preferences. These types of social formations that emerge through affinity to both shared cultural preferences, and social proximity through specific physical locations, makes the case that formations you might call a scene is both an abstract dimension existing in the minds of its participants, while also retaining a physical presence through its recurrence in particular venues. While Shelemay argues that most domains of popular music can fit under this category of affinity (ibid: 374), musical communities can also emerge through other processes such as through opposition, what she calls "dissent communities (ibid: 370), and processes of descent, what she calls "descent communities" (ibid: 367). The latter might be grounded in historical fact, be newly invented, or from a combination of historical circumstance and creative transformation (Loc. cit.). These shared identities that are generated through these processes can be grounded in such things as ethnicity, religion, or nationality, and music can be an important mechanism in their production and sustained existence. However, these various community formations can, and often do, overlap, and traces of descent or dissent may be embedded in communities that are formed through affinity (ibid: 375). Jam sessions illustrate how processes of affinity and of descent can overlap in these types of community formations, as participants share affinity to a set of related cultural practices which originates in a historically specific tradition, while at the same time actively reworking and transforming this tradition.

Straw (2015) restates the question of whether a scene could be imagined outside of relationships of physical proximity. Is it enough to constitute a scene that geographically dispersed people share similar affinities and cultural preferences? Or is it necessary that these people engage in some form of communication or collective interaction (p. 477)? These questions reverberates in Hesmondhalgh's (2005) article, in which he ultimately rejects any strict typology or master-concept of the copresence of people. Straw (2015) goes on to give several examples of activities and formations that we might call scenes. He sees scenes as a collectivity, in which the scene is usually tied to notions of bounded localities of variable scales in which a common activity takes place. Scenes also work as spaces of assembly, meaning that scenes are pulling together various cultural phenomena in such a way that they become more visible and circulate to other places (ibid: 478). In this conception of scenes, they are multi-scalar structures in which the scene that might form around a specific musical genre or musical activity in a given city becomes embedded in the broader creative scene of that city, which again may interact with similar scenes across borders, being presented at festivals in other countries, thus facilitating the expansion of a local musical activity into an international scene

(ibid: 479). Various cultural phenomena with the status of scenes are pulled into larger clusters of other cultural activities and are endowed with a sense of coherence. Further, Straw argues that a music scene may be "surrounded by restaurants, bars and boutiques which serve as the supports for the former" (Loc. cit.), which echoes the notion of the live music ecologies described by Behr et al. (2016) and van der Hoeven and Hitters (2019).

Straw argues that scenes can be workplaces that involves active transformative work carried out upon materials and resources (Straw, 2015: 479). This can mean the discovering and repurposing of materials such as old clothes, records, furniture, and spaces that, when combined in practices, result in relatively coherent collective identities (ibid: 480). These scenes might take the shape of underground cultures, or what might often be called subcultures, reminiscent of Shelemay's (2011) dissent and descent communities in which the appropriation and active transformation of cultural and historical objects and values are central. In Straw's conception, however, it deals more so with material objects that come to signify this collective identity.

Silver and Clarke (2015) proposes a multi-dimensional theory of scenes as "the meanings expressed by the people in practices in a place" (p. 427). The concept again stresses the importance of both practice (or performance), and of place, being bound to specific locations. Their concept stresses neighbourhoods, rather than larger physical groupings such as cities or nations in order to better capture local differences within and across these larger units (Loc. cit.). Similar to Small (1998), they also highlight the importance of physical structures such as buildings, music venues or shopping malls, rooting the scenes in identifiable, physical places while also accounting for the people that are actually there, and who these people are in terms of race, class, gender, education, occupation, age and so forth (Silver and Clarke, 2015: 427). The combinations of these different aspects are articulated through the actual activities that take place there, which expresses the symbolic meanings that define the importance of the experience the scene offers. They highlight such meanings as legitimacy, theatricality, and authenticity (Loc. cit.). Also, important to note is the fact that these scenes are public places that are available both to the passers-by and the deep enthusiasts. Similar to the live music ecology concept proposed by Behr et al. (2016) and van der Hoeven and Hitters (2019), the authors adopts a holistic approach to their concept, arguing that we cannot look at just one activity to define a scene (Silver and Clarke, 2015: 429). As most neighbourhoods have restaurants, cafes, music venues, shops, and places of worship, it is necessary to consider all these different amenities, the activities that occur within them, and the meanings embedded in these activities, in order to get a full picture of the scene. Also, the meanings they mention,

legitimacy, theatricality, and authenticity, can be found in different scenes without necessarily having the same meanings, such that an act of authenticity might take on different meanings in a neo-bohemian scene than in a downtown financial district.

These three dimensions of meaning have bearings on the behaviour in different scenes. The authors argue that authenticity is saying something about who you really are, theatricality on the other hand is about how you present yourselves by way of clothing, vocabulary, behaviour, appearance and more. The third dimension, legitimacy, are ways of determining what is right or wrong, whether it be by way of moral conviction, listening to authority, acting according to tradition, or according to yourself, your identity, and convictions (ibid: 431). This last category, legitimacy through one's self, or "self-expressive legitimacy" as the authors call it (ibid: 433), is a key dimension of scenes. It "grounds the legitimacy of a scene in its capacity to actualize an individual personality" (Loc. cit.). Each person brings their own personal style and ways of seeing to all their actions and the activities they perform. This also puts performance as a central part of scenes, which resonates with Turino's (2008) performance perspective and Small's (1998) concept of musicking. However, whereas Turino sees performance as something that is central to the formation of the identities of performers, Silver and Clarke see it as a medium for the expression of that identity.

While Silver and Clarke's concept of scenes does well in providing an explanation for the workings of scenes and the various actions and motivations of individuals, as well as how different values are expressed within them, it does not dwell much on how these scenes come to be. Shelemay (2011), although not prescribing to the term "scene", attempts to give an account of how musical communities are generated by her concepts of descent, dissent, and affinity communities. As she says, these different community formations are not strictly separate, and she proposes we see these as parts of a continuum (p. 376). A particular musical community might at one point be clearly located in one region of the continuum, while another might fit on the entire continuum or form different communities at different moments in history that varies in size or scale. Descent communities invoke identities shared by people over a significant period of time, "whether based on ethnicity, nationality, or belief, communities inevitably vary in size at different moments, establishing different historical trajectories" (Loc. cit.).

Shelemay argues that individual agency can play an important role in the process of community formation, for example a charismatic musician, a composer, a conductor, or a performer. This is common to all three types of community formations (2011: 377). She

mentions such esteemed personalities as J. S. Bach, Bob Dylan, and Joan Baez, who through their musical creativity and performance have generated and sustained communities of prayer or of social and political movements (Loc. cit.), in other words, communities of descent and dissent. The presence of a charismatic musical figure is essential to the formation and continued existence of affinity communities argues Shelemay. These are fairly large communities with global reach that Shelemay is mentioning here, and one could certainly find countless other examples that have contributed to similar communities within other genres, such as James Brown, Charles Mingus, NWA, and countless other African-American musicians who through their music generated large communities of dissent, or Django Reinhart, Miles Davis or Jimi Hendrix whose innovative voices and personalities are still praised and resonates to this day. You could probably argue, however, that these examples (both those mentioned by Shelemay as well as mine) point to music being used as a tool for social and political movements rather than the movements and communities being generated around the charismatic personalities of the individual performers. Nevertheless, it shows that music has the power to mobilize large numbers of people and bring them together through shared ideas and values, political views, or shared cultural preferences. Rapidly changing technologies are also important factors in generating communities, as they can easily and quickly communicate musical styles or ideas and reach massive amounts of people. One such example is the online community organized around the Instagram pages *Pickup Music,*[1] *Pickup Jazz,*[2] and *Pickup Beats*[3] that promotes individual creators and facilitates a platform for sharing musical ideas, connecting with like-minded musicians, and celebrate the legacies of musicians such as J Dilla, D'Angelo, Michael Jackson, Erykah Badu, Aretha Franklin, Stevie Wonder, Chic, and countless other musicians.

Howell et al. (2017) uses the term "community music" to refer to these acts of music making activities that create community and distinguish between three broad categories of community music: firstly, community music can be the music of a particular community (whether ethnic, cultural or otherwise) which emphasize the musical content and the relationships between it and the performers; secondly, it can be viewed as communal music making in which the emphasis is on the people, places, and their shared experiences through music making; and thirdly, they argue that it can be viewed as an active intervention in which a group of participants are led by a skilled facilitator (p. 2). This leading role of facilitator has developed as a response to cultural environments (mainly in the west) in which the

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[1] https://www.instagram.com/PickupMusic/
[2] https://www.instagram.com/pickupjazz/
[3] https://www.instagram.com/PickupBeats/

commercialization and commodification of music practices has led to a widespread disengagement of people from the act of music making (ibid: 3). In other words, in cultures in which music has become a specialized endeavour and there is a clear conceptual distinction between performer and audience.

The authors describe several different cases in which community music is used, how it is used, and how the community music facilitator works in these situations. One of the cases describes community music making in an English-language learning classroom for refugees and migrant young people. They argue that music is a very secure and self-regulating activity as it offers a broad range of ways to participate in the musical activity, which enables everyone to "regulate the intensity of their experience" (Ibid: 7). This echoes Turino's (2008) participatory performance framework in which everyone can participate regardless of technical skill, thus allowing them to access the flow-state, and experience improvement which will allow for further participation and help in identity formation. This example, while not pertaining specifically to the leisure music events with which this thesis is concerned, illustrates how participatory music making can be a self-regulating activity, allowing each performer to dictate their own level of involvement, strengthening the inclusive aspect of these performance events. The idea of a skilled facilitator who creates a nurturing environment for self-regulations and development also resonates with the workings of contemporary jam sessions in which there is usually a host or band leader acting as a strong, guiding presence that is actively trying to create a supportive musical and social environment that encourages participation.

Howell et al. explains how the facilitator needs to be attentive to these instances of self-regulated interactions with the music activities in order to provide opportunities for deeper engagement or to retreat from participation (Howell et al., 2017: 7). They also mention for several of the cases that improvisation is a central component of the community music activity and the work of the facilitator as it is a good way to encourage and generate communication between the participants. The facilitator is not only in possession of musical skills, but also of leadership and social skills in order to guide the group on a musical journey (ibid: 10). They read the responses of individuals and monitor the interactions, and need to be able to think on their feet in order to ensure variety and appropriate pacing and levels of challenge for the participants "so that the group is carried along by its own momentum, energy, and sense of flow" (ibid: 10-11). It is often required of the facilitator that they possess skills in both musicianship and in community development as they are tasked with responding to complex

cultural dynamics and the social needs of individuals, as well as developing the desired musical outcomes (ibid: 12-13).

This social responsibility of the facilitator also necessitates experience with improvisation, not just in terms of musical improvisation, but also improvisation understood as a way of negotiating the world. Through creative environments created and managed by the facilitator, participants are able to express their musical imaginations and personal identities through music in ways that are playful, personal, interpersonal, and free (ibid: 13). Community music then facilitates a context in which people's values, identities and ideas are validated and encouraged, "Improvisation evokes the human *musicking* potential" (Loc. cit., italics in original). Comparing this image of the community music facilitator to Turino's (2008) skilful musicians and core musicians in the context of a participatory performance event, they are akin to the community music facilitator insofar that they create the necessary atmosphere in which free and elaborative participation is encouraged and easy, allowing for individual expression and the negotiation of social and cultural values and preferences. This focus of the facilitator on generating an environment in which individual expression is favoured over any abstract notion of the quality of the musical outcome, points to a similar emphasis on the desired outcome or priorities of the activity to that of the participatory performance events mentioned by Turino (2008). In a similar manner, Howell et al. (2017) argues that "musical excellence" in community music refers to the quality of the social experience, on the relationships and bonds formed through the music making experience, and similar to Small (1998), that it is in these relationships its meanings lie.

As mentioned earlier, these events of live music and performance are enmeshed in a system of social actors, venues, policy makers, and urban infrastructures that are necessary and can pose challenges to their continued existence. These systems are the live music ecologies of different cities around the world. Like the concept of scenes, these ecologies are both spatially bound, and are driven by various ideologies and values, in addition to the economic and profit-oriented motivations of sustaining them, which has been the focus of much research into live music ecologies before, (see Cloonan, 2011; and Behr et al., 2016). Van der Hoeven and Hitters (2019) have tried to uncover what social and cultural values can be attributed to live music ecologies, the concrete indicators of those values, the potential challenges to them, and the relevant policy interventions that could address those challenges (p. 266). In their research, social and cultural value is understood as "the contribution of live music to the social relationships between people, a sense of belonging and collective identity" (Loc. cit.).

Like most of the other accounts of live music, performance, and social formations we have discussed so far, van der Hoeven and Hitters also argues that live music has the capacity to enhance a sense of social belonging and allow people to connect with each other. However, while offering opportunity to strengthen social cohesion and relationships within groups, they argue that racial and class barriers to participation, and a normalization of gender differences still persist which restricts the inclusiveness of these events (Loc. cit.). In other words, they distinguish between the capacity of live music ecologies for social *bonding*, which means the strengthening of in-group cohesion, and its capacity for social *bridging*, which is to say the capacity to create social ties between different heterogenous groups. Live music ecologies can also play important roles in the formation of identities, as certain venues might define the character of a street or neighbourhood and be viewed as central to a city's cultural heritage. This allows for people to derive a sense of identity and pride from these local live music scenes (ibid: 267). The authors argue that this sense of heritage and belonging that people might feel towards these local music scenes can be derived from physical elements such as iconic venues, and from intangible practices such as a specific musical tradition or regularly occurring performance events (Loc. cit.). These are collective identities and are part of the social bonding between people who feel attached to the same musical traditions of performance practices and are bounded to particular locations.

The authors also recognized three different sets of cultural values that can be attributed to live music ecologies which they have called *musical creativity, talent development,* and *cultural vibrancy* (ibid: 267-268). The first of these three categories pertain to the sentiment of "music for music's sake", music that is played not in pursuit of commercial success, but for its own sake and the enjoyment of the audience. This also highlights how live music can inspire people and enable people to discover new musical styles (ibid: 267), which can be crucial to the development of identity. The second category is self-explanatory, live music ecologies can provide spaces for people to develop their skills and musical craftsmanship, which is important in order to sustain the musical creativity of a city. They argue that it is important that cities offer spaces and venues in which emerging and aspiring musicians can perform, rehears, and develop their craft, and network among other musicians and industry representatives (Loc. cit.). However, the authors recognize several challenges to this, such as the increasing living costs in urban areas, sound proofing and noise reduction policies and regulations, and rising rents that many small venues cannot afford while still being able to offer a space for these musicians to perform (ibid: 267-268). The cultural vibrancy dimension is concerned with how live music

connects to the wider cultural ecology and contributes to a thriving cultural sector. Live music venues and spaces that offer musical performance activities can be central in creating an attractive live music ecology that enhances a city's cultural offerings (ibid: 268).

The various terms and concepts used to describe the co-presence of people through musical activities highlight many of the same things. People are drawn to these events of live music making because it provides opportunity for self-development and expression, and through shared cultural preferences and affinities, various groups of people are able to share a sense of collective belonging. Musical practice and participation actualizes both individual abilities and potential, while at the same time generating and bringing to the fore the various relationships that come to be through these activities. They also highlight the spatial dimension of these events as they are situated in physical locations, and also their temporal character as they take place in a specific point in time. Local live music ecologies as a concept does well to capture the complexities of cultural sectors in urban city environments and is a useful tool when trying to uncover the challenges these ecologies faces and the remedies to these challenges. It considers professional musical endeavours and amateur performance, vocational and leisure activities, and large arenas and small venues alike. Much of the musical activity that takes place in various venues can be considered a professional endeavour as it more often than not involves established or emerging artists that have been booked to play a show for a paying audience. However, as van der Hoeven and Hitters pointed out, there are instances where the activity undertaken is done so not to achieve commercial success, but rather for its own sake. These could be such musical activities as karaoke, open mics, or as this thesis is concerned with, jam sessions.

4. Contextualizing jam sessions: a historical perspective

Jam sessions are not new phenomena. Dating back to the 1930s and 1940s in the USA, they are events that are deeply rooted in the jazz tradition, hence the reason that I have already made a distinction between jazz jam sessions and contemporary jam sessions. Early research into jam sessions emerged in the 1950s in the USA and the common thread throughout this research is that they are dealing with a more informal and less codified performance event organized by musicians, for musicians. Less formal in the sense that they were not traditional concerts with a paying audience and a pre-determined setlist or programme. Calling them informal highlights the meanings, functions, values, rules, and norms of the events and describe

the interaction between musicians and between musicians and the audience. Most of the research on this phenomenon focuses on jazz jam sessions, mostly in the 1930s to 1950s, with some looking at jazz jam sessions in more recent times. The term "jazz" is complicated, diverse, and covers many musical expressions that sound wildly different. However, one shared aspect of most, if not all, of the musical expressions termed jazz, is the element of improvisation, which as we will see is also a central part of jam sessions, both the jazz jam sessions and the contemporary ones.

In this situation, improvisation mainly refers to two different things. Firstly, we are talking about musical improvisation, the ability of a musician to make a piece of music spontaneously and without prior rehearsal. In the context of jazz music, this usually means improvising melodic lines over the harmonic foundation of any given composition. This is, and has been, the way jazz has been played ever since jazz came about at the beginning of the 20th century and requires a great deal of technical proficiency and knowledge of western music theory and jazz theory on part of the individual player. It also requires that the musician be intimately familiar with the jazz repertoire and the enormous reservoir of songs that make up the jazz canon or "jazz standards", as well as knowledge about the ways in which songs are structured and the conventions in which they are played among musicians. The jazz tradition has established ways of playing songs, traditions that have developed over time. A rough guide to how jazz standards are played within smaller jazz ensembles or "combos" could look something like this: One of the instrumentalists (often a piano player) plays an intro of a couple of measures establishing the groove, tempo, and key of the song. The rest of the band joins in and someone plays the melody (someone else might play the melody on the B-section of the song), and then the different musicians take turns improvising solos over the harmonic foundation of the song (the same harmonic foundation that underscores the melody) before finishing the tune by playing the melody again. The other thing we might mean when talking about improvisation in the context of a jam session is more generally the ability to adapt quickly to a situation and navigate the social environment of the jam session, adapting to the responses and feedback from audience members and fellow performers. In short, improvisations at a jam session requires the musician to be technically proficient at their instrument, to possess knowledge about the song reservoir and the manner in which they are played, and also to possess a good deal of social and musical awareness and be a skilled communicator. These are traits that are necessary in order to play jazz music outside of the jam session as well, in what might be considered a more professional or serious setting. All these things require a great deal

of practice and experience on the part of the musician, to which jam sessions seem to offer great opportunity.

Back to the matter at hand, how have researchers described jam sessions in the past? And how did they describe their workings and functions? William Bruce Cameron gives us one of the earliest accounts of the jam session, providing a clear definition of jam sessions and a statement about the meaning of the event by saying that it is "a recreational rather than a vocational activity of jazz musicians" (1954: 177). Similar to Howard S. Becker (1951) and Scott DeVeaux (1989; 1997), he connects the jam session to the dance musician and the ballroom dance music of the 1930s and 1940s, albeit in different ways. Where Cameron (1954) and Becker (1951) argues that the jam sessions were creative outlets for jazz musicians where they could distance themselves from the ordinary public and the commercial music they played in those settings, DeVeaux (1997) argues that jam sessions were experimental playgrounds that were instrumental in the development of the subsequent style of jazz called bebop. At the same time, they were also battlegrounds for musicians, sometimes also referred to as "cutting contests" (DeVeaux, 1997; Gooley 2011) where musicians would compete by trading solos in order to establish a hierarchy of competence and skill among themselves. DeVeaux concedes to Cameron's argument that the jam sessions were recreational activities insofar as they rarely paid anything, were outside of union work, took place during leisure time and "after-hours" in various night clubs, and that they were sites where musicians could play for their own satisfaction. However, their nature as a recreational musical event does not exclude them from the role of a vocational musical activity, as DeVeaux puts it:

> The jam session was an integral part of the 'art world' that constituted their professional life. It was both recreational *and* vocational. The element of escape and recreation is obvious: the jam session was a part of nightlife … But it was also a kind of work. Musicians counted on having this time to practice, to work out new ideas and techniques, to exchange information, to network with their colleagues, to establish a rough-and-ready hierarchy of competence – all useful and necessary activities that could not practically be carried out on the band stand (DeVeaux, 1997: 207; italics in original).

Jam sessions were thus simultaneously work and leisure, sites of experimentation and practice, places of social networking both personal and professional, and sites of confirmation of one's own capabilities, or lack thereof, encouraging practice and self-improvement. The jam sessions and their function as a place of "friendly competition" (ibid: 208) meant that even though there was a competitive edge to the sessions, it was not a hostile environment. "While

the competition was serious, the atmosphere was congenial and supportive. Individual reputations might be made or broken, but the ultimate purpose was to raise the quality of performance all around" (ibid: 211). Thus, you could argue that the music was played for the music's sake, as these performances were not about reaching commercial success, but rather striving to improve the quality of performance.

As already mentioned, these sessions would take place "after-hours", as this was when musicians would have finished their jobs in various dance bands and gather together in different clubs. While not all dance musicians were jazz musicians, many jazz musicians at this time were employed in dance bands in order to make a living, as this was "the nearest commercial compromise available" (Cameron, 1954: 177). As DeVeaux puts it they "were dance musicians and entertainers, by necessity if not by inclination" (DeVeaux, 1989: 7). The music of the dance bands are described by Cameron as the commercial antithesis to the serious and artistic jazz music that they wanted to play (at least this was how the musicians seemed to think of it), and so the jam session became a ritual of purification for the jazz musician, a way to cleanse their mouth of the taste of commercial music while at the same time reaffirming their own aesthetic values (Cameron, 1954: 178) Dana Gooley argues the same, saying that "jazz players valued jam sessions as the antithesis of their professional work. Sessions offered welcome respite from long and unrewarding hours playing in dance bands, stage shows and radio studios" (Gooley, 2011: 44). Cameron, in his account of these events explains how they were quite reserved, not completely private to the extent that they would be hosted in a private home (although this would occur on some occasions), but there were several criteria in place for what venue would be chosen for the session, one being relative obscurity so as to not be disturbed by the casual spectator, others being the availability of good food and drinks (Cameron, 1954: 178). The casual spectators from whom they wanted to distance themselves were the same people for whom they would play the dance band music, people that would not understand and appreciate the seriousness and quality of the music they would play at a jam session. Thus, even though jam session take on the appearance of an open and democratic participatory event through their free form and openness compared to the fixity of an event such as a rock concert, it is (or at least was) "not an 'open society' but a group self-consciously marked off for its professional status" (Gooley, 2011: 44).

Becker (1951) sheds some light on this desire for the musicians to remove themselves from the general public and the "casual spectator" as Cameron has called them. He claims that the musicians at these jam sessions found jazz the only music worth playing, jazz in the sense

that the music is non-commercial and in line with their own aesthetic standards and values in the same manner as described by Cameron. At the same time, they experienced the necessity of also playing this commercial music (the dance band music) in order to make ends meet, thus sacrificing their own aesthetic standards and sense of self. "If he remains true to his standards, he is doomed to failure in the larger society" (Becker, 1951: 136). They would classify themselves according to the degree in which they would give in to the demands of the public, to the outsiders or the ordinary person, or "squares" as he also calls them. This ambivalence between staying true to ones' self and selling out results in a conception of themselves and their identity as a musician that is different from the ordinary person, they talk differently, behave differently and understand things that the ordinary person simply does not (ibid: 137). "The squares do not understand the music" is the general sense of the argument, and thus should not have a say in what they play and how they play it, and thus the musicians seek to remove themselves from them through the jam session. Pinheiro argues that this description of the jazz musician by both Cameron and Becker is contributing to "a rather stereotyped vision of socially self-isolated, illiterate, and nonverbal musicians" (2014: 336).

The secluded nature of early jam sessions as described by Cameron and Becker makes it seem as if they would only take place in small and obscure clubs and bars and private homes. DeVeaux (1997), however, points to the fact that jam sessions could be found regularly at prominent jazz venues and nightclubs in New York all the way back to the 1930s. He quotes Dizzy Gillespie saying that he used to go to as many as twelve different places each night (1997: 213). These were venues such as The Rhythm Club, Minton's Playhouse and Monroe's Uptown House, all highly esteemed clubs in the New York scene.

Improvisation is a central element of jam session, partly due to the music that is played in which improvised solos over a general chord scheme is commonplace, but also in the sense of their organization. The sessions would be unprepared in the sense that there would not be a setlist of songs to play, but they would rather agree on tunes while on stage. These would be chosen from a song reservoir, "one of about a thousand 'standard' jam tunes" (Cameron, 1954: 178), these could be songs preserved in memory, songs from the American songbook, fake books or Tin Pan Alley, songs written by other jazz players or even songs that would be made up on the spot (Faulkner & Becker, 2009: 19). Pinheiro adds to this by saying there are conventions that dictate the behaviour at these events, and "a standard repertoire which shapes the performance in jam sessions, serving as the starting point for the improvisation of the musicians" (Pinheiro, 2012: 134). The ways in which these conventions regarding behaviours

and repertoire are communicated is through symbolic patterns and action determined by the jazz tradition (Loc. cit.). The tunes could however have pre-arrangements that the players were expected to know. These were not arrangements in the way that the dance band music was formally arranged with each part written out, but rather "certain introductions, cadenzas, clichés, and ensemble obbligati assume traditional association with specific tunes and come to be viewed as an organic part of the tune itself" (Cameron, 1954: 179). In other words, certain ways of for example playing the introduction to the selected tune that would be learned by ear from specific recordings in specific keys and that would be expected to be common knowledge about the songs. Even though improvisation is a central part of jam sessions this does not mean that it is all spontaneous and unorganized, but as Cameron says it is rather "non-literate" (Loc. cit.).

Although the events were relatively private and reserved for a small selection of musicians, there was still the occasional outsider which would sit in on the session, meaning they would get a spot on stage or take the place of one of the members in the house band. Still, the audience that would make up the session was largely other musicians. In this manner the session could also function as an initiation or a trial for an outsider seeking to enter into the group. Cameron (1954) explains how these might be musicians from other places, younger musicians and even teenagers looking to learn from and become part of this elite group of musicians and learn the trade. Pinheiro quotes Lawrence Nelson in saying that the act of even bringing your instrument to the jam session signals to the other musicians a willingness to perform while also suggesting that you would have a certain competence in the craft. The choice in song might also send a further message (Pinheiro, 2014: 336). Cameron, while discussing the same situation in which an outsider joins in and performs mentions how their choice in song might inform whether the person will be accepted or not, and not only that they choose a song that the musicians are familiar with, but that they choose to play it in the correct key and are familiar with any pre-arrangements that might be integral to the performance of the song (Cameron, 1954: 178-179). This is also evidence of the jam sessions at the time being a site for networking amongst professionals and aspiring musicians, an arena for establishing a professional network of musicians and potential collaborators. The social milieu they fostered at these events, in part due to their exclusivity and removal from the public eye and the casual spectator, also makes it a site for "establishing, expressing and consolidating values and beliefs shared by jazz musicians" (Pinheiro, 2012: 133). Thus, the sessions were a private affair

between musicians, not only in terms of their physical locations, but also in terms of their meanings.

The initiation goes hand in hand with the friendly competition described by DeVeaux (1997), and the more established musicians at the jam sessions would constantly try to test these younger musicians or outsiders seeking entrance to this musical world and seeking to master their musical craft. "In this way, the after-hours jam session became an integral part of an aspiring musician's musical education … the jam session was 'the jazzman's true academy'" (ibid: 212). In some "extreme" cases, such as in the 1988 film *Bird*, a young Charlie Parker is promptly put in his place by the drummer throwing his cymbal at his feet, indicating to him that he is in over his head and needs to go practice. DeVeaux argues, however, that for the most part musicians had established procedures that could be called upon to put others in their place, more subtle cues that were meant to make the musician realize for themselves their shortcomings. These strategies could be such things as playing a song in a key "outside of the ken of ordinary musicians" (ibid: 214), as most musicians had certain keys in which they were comfortable playing specific songs. Thus, a more experienced and professional musician could test the limits of the musician sitting in at a session or let them know in a subtle way that they did not belong by playing the song in a different key or modulating on each chorus to see if they could follow.

In addition to ascribing the development of bebop to the jam sessions of the 1940s, DeVeaux (1989) also attributes to the jam sessions the development of jazz music from being a form of entertainment music to a more serious art form, deserving of the same undivided attention and respect as western art music. Through such events as the "Jazz at the Philharmonic" concert series, he argues that jazz musicians took the jam session format and merged it with the concert format of western art music as jam session audiences at this point had developed into a dedicated an enthusiastic audience, appreciative of and dedicated to the virtuosity of the jazz musicians. "This fact led to the organization of concerts with a jam session ambience that became one of the most well succeeded jazz live presentation forms" (Pinheiro, 2014: 338).

Cameron and Becker both describe the jam sessions as something jazz musicians started doing out of necessity. The jam session was the escape and the ritual of purification that allowed them to uphold a sense of artistic integrity and play music of their own choosing in their own way, within a context and a framework of their own design. Pinheiro, in researching different jam sessions in Manhattan in the early 2000s, also proposes that we view these events as rituals as they are characterized by "a set of actions with symbolic value, configured by norms that

shape jazz performance, and by decisions of the actors involved" (Pinheiro, 2012: 133). These events also involve communication, and their frequency and organization assure the unity and continuation of the social group that takes part in it. Their occurrence on specific days and at specific venues further illustrates the ritualized character of the event, not ritualized in the sense that these events are somehow mundane and devoid of their original meanings, but rather that they have become internalized and significant practices for the participants that are regularly occurring. Members of a social group are using sounds that have been brought into certain kinds of relationships to explore, affirm, and celebrate the values of that group, or what Christopher Small calls ideal relationships (Small, 1998: 183).

Conceptualizing jam sessions in this manner, as rituals, involves an acknowledgement of certain conventions and norms that dictate behaviour both on and off stage, as well as the existence of specific roles such as a band leader (Pinheiro, 2012: 135). Compare this to a religious gathering in a place of worship. There is a leader figure, such as a priest, whose responsibility it is to lead the congregation in worship. In the same way, a bandleader at a jam session is structuring the event with their involvement and decisions and through the relationships they establish with others involved, by encouraging participation from others and making sure things run smoothly. Pinheiro makes comments on the existence of a shared repertoire of songs and argues that this also points to the ritualized nature of the jam session (2012: 139). This repertoire is the same as that which Faulkner and Becker (2009) mention. Knowledge of the repertoire is crucial for the individual performer in establishing themselves as competent and knowledgeable musicians in the scene, and you are expected to not play if you do not know it in order to give someone else a chance to play (Pinheiro, 2012: 139-140). A musician realizing that they do not know a song that is being called can however be an important part in the process of learning and obtaining the status as a high calibre musician as it can encourage further practice and encourage one to learn the song in order to be able to participate the next time.

Conceiving of jam sessions as ritualized practice involves the idea that the session reinforces practices and values shared by the musicians and establishes a collective understanding of the aesthetics surrounding jazz. Pinheiro concedes to this point, but also argues that jam sessions are events which "may stimulate change over time in behaviour patterns and culture, including norms and values" and that are important in the "expression, transmission, fixing, strengthening and transformation of aesthetic and performative values shared by the 'jazz scene' in Manhattan" (ibid: 140). This does not necessarily apply

exclusively to the "jazz scene" in Manhattan but to local music scenes in other cities as well, Manhattan is just the place in which Pinheiro's research is based.

As we have surveyed thus far, jam sessions have historically been a space that facilitates leisure music activities for professional musicians, primarily jazz musicians, and aspiring musicians trying to perfect their craft. The surrounding discourse frames the events as platforms that allow for musicians to explore and experiment with their musical vocabularies and capabilities and network among other musicians. They are also argued to be fertile grounds for the development of musical ideas and the affirmation of both personal and collective aesthetic standards and values. However, leisure musical activities are not only practiced by professional musicians, and on the grand scale of things, there are certainly significantly more amateur musicians in the world. That is, people who practice music mostly as a recreational activity. The jazz jam sessions that we have described thus far are not the only types of perceived informal performance events that musicians take part in, and other types of events might look similar to the jazz jam sessions, while being tailored to this other category of musicians, the amateurs. Two of these types of events are the open mic and karaoke. The reason for examining these is to discover the characteristics of these different types of events, as they share common features between them and with jam sessions, while at the same time being distinctively different in other aspects. This is done in order to better understand the nature of these events and to be able to situate the contemporary jam sessions in Oslo within a larger spectrum of performance events as they share similarities both in their structure and organization, as well as in terms of the social relationships, communication, functions and values.

5. Leisure music activities: The open mic night and karaoke

5.1. Open mic nights

The first of these other two types of events we will look at is the open mic night. Similar to the jam sessions which have already been accounted for, open mic nights are a type of performance event outside of the constraints of more traditional concert events, "themselves a grey area between professionally oriented musical pursuits and more casual activity in a number of ways" (Behr, 2012: 560). Marcus Aldredge (2006) looks at one particular open mic night in Brooklyn, New York called "The Jig" and describes its conventions, meanings, and functions. Although very limited in scope, it does provide some insight into the workings of open mic nights and points out some key aspects that make it different from a jam session. Very generally,

he describes the open mic as a weekly recurring musical event at a particular nightspot where musicians and bands can show up, sign up, and play (ibid: 109). Regardless of the genre of music, all acts that sign up are given a time slot in which to perform. An important aspect that distinguishes this event from the jam sessions discussed so far, is the fact that musicians at this event are amateurs, or as Aldredge puts it: "These musicians are in transitional points in their musical careers and identities and reside on the periphery of the musical world, with the hope of eventually entering it" (Loc. cit.). Aldredge is using Howard Becker's (1982) concept of *Art Worlds* in order to understand the open mic night in question and how it might assist the musicians in their endeavour to learn their musical craft and enter into the musical art world. This concept argues that all artistic work involves the cooperation of a group of people and the complex social networks and positions they are a part of. These forms of cooperation might become routinized, "producing patterns of collective activity we call an art world" (ibid: 1). This routinized collective activity can be seen as conventions of that art world, conventions one has to be familiar with in order to successfully and competently navigate that specific artworld. Aldredge argues that the musicians that perform at this particular open mic use it as a means of "familiarizing themselves with the meanings and structures of the professional music world in the hope of gaining access to that world" (Aldredge, 2006: 110). He also makes use of Will Straw's conception of scenes (1991; 2006; 2015) and argues that the open mic might be considered a scene as they are expressive and leisure-based and "support a collective orientation of people engaging in a common activity" (Aldredge: 2006: 110).

Central to Aldredges' research, however, is the role of the amateur musician. He contrasts these to the dance band musicians as described by Becker and argues that the open mic performer seeks input from their fellow amateur performers and the audience in order to facilitate their growth as musicians and performers (ibid: 112). He claims that this desire breaks down the supposed barrier between audience and performer that exists in other, more modern, popular music scenes. This, he argues, "reinforces a sense of a *folk* music scene" (Loc. cit. italics in original). While this implies that the aspect of participation is a crucial component of the open mic, Behr argues that open mic nights more often than not are oriented towards popular music, thus maintaining the differentiation between performer and audience, "at least *during the performance,* that distinguishes pop or rock (commercial music) from traditional folk sessions" (Behr, 2012: 562; italics in original). Nevertheless, open mic nights are in general open to anyone who wants to perform.

Aldredge splits the performers at The Jig into two categories – the workers and the patrons – for which he has subgroups for each of these as well. The patrons are the performers, friends of the performers, and other visitors on any particular evening. Probably the most important role of the workers (the owners of the venue) is the role of hosting the open mic. Making sure everything runs smoothly, that those who sign up are present and ready and that people stick to their allotted time slot, that the equipment is in working order and helping out with any technical issues. Regulars at the open mic who are familiar with the equipment will also do this at times (Aldredge, 2006), pointing to a shared sense of community among performers and the function of the open mic as a learning platform for musicians. The workers also inform newcomers of the "rules" of the open mic, and monitor the behaviour of patrons, for example making sure that no one brings with them drinks from outside.

The performers are split further into three subsets of performers. The most common one is the solo performer who signs up alone, typically accompanying themselves and singing. This is the typical singer/songwriter individual. The second subset of performers is what Aldredge calls the "combo" (ibid: 114), a group of individuals that perform together, but that still sign up with individual names. This, he argues, is the most dynamic of the performer subsets, as configurations might be shifting from one week to the next. Lastly, and least common out of the three, is the band. This group sign up using a non-personal name, "signifying a group identity, and it plays every time under this same name" (Loc. cit.). The frequency of attendance at the open mic by musicians also vary, and Aldredge notes that those who come every week usually know each other personally. In the "back area" is where most of the informal schooling and networking among the musicians at the open mic occur (ibid: 115). This back area is the part of the bar/venue where people would naturally sit while listening to the current performer and getting ready to perform themselves. It is not a back-stage in the literal sense, but might function as one to a certain extent, it is at least a space differentiated from the actual stage, where a different role is played. Aldredge also draws on some of Erving Goffman's theories of social interaction and roles in describing strategies the performers use to distance themselves from the status of performer whenever something does not go according to plan, and to rectify this image. Over time "Their scripting and impression management abilities become finely tuned" (Loc. cit.), the concept of role distancing can become visible in instances where a performer jokes with the audience for example. This points to the development of performers musicianship as Aldredge argues that performers evolve in their confidence over time (Loc. cit.).

Regular performers will mingle and interact with each other, sharing experiences, ideas, constructive criticism, and values. A successful performance will usually entail fulfilment and satisfaction, having the audience be attentive to ones' performance, and feeling comfortable with sound levels. Positive feedback from the audience and other performers and getting to hear good music from others are also a part of a successful performance. Even an audience that is disrespectful can be seen as a successful performance as this too can be a learning experience (ibid: 115-116). These events seem to illustrate what Turino would call a sequential participatory performance. The success of these performances are not necessarily judged on the perceived quality of the musical outcome, but rather on the level of participation. It is the goal of the event that as many people as possible are allowed and given the opportunity to perform, however, as participants are not performing simultaneous, it becomes a sequential performance event. This aids in creating a comforting environment for performers as they know their performance will not be the only one, and that other participants will also perform, which ensures a variety of different skill levels.

Behr takes a slightly different approach than Aldredge, connecting the open mic scene to local music ecologies as these events are also integrated with businesses, both music businesses and others, such as the night life business, as these events typically take place in night clubs, pubs, and bars. Open mics, he argues, illustrates that music business and other businesses co-exist symbiotically and that policy decisions on one might affect the other. They illustrate a "'bridging point' between the professional and the amateur" (Behr: 2012: 560). Despite notable contributions describing the ideologies of collective musical activity and descriptions of local music cultures, little is said of the open mic night in relation to these ecologies (ibid: 561).

As already mentioned, Behr argues that Aldredges' assertion that openness signifies a sense of a folk music scene is at best a simplification. As Behr argues, open mics and folk sessions certainly share similarities as informal, weekly occurring performance events that are open to the participation of anyone who wishes to do so. However, partly because of the available repertoire and genre, and the ideologies attached to these events and their repertoire, the two differ in their kinds of inclusivity (Behr, 2012: 563). Similar to a jazz session, the folk session is more strictly codified than the open mic, contributing to the exclusion of certain people and musicians, privileging participation from those already engaged with that specific musical world (Loc. cit.). At open mic nights on the other hand, being more oriented towards popular music and thus with a greater emphasis on privileged performance, "the inclusivity

works as a function of the night itself as a forum and training ground for such performance, even if the audience is often comprised of other performers and their friends" (Loc. cit.). The open mics are thus aimed more towards the conventions of performance that are found in popular music, but without the commercial aspect and also without the ideological or aesthetic constrictions that follow folk or jazz sessions.

Behr highlights many of the same things that Aldredge does, mainly the learning aspect of the open mic night. It allows performers to become familiar with the feeling of performing on stage, in front of an audience, developing individual confidence, technical proficiency and the negotiation of stage behaviour. However, Behr specifies that the performers, while not professional in the sense that this is what they do for a living, are more than just amateurs, and skill levels can vary greatly between performers (Loc. cit.). In addition to the amateur musicians who use open mic nights to develop their musical craft, there are also ex-professional who, while no longer practicing music as a career, still enjoy performance; highly skilled amateurs who regard public performance as a significant and meaningful part of their leisure activities; and also professional and semi-professional musicians who might use the open mic as testing grounds for ideas and new material (ibid: 564). This intermingling of professionals and amateurs, or "dabblers" and "devotees" as Behr also refers to the them, is a crucial part of the events, and it signifies the intimate relationship between social interaction and musical development at these events.

Open mic nights exist on a spectrum, not only a spectrum of leisure time performance events, but also on a spectrum of open mic nights. Behr mentions three different types, what he calls a "broad typology of open mic events" (Loc. cit.). First is what he calls the "migratory/branded" open mic. These are open mic events that are in a way self-sustaining and self-contained, not tied to any specific venue, but that takes place in several different venues over time. These are highly organized with committees, websites, meetings and so forth. One such open mic he mentions called "Out of the Bedroom" is actively trying to establish a music scene or merge with an existing one, catering to the amateur musician, promoting original music (i.e. not covers), a strict system for organizing performers during the course of the evening and with featured artists (ibid: 566). The second category is what he describes as venue specific open mic which takes place at music pubs (ibid: 567), and that are tied to these pubs such as "The Jig" with which Aldredge is concerned. These usually have the necessary infrastructure to function as a music venue, with PA-systems, a dedicated space for performance, dance floors etc. These are, as with The Jig, organized in line with a "first come first served" basis, with

performers signing up to play, and are less strictly organized than the migratory/branded open mic. The third category he mentions are venue specific open mics that takes place at local pubs, in which the open mic "takes place as part of an attempt to bring trade to a pubs that has no ostensible links to the music scene" (Loc. cit.). These types of venues will often have open mic nights as well as hosting other types of activities such a quiz night, boardgame night, and the occasional gig. These venues did not, however, have the same fixed infrastructure to support musical events as the music pub, but would improvise their musical space.

Behr also stresses the important role of the host, and argues that these are often semi-professional musicians themselves, sometimes employees at the pub in which the open mic takes place. In the cases where the venue does not have the musical infrastructure in place, the host is responsible for the musical content, "They provide the link between locality and musicality" (ibid: 569). Hosts at different venues will sometimes visit and co-host at other venues, fostering a sense of a local music community. This resonates in the scenes concept, as these are common cultural practices bounded to specific locations in which people congregate and move through, while also being intertwined in the business of drinking and dining. Being responsible for the musical content of the open mic also means ensuring a minimum requirement of quality, as they are also responsible for the appeasement of other guest who might not be there as a result of the open mic, as the host needs to also take into consideration the fact that venues often are both musical venues and a business. This involves making sure that people who are overly inebriated does not get the chance to play as this can be off-putting to other customers (Loc. cit.). Aldredge noted that one crucial task of the host was making sure performers would stick to their allotted time slots, this is seconded by Behr. Depending on the night, these rules can be bended and adapted, and hosts sometimes being semi-professional, might have to take the stage themselves during quiet periods. Tolerance is a crucial aspect of the open mic night, and this trumps competence (ibid: 570). Allowing the less proficient musicians their time in the same manner as the confident performer is crucial in maintain a non-judgemental atmosphere, all within reason of course as the implicit rules of the even are just that, implicit, not fixed. The host might then take the role both of a mediator, but also as an enforcer when it is deemed necessary, as in the case of overly inebriated performers (ibid: 571).

Open mics occupy a different area of the spectrum of musical performance events than the jam sessions described earlier. They cater to the amateur musician (to a larger degree than jam sessions do) whose musical identities and careers are in transitional positions on the periphery of the musical world and are framed as providing an opportunity to learn and master

their musical craft. Jam sessions also seemed to offer this opportunity for aspiring musicians who are given the opportunity to sit in at a session, but their learning depended more on the experienced professionals testing and challenging their abilities, whereas the amateurs at open mics relied heavily on the feedback and responses from the audience members and other performers. Both are framed by ideologies of openness and informality, but genre restrictions at a jazz session and the popular music orientation and the clear presence of a host at open mics contribute to their own kinds of conventions which restricts behaviour and their degree and types of inclusivity. Both open mics and jam sessions offer performance opportunity for both singer and instrumentalists alike. However, this is not the case in the last event we will discuss, namely karaoke.

5.2. Karaoke

Out of all these leisure music activities, none is probably more easily recognized than karaoke. Whether at a bar, at a party, or at home with friends or family, most of us have some kind of relationship to this activity and know how it works. Essentially, you get to take the place of the singer in recordings of popular songs. In karaoke bars, you usually pick a song from a list that includes a wide variety of different genres and artists, the request is submitted to an emcee who will program the music and run the show (Drew, 1997: 450). Robert Drew describes the workings of karaoke nights at various karaoke bars in an effort to better understand the "many types of modern amateurs" (ibid: 452), as these events might be more clearly frequented by amateurs than the other events which we have described so far. Again, "amateur" does not mean un-skilled, it simply means that these are not musicians by vocation and use these types of events as a space where they can develop their own musical craft and musical identities.

Turino argues that karaoke is particularly interesting because it is what he calls a "sequential participatory tradition stripped down to the barest essential – the participatory frame itself" (2008: 51), "sequential" meaning that all participants take turns performing. As we discussed in a previous section of this thesis, Turino differentiates between different types of performative traditions, mainly presentational and participatory. Presentational performance is what you might associate with a regular concert performance, a presentation of a "musical product". This tradition of musical performance is common especially in the west and in cultures where music has been commodified and is seen as an object that can be owned, purchased, and consumed, a performance is thus a presentation of a musical product.

Participatory performance on the other hand, is a special kind of artistic practice in which the distinction between performer and audience is dissolved, it is only performers and potential performers, and the primary objective of the activity is to engage as many participants as possible in performance roles (ibid: 26). These events of participatory music making are not just informal or amateur, which is to say a lesser version of the "real music" made by professionals, rather they are something entirely different and should be conceptualized and valued as such (ibid: 25). The style of performance at a karaoke is presentational insofar as they are re-presentations of famous songs, but the underlying ethos, that others present will eventually do a song as well, makes it participatory (ibid: 49). The success of a participatory performance event hinges more so on the degree and scale of participation than on some abstract assessment of the quality of the music.

Drew describes the conventions that shape a karaoke night, explaining how individual performers decide to perform and how they might negotiate different roles and handle role conflicts in these situations. Many performers refer to the presence of other people that they know as the only reason that they would dare perform, others might go opposite and state the absence of people they know as the most important reason (1997: 453). Performers might often cater their performances to particular individuals in the audience, this becomes particularly crucial in public spaces like karaoke bars where the activity of karaoke enters into a pre-existing social environment with complicated structures and relationships. Embarrassment during or because of a performance might discredit ones already established identity within this social environment (ibid: 453-454). Some incentive to perform must often be in place before the individual performer will do so. An incentive might be as simple as having someone else to perform with, a friend or a significant other (ibid: 455). In cases where a performer attends the same karaoke session (one that is held each week at the same venue/bar) several times, they might start to get recognised by other frequent visitors who might in some way encourage them to perform again (Turino, 2008: 50). Group members might decide to perform together, making the performance seem more like a team effort, making each individuals' desire to perform less visible. Drew also mentions a situation in which two female performers got up to perform together, one more hesitant to do so than the other. The woman who at first seemed the most eager to perform at one point opted out of the performance as the second had become more involved, explaining to the author how she only wanted her friend to perform and show off her talent as she had the better voice, but was reluctant to do so (Drew, 1997: 455-456). In this case, the performance of the first of these women was framed as "a complementary team effort in

which her role was to allow her friend to demonstrate her talent without appearing too eager" (ibid: 456).

Karaoke is an activity that in some eyes might be viewed as less worthy of serious appreciation, as "low-brow" culture. "Because of its implicit amateurism and folksy character, karaoke finds itself in the lower regions of the cultural hierarchy" (Peters, Koen & Michael, 2018: 59). While this might be true in much of western society, it is not necessarily the case in other parts of the world, for example in Japan where karaoke is taken more seriously and in high regard. Nevertheless, karaoke is sometimes approached with a sense of ironic distance or reluctance to take it seriously. Peters, Koen, and Michael (2018) argue that the manner in which different people approach, consume and perform karaoke might reflect their cultural capital and social background, invoking a Bourdieu-esque conception of cultural formation and consumption. As the practice is often linked to working-class cultures, at least in western cultures, karaoke performers from high cultural capital backgrounds might approach it ironically in order to communicate a mismatch between the activity and their identities (ibid: 60).

Drew does touch upon the point made by Peters et al. and argues that some devoted karaoke performers might begin to distance themselves from acquaintances who are not as committed to the activity as they are (Drew, 1997: 459). They might connect with other enthusiastic performers and attend other karaoke bars in other places removed from their home bars "partially to minimize the threat of conflicting role demands" (ibid: 460). In cases where regular performers start to gather frequently at certain karaoke bars, they start creating social worlds that can offer them regularized and collective experiences, they start bonding together to do karaoke specifically. They start performing together, and these formations might shift from week to week in the same manner as Aldredge described the combos that would perform at The Jig. These performers embrace the role as amateur and actively seek to put on a good show, careful in their choice of songs, making sure that the song and the performance will enhance the mood and experience of the event (ibid: 461). This also makes the case for the scenes concepts in the same manner as the open mic nights, as people congregate in particular venues to share in a common cultural practice that allows them to develop and express both personal and collective identities.

Peters et al. (2018) make similar points but highlight the importance of the performers background in explaining the rationale behind their engagement with the activity. They distinguish the engagement of performers into three separate categories: Serious engagement,

ironic engagement, and secretly serious engagement. They argue that the serious performers in their research often came from low cultural capital backgrounds, and had a serious and "near professional approach" (p. 63) to technical aspects of karaoke and vocal qualities, were emotionally invested, had a clear connection between song selection and musical taste, they highly valued others' opinion and judgements of their performance and wanted to improve their performance, and thought that karaoke could have a cathartic effect (Loc. cit.). However, even though these performers were quite serious about karaoke, humour and fun were not therefore off the table.

Other performers from backgrounds of higher cultural capital would, more often than not, be ironic in their engagement with the activity (ibid: 65). These participants were not by that standard unenthused by the activity, but their involvement was often ambiguous. The respondents that fell under this category had a rather clear disdain for the serious performers and they were adamant about fun being one of the most important aspects of the activity. They also meant that karaoke and your choice in songs does not reflect one's actual musical taste, drawing boundaries between karaoke and their own taste. For this reason, the songs performed could not actually be good. They did not believe that there should be any sincere emotional investment to this activity, and a sincere performance should be funny and humorous, and thus they would not try very hard or sing a song seriously (ibid: 65-67). Even though these performers would not use this musical activity to develop and express identities which coincides with the values of the activity, they would still use them to manifest and express their personal identities by ironic approach, distancing themselves from the activity while still participating in it.

The performers from backgrounds of higher cultural capital would not all be ironic in their approach to the activity, some would be, as the title of Peters et al. (2018) suggest, secretly serious. Their seriousness was shrouded by ambiguity, unwilling to identify with the activity, and showed a degree of resistance to their own seriousness (ibid: 67). In the instances when they let their guard down and realized they were being more serious than they would like, they would feel a degree of shame and feel the need to apologize for it. Karaoke performers who receive audience approval and positive feedback might be inclined to take the activity quite seriously and even practice at home, while others might use comedy in order to make their performances entertaining (Turino, 2008: 50). The serious performer in Peters et al. (2018) might even treat karaoke as a stepping-stone to professionalism, however, most do it for fun and "to experience the Possible – what it would feel like to be a singing star" (Turino, 2008:

51). The varying skill level of performers is an important part of the participatory framework with which Turino is concerned as it bolsters confidence among those performers with less experience and confidence.

Leisure music activities can take many different shapes and forms, taking place at various venues and cater to different kinds of people. Whether they be serious recreational activities for professionals meant as a creative outlet, a ritual of purification and a site for the reaffirmation of aesthetic standards and ideals, arenas facilitating a learning experience for aspiring musicians and the teaching of musical craftsmanship and the conventions of an art world, or as a musical leisure activity for amateurs in which levels of serious engagement can vary and social collectives are formed around a common activity. Common is their situatedness within a broader spectrum of leisure music activities, both as a recreational and a vocational musical activity. The descriptions of these events given so far will serve as a comparison to the contemporary jam sessions in Oslo as we get into the events researched for this thesis. Having examined some of the contributions that describe jam sessions, we will have ample opportunity to see how the contemporary jam sessions compare, how they have potentially evolved and merged with other types of leisure music activities, and how they fit into an ecology of live music events in Oslo.

6. Leisure music in the city: contemporary jam sessions

Now that some thoughts and conceptions about jam sessions and other participatory leisure music activities have been introduced, we have a clear sense of how they have been conceptualized in the past, how performers approach these different events, who these performers are, and how these events converge and overlap. The following section is an account of three contemporary jam sessions I attended in Oslo and is derived from my own experiences as a performer, audience member, and as a participatory observer, as well as from the four qualitative interviews with four different performers at these jam sessions. My four informants will be called Aurora, Henrik, Per, and Stein. Aurora is a 25 year-old singer, Henrik is a 27 year-old drummer, Per is a 25 year-old saxophonist, and Stein is a 29 year-old guitarist. All are in their 20s, which is fairly representative of the performers at the jam sessions I attended. There were of course exceptions to this, but more often than not, performers were young. The sessions I attended share many similarities with each other, and also with the other musical events already discussed. These different jam sessions, hosted by different people, with different house

bands and at different venues might share characteristics and ideologies because many performers attend several of the sessions and are regular performers at most of them, making it so that their aesthetic standards, genre preferences, values, and ideologies follow them around even though the house bands and hosts at the various sessions are different people. Some of the musicians in the house bands can also be found at other sessions, and I noticed several audience members would also visit different jam sessions.

Similar to the accounts of jam sessions already explored, as well as the accounts of open mics and karaoke, the sessions I observed in Oslo occur on a weekly basis at different venues and bars around Oslo. Some of the sessions charge an entry fee, with discounts for performers and students, while others do not. Patrons seem more than willing to pay this entry fee in order to support the jam session and the house band as all proceeds from the entry fee normally go towards paying the house band. All of the sessions are generally open to the public and most of them take place in bars with existing musical infrastructure like PA systems, drum set, piano/keyboard, amplifiers, stage lights and so on. Because most of these venues are not strictly musical venues but rather bars and pubs with some musical infrastructure, the musical activity is not necessarily the primary focus of the entire room, and regular visitors who are not there because of the jam session will often sit in other parts of the room where they can socialize and carry a conversation. Some of the venues host different types of performance events as well, such as karaoke nights and also gigs from both local and international artists, and even stand-up comedy shows. The sessions usually start at around 8pm or 9pm in the evening and go on until around 11pm or midnight as opposed to the jazz jam sessions described earlier that would start after-hours and go on until early in the morning. This is mainly due to the fact that most of the venues close at around midnight. The fact that they take place at these times contributes to the availability of the event for a wider range of people as it is not a viable option for most people to stay up until the middle of the night and jam during weekdays. There is one exception among the various sessions, however, that usually start at 11pm in the evening and carry on well past midnight.

Common for all of the sessions is the presence of a house band and a band leader or host who is responsible for the structure and managing of the event. The house band is usually a fixed constellation of musicians, the same each time, with the occasional substitute whenever one of the members for some reason is unable to participate. It is not uncommon either that the host and house band members visit and perform at other sessions as most of them occur on different nights of the week. The house band usually consists of standard band instruments,

guitar, piano, bass, and drums, as well as a singer. Each session starts with the house band performing a short set of songs before the session is opened up to other performers who wants to join. For most of the sessions at which I observed, and at which I have myself performed in the past, the repertoire was largely popular music oriented, with the occasional jazz standard. Genres vary from blues and jazz, to funk and RnB, pop and hip-hop, rock and country, rarely do people perform original songs. In the few instances I have observed someone performing their own music, the outcome of the performance has varied in terms of audience attentiveness and reception, as well as how the musicians in general have managed to carry out and perform the song, as it would be unknown to all except the composer of the song.

In general, much of the music that is picked and performed are popular songs that are familiar to most people, that people can sing along to, that are not overly complicated to perform, and that encourage participation. There are of course exceptions to this as well, as there is the occasional jazz tune with lengthy improvised solos that offer more opportunity for expressions of individual creativity, technical skill, and an individual expression, as well as ballads and slower songs. This choosing of songs that encourage wider participation from all present seems to be an important aspect of the sessions and speak to the social character of the event. To illustrate this, during one of the sessions I observed, I overheard a conversation at the table next to mine between two older women (maybe in their 60s). At this point in the session there had been a series of down-tempo ballads that did not lend itself easily to participation from the audience in the sense of audience activities such as clapping and singing along. As some of the performers were leaving the stage and new ones were entering it, one of the women expressed to her friend that she hoped the next songs would be something more up-beat that people could sing along to, because then everyone could participate. It is clear from this that participation is something more than just playing an instrument or being on stage and making a musical contribution in the most direct sense possible. At the same time, it is more than just being a bystander, an audience member who sits in attentive contemplation watching a performance unfold. It brings to participation a sense of social interaction and inclusivity, actions that contribute not just to the sonic environment of the performance, but to the social environment as well. This also invokes the sense of a musical performance as something more than just an abstraction or a presentation of a musical work, and more as an actively engaging activity with which people can engage in various ways and in accordance with their own desires and skills, that it is through performance that musical meaning is created, and that this meaning is fundamentally social.

In the same way as with the jazz jam sessions, improvisation is a central aspect of the contemporary jam sessions in Oslo. Both the ones that are jazz oriented and those that are popular music oriented. This is particularly evident in the trading of solos on close to every single song performed. Musical improvisation also comes to the foreground of these sessions as the songs performed often are performed in new ways, with new grooves, tempo, and time signatures, requiring musicians to adapt to these changes. This role the band leader plays in distributing solos accomplishes two things: Firstly, it ensures the performers each get their time in the spotlight, and secondly, it helps manage the time of each performance. This in turn signifies a sense of inclusion, that all performers will be given the chance to show their skill and competency, encouraging participation. Other incentives to perform are also in place at some of the sessions, such as providing each performer with a voucher for a free drink at the bar. The host or band leader is usually the one who distributes these vouchers, while also thanking the performer and announcing the names of each individual performer to the rest of those present.

The host or band leader together with the other members of the house band has a variety of different responsibilities. They are responsible for the general management of the event, providing backing for singers and other musicians, making sure those who want to get the chance to perform, intervening in challenging situations, and, invoking Howell et al. (2017) they have the role of a facilitator, someone who is consciously trying to create an encouraging atmosphere that is inviting and inspires confidence in potential performers. Each session usually starts with the host explaining to the audience how the session works just in case there are newcomers there that evening who might not be familiar with the "rules" of the jam session. There is rarely a sign-up sheet in the same manner as with the open mics described earlier, or this is at least not strictly adhered to or as rigidly followed as with the open mics described by Aldredge (2006) and Behr (2012). The host at one of the sessions I attended would usually start by saying that anyone was welcome to join on stage to perform, whether it be by singing, playing an instrument, dancing, juggling, or performing magic, anything goes (although I have yet to see someone juggling or performing magic). Dancing is not unheard of, but not very common either, although this seems mainly to have to do with available floor space, and during the pandemic as a consequence of strict rules requiring that people remain seated at their designated table.

Not strictly relying on a sign-up sheet for the structuring of the session also allows the host more control of the progression of the session. Even though they usually have a sheet with

names of performers and the songs they wish to perform, not strictly adhering to the order in which performers are called upon allows the host to carefully manage the dynamic and flow of the event, choosing to include some slower and quieter songs from time to time just as a band or artist would manage a concert performance with a setlist. There are usually a handful of regulars at the session, people that perform regularly and have an established relationship with the host and house band, this seem to offer security to the host as they know they have someone available they can call upon whom they know will be able to perform confidently if the situation calls for it. For instance, in situations in which no one is volunteering to perform, they can call upon regulars to do a song, in which case they will often remain on stage for one or two more, and during which other performers often enter the stage as well. This often happens early in the session. Having someone there that the host knows, and whose abilities they are familiar with, is an easy way for the host to start of the jam and to illustrate the inclusivity of the event, and how low the threshold is for performing. The house band does however take back control about halfway into the session and play a song before taking a break.

The regulars at the various jam sessions I attended could also be seen frequently at other sessions and would thus be familiar to the house bands and hosts at various sessions and also have established relationships among themselves. They know who knows what songs, who they can play with and what songs to suggest depending on who is up on stage. As soon as the house band finishes their set at the beginning of the jam, one of the regulars will often be asked to join them on stage to perform, these will usually be singers. Instrumentalists will often join in a more discrete manner, usually approaching members of the house band more directly (usually the person in the band they will replace, such as a guitarist replacing the guitarist in the band, or a drummer approaching the drummer in the band etc.) rather than the host or band leader. It is not uncommon either, that some of the regulars will perform several times in the course of one session, however, this depends on the amount of people that wish to perform, seeing as it is the role of the host to make sure that as many as possible will get the chance to do so. The fact that singers are more so the centre of attention during performances and are the ones called upon seems to indicate that these jam sessions have a presentational character, while at the same time being participatory insofar as the core mission of these events are to engage as many people as possible in performance Nevertheless, singers are often the ones who request songs and who are the focus of the performance, as is often the case with most popular music performances.

The second half of the sessions usually starts in the same way as the first half, with the house band playing a small set. Some people usually approach the host during the break in order

to request songs and ask to perform. This gives the house band time and opportunity to assess whether their request is manageable and to discuss among themselves, as illustrated by this statement from Stein:

> Stein: It is usually the case that a singer comes up and suggests a song… sometimes the singer has made up their mind, like, 'yeah I want to sing this song', and then it depends if we know it, if not, we have to ask them if they know something else and then we have to figure it out. Sometimes a singer will come up to us before the jam or during the break, and then we might listen to it a bit during the break and like… 'yeah okay, we can make this work'.

Stein further elaborated by saying that if someone in the band knows the song well, then they can usually do the song just fine, which indicates both the need for performers to possess a certain degree of skill and technical proficiency, but also the ability to improvise and adapt quickly to the situation. In other words, listening to the other performers is a key part of the event, along with some knowledge of popular music and/or jazz theory. However, in order to ensure that performers are able to pick up on the songs quickly if they do not initially know the song, songs are rarely picked that are very complicated. Being a fairly competent guitarist myself, and having performed at jam sessions on several occasions, I recall instances in which I did not know the song, but as long as I was told what key we were in and I got a good sense of the groove, I could quickly adapt and learn the song on the spot by listening to the other performers. This does require one to actively listen to what the others are playing. Similar to what Stein described, Henrik also noted that it is not necessary for the entire band to know the song in order to be able to perform it when a song is requested. When asking him whether there are any requirements as to what can be played or even suggested, he responded:

> Henrik: Well that depends on how vague you want to go or not. There is always the good old 'if the bass player knows the song it is all good' for example. I feel that one comes up a lot, because it is really easy for people to follow what the bass is doing. Like, the drummer can play a beat, but that does not help all that much if no one else knows the song. If the bass player knows the song, then all of a sudden you have a foundation, both groove and tonal.

This is not the case at all jam sessions, he argued, and other places might be stricter in this regard, requiring you to know the song if you want to perform. These kinds of unwritten rules makes the job of the band leader or host as a facilitator easier, and also speaks to the ethos of some of these sessions as a playground for experimentation and learning based on inclusivity that does not penalize performers who are out of their element. Henrik and Stein, both house band members at different jam sessions, made mentions of another jam session and the way it

was organized and managed by the host of that particular session and how he would constantly be on top of things, distributing solos, queuing transitions and intervening whenever he felt someone was a little out of their element, in a way micro-managing the jam. "I felt that it was more… yeah it became more about a product" said Henrik. Stein commented on the same thing, saying: "He would control very carefully what was played and he was up there, almost like a conductor, like 'now you play a solo and then you guys play softer' right? To try and create a show". In their minds, the band leader at this particular jam session was concerned with ensuring a level of musical quality, an aspect which they felt was not as important at the jam sessions at which they played themselves.

> Henrik: He was always great at ensuring a level of quality, but that also sometimes led to it becoming kind of sterile. And I feel that a jam in my mind should have a certain amount of chaos, and I felt like that disappeared a little at that jam as opposed to my jam for example where we can miss really bad sometimes, but then it is just even more awesome when it really clicks.

This is not to say that Henrik or Stein was not concerned with maintaining a certain level of quality at their jam sessions as well, but they also wanted to maintain that level of playfulness in which they could foster a sense of inclusivity and promote the idea that you are allowed to stumble and fall and still be welcomed back with open arms the next time. This uncertainty and playfulness would also enable moments of great musical value for the performers, moments in which musical potential could be realised in a way that could heighten the performers sense of self and strengthen social bonds between the performers. Stein explained how they would not be as strict at his jam session with managing everything happening on stage, but they would still try to maintain a certain overview in order to avoid situations where things could get out of control, because he felt that he and the rest of the house band had a responsibility to the audience to make it entertaining.

> Stein: For some reason it always happens at around 11pm that we get to a point where there are only jam participants on stage and no one from the house band, and then someone suggests a song that some of the people think that they know, but that no one knows really well. And then you get this long, uncertain stretch where they cannot really play the song properly and where it is really kind of bad, and they cannot really finish it, or no one takes the initiative to end the song and it just goes on for way to long.

There is clearly a sense, from the point of view of the band leaders or house band members that there needs to be a strong guiding presence on stage. Someone who can take control of a performance. It does not have to be micro-managed, but it seems necessary to have

someone who can confidently lead the performance in a direction that is deliberate and purposeful in order to make the experience good for the performers and for other participants of the event, including audience members. These are similar to the skilled facilitator of Howell et al. (2017) or Turino's (2008) core musicians, they are individuals who can exert a level of competence and leadership and provide the foundation on which others can either embellish with their own individual expressions, or simply perform to their own skill level, enabling the flow state Turino talks about. These are attributes that take time to develop and learn, and like the jam sessions described by Pinheiro (2012; 2014), Becker (1951), Cameron (1954), and DeVeaux (1989; 1997), these sessions might also provide an opportunity to learn these attributes.

While not explicitly called the flow state by my informants, Stein and Per described a state of mind during a performance which appeared to point to the same kind of experience as the one Turino talks about, only they called it a "kick". Per first mentioned this feeling when recalling his first encounters with jamming as a child, he described it as being similar to an adrenaline rush that you might get from an activity like jumping from a diving tower for the first time. He said:

> Per: You get a little insecure and maybe deep down you feel a little scared, and you are pretty nervous about doing it. But when you just do it and you get this pleasurable sensation from it, then you get really focused, but in a relaxing way. Even though your whole body is on full alert, you think to yourself that this is what I am doing, and all your focus is directed at the activity and it is just fun.

This sensation is something he would feel when jumping into these types of uncertain situation, like at a jam session, where the pressure of the situation becomes embodied, but in a relaxing way in which all your focus becomes directed towards the activity at hand which heightens the experience. Naturally, this will not be the case for every performer every time they perform, but in Per's accounts of his experiences at jam sessions, he made it clear that this was certainly a place that provided the opportunity for this mental state and feeling.

> Per: I myself feel that when I am at a jam and I feel totally free and in my own world that I am capable of playing much better than what I usually can. I have many instances in which I have played much better than I ever though I was capable of, and I also have instances where I have not played that good. These things happen. But I feel great myself after having been to a jam and played.

The uncertainty and playfulness of these musical situations offer opportunities for the realisation of one's own musical potential, generating feelings of confidence and a heightened sense of self. Stein used the word "kick" on several occasions relating to instances of great musical inspiration and encouragement, instances where both social and musical interaction were key elements in generating this feeling of musical engagement. These moments would not come very often, and more often than the jam producing these moments the opposite would happen, and situations would arise where it would, in Stein's words, "be really bad". However, similar to what Henrik said, this would make those moments even more special. In Stein's account, these moments would hinge on musical interactions, as this excerpt from his interview illustrates:

> Stein: There is a 25 percent chance that it turns out really bad and I think "why did I not just stay home", and there is a 25 percent chance that it turns out exceptionally good. Or maybe 30 percent chance that it is bad and 20 percent that it is good (laughs). But the times when it just somehow clicks, and it is all the right songs and the right musicians are on stage and that everything just fits together, then maybe something new happens and I am able to come up with something really cool, or we manage to collectively take it in a new direction, right? These kind of improvised musical interactions that you can really get a kick out of, that is my favourite part of it.

> Interviewer: You have used this word "kick" a few times. Can you tell me what you mean by that?

> Stein: It is an extremely positive feeling where you are struck by something of… maybe aesthetic value. For instance, if you play something and you feel that "this really resonates with me, it hits me", and it creates this drive, an engagement.

The social and musical interactions that are facilitated by these jam sessions create opportunities for performers to share in powerful experiences that can shape their musical and personal identities, and attitudes towards music making activities. Even though situations arise that might not be pleasurable, that might be awkward or even unpleasant, it does not deter participants from continually seeking out these events, knowing the possibility for potentially powerful and moving musical experiences that might take place. These instances of significant musical, personal and interpersonal experiences does not, however, hinge on one's own participation in the musical sound, and they can create and strengthen social bonds between individuals who share in these experiences. Aurora described a memorable situation that had

taken place at one of these jam sessions in which she, like Stein, was struck by something of aesthetic value.

> Aurora: The bass player at one of the jam sessions, I think he plays really well. And one time he had a bass solo and I was listening to it and I thought it was so cool, and then I opened my eyes because apparently, I had closed them, and I had not even noticed. And then I look over at the guy I am sitting at the table with and he is sitting there imitating me, because I had been sitting there and grooving and was completely consumed by it. So that has become a thing where every time a bass player plays a solo, we sit there like that.

While this story exemplifies how instances of musical expression can generate strong emotional responses in individuals, it also signifies the social character of these events and the ability of these musical experiences to create strong social bonds between people who participate in them. This resonates with Drew's (1997) descriptions of how regular karaoke performers coalesce into conventionalized crowds at bars that offer karaoke. They come together in a social world that offers the members a regularized and collective experience centred around the activity of karaoke and form social bonds and find reassurance in each other's presence as karaoke lovers (Drew, 1997: 460). The same phenomenon can be observed at various jam sessions and is something several of my informants alluded to. New social formations are created, new members are initiated into the social group or community of jam session musicians, and existing relationships are strengthened. In the same vein as Drews karaoke performers, they become each other's social anchors and safeguards prior to, during, and after their performances. They might develop interpersonal jokes, references, and rituals based on shared experiences and specific incidents that might occur. They learn each other's musical preferences, references, and ways of performing and can offer support, guidance, critique, and feedback, very much similar to how the open mic participants Aldredge (2006) observed relied on the feedback of other performers in their efforts of refining their musical craft. As mentioned, several of the regular performers at the jam session I attended are frequent performers and patrons at other jam sessions as well, bringing with them this tight knit community or fellowship, their rituals, jokes, references, and values. Aurora recalled how, when she moved to Oslo and started attending jam sessions found one jam session in which she quickly became a part of the social group of regular performers, and consequently got other gigs by performing at this session. This speaks to the function of these events as both a social and a professional arena that offers networking opportunities.

Aurora's story of her reverence of a bass solo and how it created an inside joke between herself and a friend speaks to the social character of the event. Their continued reference to this moment in similar situations brings with it meanings of both social and musical character and illustrates the capacity of the event to create meaning in a similar way to how Small (1998) argues meaning is constructed through these musicking activities that take place during a performance. They are contributing to the musical occasion in a way that does not contribute directly to the musical sound, but that heightens the experience for those that are part of this reference. This example illustrates the difference between performer and audience that exist at these events, without denying the impact extramusical activities can have. If we look at these events through the performance frames proposed by Turino (2008), it is hard to designate them as either presentational or participatory. Rather, as Turino argues, these types of performance events can overlap, which seems to be the case with many of the jam sessions in Oslo.

It is tempting to perceive of these events as having no clear boundaries between what constitutes a performer and what constitutes an audience member. Nevertheless, some people do attend these sessions who will never enter the stage themselves and perform, however, they are still active participants in the occasion whose actions have influence on the actual performance on stage. From the point of view of the musicians, on the other hand, this difference is not experienced as strongly, as Henrik pointed out:

> Henrik: I am a musician when I sit on the couch, and I am a musician when I am on stage. I can be on stage and laugh with the people sitting at a table, not talking to them, but I am communicating with them. For instance, a friend of mine really likes to hear an emphasis on the second beat rather than the first, he really likes that. So it might happen, when he is in the room, that I will look at him and really emphasize the second beat, and then he will look at me and smile and I will smile back and give him one of those looks that say "there you go, that one is for you". So, I feel that is a kind of communication, like a buddy communication that you would do whether you are on stage or not.

This excerpt illustrates how musical references and tools can be used in order to realize relationships and create meaning. It brings social and personal relationships into the music and strengthens social bonds that exist prior to the musical activity, or that might have been established through musical activities. Even though these jam sessions to a certain degree fit under Turino's participatory performance framework with regard to its ethos of enabling and encouraging people to participate and perform, attempting to argue that these events does not have a distinct audience is futile. Not all audience members are potential performers,

nevertheless, their presence and participation in the musical occasion are meaningful, impactful, and also conditioned. What is more interesting, however, is the ethos and motivations of these events, the driving force behind them. What my informants though about this tended to come out when asking them if and how they experienced any difference between performing at jam sessions and performing at a more traditional concert. There was no clear consensus as to whether one was more enjoyable than the other, some felt more in control and relaxed when performing at a jam session, while the opposite was true for others. However, most agreed that traditional concert performances were more presentational whereas jam session performances were more participatory to put it in Turino's terms. While performing to the best of one's abilities was certainly an important aspect of jam session performances, especially for aspiring and professional musicians, it seemed my informants (and other people I talked to) did not judge the success of the event on any value judgements of the quality of the music or the performances. In other words, the end goal of most of these sessions did not seem to be about creating or presenting a product, as Henrik pointed out: "A concert is a product, while a jam is a feeling". Henrik further elaborated on this statement, arguing that a jam session "is a kind of journey together, and everyone is kind of on this journey together, because no one knows what is going to happen".

These jam sessions have an open structure that facilitates strong, spontaneous moments and experiences of both musical and social character. Since everyone present is sharing in this moment, the social aspect and the relationships that are realized transcends any notion of good or bad music. These relationships carry greater significance than any abstract value judgement about the quality of the music they are witness to.

> Henrik: It is more a shared experience when you are at a jam session than at a concert. At a concert, it is like "I am going to give you something", and it is like that at a jam as well to some degree, but at a jam it is also more like "we are experiencing this together", both good and bad. It has happened at times, both when I am playing and when I am in the audience, that someone is singing and I have given someone a look and they give me one back that is like "this is terrible", and then you connect in that way. They are saying with their eyes "what is happening?", and I say "I did not know this was coming, I hope this turns out okay", and they say "it will".

This communication and the feeling of community that is generated through these acts of music making creates a sense of security among the participants. This security pertains to the cohesion of the social group as they are "in this together". Other factors of the jam session

provide other kinds of security for individual participants, especially in relation to the choice of songs and genres as mentioned earlier. Turino talks about how repeating rhythmic and harmonic patterns create what he calls "security in constancy", this concept applies to jam sessions as well. As previously mentioned, there are many standard ways of playing different songs, and common chord progression that are usually familiar to most musicians, professional or otherwise. This also provides further opportunity for the flow state, as songs that have a simple harmonic foundation and song structure can more easily be altered and played around with on the spot than something more challenging, as evidenced by this statement from Henrik:

> Henrik: At my jam session we think it is fun to play pop-songs, like Dua Lipa, The Weekend etc. because we choose songs that we think have cool grooves. And that is why people say that "jam songs" are songs that are not too complicated, so that you can let loose a bit, relax. If the harmony is simple, then it becomes easier to add a little extra on top.

He noted how him and the other musicians in the house band at his jam session will add chord extensions, chromatic embellishments, changes to the groove, and other musical effects to songs with simple harmony, not necessarily reharmonising songs, but that they would "upscale the harmony to make it more interesting". The song selection and available repertoire thus serve to engage audience members and others in the music making activities, provide easy opportunity for musicians that are less technically proficient to perform, and also provide opportunity for musicians with a higher skill level to embellish and experiment. Their experimentation and the changes they might make while playing also provide challenges for the less technically proficient musicians in such a way that they may improve their own skills and musical craft, and the session thus becomes a learning experience, an academy for learning and improving, similar to DeVeaux's (1997) descriptions of jazz jam sessions in the 1930s and 1940s.

The difficulty of the songs that are played is not the only part of the jam sessions that facilitate a learning environment at the various jam sessions, and as already mentioned, the uncertain and spontaneous nature of the sessions require performers to be on their toes and ready, which can generate further opportunities for development and learning. Technical aspects of the music and the performance allows musicians to experiment and perfect their musical abilities, practical aspects such as dealing with sound equipment, lighting and so on provides performers with opportunities to become comfortable with stage performance and sound equipment, and the social aspects of the event provides opportunity for performers to learn stage behaviour and develop communication skills both with other performers, but also

with audiences. Aurora, coming from a classical background, exemplified how jam sessions had helped her with technical and practical aspects of performance:

> Aurora: Well, for example singing in a microphone is not something I have done that much, because you do not need it in a church, it already has a lot of reverb and sound. I am, or at least I was very uncomfortable in that soundstage, because you hear yourself from somewhere else except inside your body like I am used to. It is just a very different soundstage because there is so much drums and other instruments that prevent you from hearing properly, which can make it difficult to sing in the correct pitch.

The soundstage of an amplified performance was something relatively new to Aurora with which she was unfamiliar. Performing at jam sessions provided an opportunity to learn this new skill, to become comfortable with a new way of singing and listening that her classical training had not prepared her for. She also expressed her concern when singing at jam sessions that she would not sound appropriate, noting that she in no way wanted to "sing Stevie Wonder and sound like an opera singer". Interestingly, even though she felt this pressure or expectation to perform and sound a certain way, it did not seem to be an external pressure. Rather, as Aurora expressed herself, it is an internal matter that stems from comparing one's own abilities and performance to others. There had been instances in which she had not managed these expectations or where she had at least felt that to be the case. However, it did not really matter to her, as she said:

> Aurora: Things happen, and it is a jam so you have not rehearsed for it. Things can go to hell, and no one really cares that much, and I do not end up feeling ashamed of myself for days, so it is really fine. It is more that you really want to do good, so that you really show what you are good for.

This also brings in a discussion from earlier in this thesis of whether to conceive of these types of events as vocational or recreational. For Aurora, it seemed to be both vocational and recreational. As a professional singer, she acknowledged the potential of these events as gateways into other jobs, and as potential networking arenas in which she could find potential musical collaborators. This led to Aurora ascribing more seriousness to her own performances at these events as she wanted to make a positive impression. However, she also noted that getting gigs through jam sessions is "not necessarily a goal, but it is a very positive bonus", and later saying that you do not go to jam session to criticize others, but to have a good time. Henrik was very direct in saying that when he is playing at his jam session, he is at work. However, he did not seem to draw any clear distinction between vocation and recreation, between work and

leisure. Per was not actively pursuing a career in music, and jam sessions seemed to be generally regarded as a leisure-time activity, something fun that he felt very deeply about, to such an extent that he would actively work to preserve what he called the jam session scene in Oslo. Stein, like Henrik, did not seem to make any clear distinction either, as he was also working when playing at his jam session. It seemed, however, to be less personal than performing with his own band, and he would go into a mindset in which he completely shut out the opinions of others and would simply play for himself.

Aurora was not the only of my informants who expressed the idea that jam sessions provided opportunities for learning, in fact, all four of my informants was under the impression that this was the case. Henrik, for instance, argued that jam sessions are the best way to develop musical skill, especially skills pertaining to listening and adapting to changes quickly, arranging on the spot, and improvising. Creating an environment that encourages learning involves inclusivity, and more importantly, tolerance, meaning that performers are not penalized or sanctioned for a lacking performance (within reason), as illustrated by Henrik:

> Henrik: I can only speak for myself but take my jam session for instance, if you screw up, I don't care, but you have to have made an honest attempt. If you choose not to listen, to steamroll others, then I will let you know that you need to listen more the next time, because I feel like we have to serve the song. The songs can take infinitely different shapes and forms, so then I feel like it is the job of each performer to listen to the rest of the band and try to figure out what you can do to add to this.

Second chances are important in creating a welcoming and inclusive environment, which aids in facilitating a situation that encourages others to perform as well. Teaching performers how to actively listen to their co-performers and to be thoughtful in their musical contribution is key to sustaining an inclusive environment. And not penalizing performers for making mistakes encourages continued participation from them, and from others who witness this, as Henrik put it: "My line of thought is that if you screw up, you are going to want to do even better than you normally would the next time you join to show that you are mature enough to take it seriously". If we remember Stebbins (2017), he argued that one crucial aspect of serious leisure activities is sticking with an activity and overcoming adversity, which would then generate positive feelings about the activity. My informants all argued that it was their mandate to create a good experience for the audience who had come to enjoy good music, as Henrik argued, this was not because the jam sessions were aimed at creating a product for consumption, but because the jam session was supposed to be a musical journey, an experience

that should include everyone. Making sure that performers learn to be thoughtful and respectful to other performers can aid in the construction of this pleasurable musical experience. This is also why the host or band leaders are deliberate when choosing what songs to play and which performers to call upon in order to create a cohesive musical programme. Per argued it was important to be deliberate in this regard as he felt his mandate was to provide the audience with a good experience, saying:

> Per: What kind of music has been played so far? How has the audience reacted to it? How is the mood right now? For instance, if someone just played a slow song, a ballad, then playing Donna Lee is not really the right way to go, because then you get this really sudden shift, which can be cool sometimes, but it is good to have kind of smooth transitions.

Even though the jam sessions are supposedly spontaneous and open to anything, it is still an ideal that they should be structured to a certain extent, not to the level of a traditional concert, but in a way that is easy to follow and aesthetically pleasing, while still maintaining a certain level of chaos as Henrik would put it. Per also argued that learning to listen and to create a musical interaction based on active listening is key to create an inclusive musical environment, also saying that steamrolling others should be avoided, or overplaying to put it in other words. This relates to Turino's idea of core roles and elaborative roles as it is fine and even encouraged to elaborate and embellish, but it is important to do so thoughtfully and to be conscious of what your contribution brings to the performance.

> Per: One guy who was a regular guest at one of the jam sessions made me really conscious of this. He told me that he thought I played well and that I placed myself well in the soundstage, and that there was this other saxophonist that he really did not like because he would have very sharp elbows and dig his way into the soundstage. I thought about that for a long time, the significance it has for the audience, that the information they receive from the music is cohesive, that the melody is in focus and that you think about when it is appropriate to play a lot and when it is appropriate not to play.

This sentiment was also something Stein was concerned with and was something he had learned at the Norwegian Academy of Music: "At the academy they talk about how you first have to learn how to play, and then you have to learn not to play". Naturally, not everyone gets to attend the academy, and so the jam sessions might be where people learn these skills of how to actively listen to your co-performers, when to play, and when not to play. It was in the moments in which he felt that his co-performers were listening to what he and the others were

doing that he felt they really connected with each other, and if not, he would abstain from playing himself.

> Stein: If there are people on stage who take a lot of space musically, then I will just lay off and wait. I try to listen and determine what is needed and if I actually have anything to contribute. If not, I will rather not play anything.

Even though steamrolling others and overplaying seemed to be considered a negative thing by my informants, performers would not be penalized or severely sanctioned for such behaviour. As Per noted, this is because of what he considered the ethos of these events, which was to allow everyone to play whatever they want without being met with hostility from others. As Per said: "Those that disagree with you are people who do not really get it". This contributes to the inclusive and tolerant nature of the sessions, which was an aspect Per was particularly concerned with. He felt that it was important that everyone was allowed to perform and try to unfold their expression and creativity. Per argued that you could have your own opinions about whether or not you liked what someone played, but you should not harass someone if you do not like what they play.

> Per: Even if you though that a person played horrible, you still kind of have to clap and think that it is a little good or be a little inspired, because that person actually went up and did something that they thought was great. If they are happy with their own performance and I think it sounds like crappy Arne Norheim, they should still be appreciated, because they did exactly what they wanted, and that has its own value.

Feedback and tips seemed to be welcome and encouraged, as was the case at the open mic described by Aldredge, but Per argued that no one would come up to you and tell you that you should not be allowed to play anymore, again echoing the ideal of tolerance and inclusivity, and pointing to what is one of the functions that these events serve. As Per argued:

> Per: It is the musician's opportunity to have their own place to play. For those that are members of the house band, it is of course work and they are paid, but for everyone else it is like this little sandbox where you can go to play almost anything you want… It is our forums as musicians to show exactly who we are, without hindrance or influence from others. The jam scene by itself kind of becomes the guilty pleasure opportunity for all musicians.

Through musical expression and experimentation, musicians are able to express and develop their own musical and personal identities, both professional and amateur musicians. This points to Turino's argument that performance is key to identity formation because they

often display the deepest and most sincere sides of the individual. Even though jam sessions have developed since Cameron and Becker discussed them in the 1950s, taking different shapes and forms, seemingly merging with other similar performance events, and opening up to a variety of other performers with varying skill levels, there is still something to be said about their character as a palette cleanser, as a ritual of purification for musicians. Rather than describing a socially self-isolated musician who needs to reaffirm their aesthetic standards by way of excluding the casual spectator, it rather describes a socially bound musician who finds both social and musical companionship and identity through sharing a strong musical experience with others through the act of performing or musicking. Per put it this way:

> Per: If you are an amateur musician that maybe cannot find a band to play in, or you feel like you have not played in a long time but really miss it. Or if you are a professional musician and feel the need for a musical outlet, then I look at jam sessions as kind of the salvation for this. It is low expectations, virtually free of charge, and socially bound!

This again echoes Stebbins ideas about serious leisure activities with which participants strongly identify, activities they partake in during their free-time, through which they might experience self-development, enrichment, expression, accomplishment, and feelings of belonging to a social group. While providing the opportunity for musicians of all skill levels to realize their personal identities and social relationships through acts of music making, there are also practical aspects of jam sessions that are as true today as they were in the 1950s. As Aurora mentioned, she had gotten several gigs by performing at jam sessions, and both Stein and Per described how they went to jam session when first attending the Norwegian Academy of Music in order to branch out, get experience, and network among other musicians. Henrik argued that networking was one of the most important aspects of these jam sessions, whether it be connecting with and getting to know new musicians or catching up with old friends and playing together.

What function the various sessions might serve for the performers that attend them depends on what type of jam session they are attending. My informants all made distinctions between the jam sessions they would most often frequent (and in the case of Henrik and Stein, the ones at which they are in the house band) and what we have called jazz jam sessions. Most of the sessions in the area are of the more popular music oriented types, with one notable exception referred to by all my informants as a more jazz oriented jam session. It is the same session that Henrik and Stein mentioned at which the host would micro-manage the event, that they felt was more focused on creating a musical product. Per expressed how he felt it was more

about playing music that was difficult than playing music that everyone liked, and that jazz jam session were more so about getting to play with extremely skilled musicians and to play difficult music and the things one might be practicing at the moment. He further distinguished between the jazz jam session and the popular music oriented ones by saying:

> Per: In the world of jam session you kind of have the *practice taker* and the *money maker*, where the practice taker would be playing at the jazz session and the money maker would be playing at the jam sessions where you actually end up getting enough contacts to get you gigs.

It seems odd that going to jazz jam session and playing difficult music to develop your musical craft and playing with professional musicians would not accomplish the same as playing at the popular music oriented ones. However, this was how Per experienced it, and as he said, the popular music oriented jam sessions were the ones at which he himself had made the most money by getting other gigs, the same as with Aurora. This, he felt, was partly because he was given the chance to show his flexibility and ability to adapt to different genres, as opposed to just showing that he knew the changes to any jazz standard and how to play them. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to assume that the different jam sessions still fulfil many of the same functions, albeit, maybe for different people. All four of my informants seemed to think that the clientele at the jazz jam sessions consisted of older, more established musicians, often jazz musician. This might very well affect the workings of this particular type of jam session, or at least how my informants perceive them to function, and how they experience a different type of pressure or a different set of expectation at these sessions. As mentioned, it seems that the expectations performers experience are an internal matter, that it is not an external pressure, but rather a perceived set of conventions that results from comparing oneself to other performers.

As already mentioned, social relationships and collectivities are generated through these jam sessions, and many of the performers frequent several of the jam sessions in Oslo. In Aurora's experience, this was a comforting factor when performing as she would always have familiar faces there onto which she could direct her attention during a performance in a similar fashion to how Drew described karaoke performers dedicating their performances to friends in the audience. This was true for Per as well, at least at certain jam session where he knew he would usually have people whom he knew would appreciate his performance and expression. For Aurora, this was partly because she felt that she was part of the "jam session people", the people she had come to know through these various jam sessions. This was a key factor that separated performing at a jam session from performing at a normal concert, and that to a certain

extent erased the distinction between performer and audience, as Aurora said: "It is a little cheesy, but you are more a part of the people, a part of the group". Her belonging to this group of jam session performers also provided security and comfort in her own performance as she knew she would not be the only one of her friends who would perform, invoking what Turino called sequential participation.

Being a singer, as opposed to my other informants who are all instrumentalists, Aurora had a different perspective on the communicative sides of jam sessions. Similar to what Per stated, she also thought it important that everyone was given space at a jam session through distributing solos, and, as my other informants also highlighted, through listening to your co-performers. As opposed to someone like Stein, just laying off or even ceasing to sing is not an option for a singer as they are the ones that are most in focus during the performance, who sings the melody and the lyrics. Aurora felt as though being able to communicate with her co-performers was especially important as she would attempt to dictate and lead the dynamics of the performance, which was not always easy:

> Aurora: Something that I often find frustrating about instrumentalists is that they are so preoccupied with their own instrument. They are looking down and if I try to communicate something to them it is very difficult, and then you really loose that communication and I am not able to give any directions about dynamics and such. It of course depends on who is playing and how well we know each other., but it can be so much better. There can be a build-up and some dynamics that disappear because they are not listening to how I am singing and just keep doing their thing.

Again, this reflects the special capacity of jam sessions as arenas of learning that does not needlessly penalize lacking skills, musical, communicative, or otherwise. Rather, they provide these performers with an opportunity to learn these skills and to receive feedback from other performers that can help direct their course of development. Even though this ends up affect individual performances, it is still crucial that these performers also get the opportunity to perform and to improve.

The jam sessions sits in a unique spot in the environment of live music in Oslo, and presumably in other cities with similar events. It shares key characteristics with the jazz jam sessions that emerged in the united states in first half of the 20th century. While having adapted and changed as time has gone by, jazz jam session still exist in a "pure" form in which the repertoire mainly consists of jazz standards and where established ways of playing these songs are still heavily prioritized. However, these sessions (at least the ones in Oslo) have also opened

up to the public more as they take place in established concert venues, pubs, and bars during hours that make them more accessible to the ordinary person, and to the changing lifestyles of professional musicians that with all likelihood does not look the same as it did for the dance band musicians of the 1930s and 1940s. The contemporary jam sessions that are found in Oslo share key similarities with the jazz jam sessions such as where they take place and the frequency of their occurrence, they revolve heavily around improvisation, and they represent an arena for the development of musical skills and a fertile ground for networking among musicians. However, where they differ are in more significant aspects of ideology and motivation. Where the jazz jam sessions might be conceived of as cutting contests and an arena to establish social and musical hierarchies of competence, the contemporary jam sessions present themselves as inclusive and tolerant playgrounds for professionals and amateurs alike in which values such as inclusivity, tolerance, solidarity, and community are prioritized.

The contemporary jam sessions include a wider variety of available genres, which lends itself to be more accessible to a larger number of people, both in terms of the audience and the performers. Like the open mic nights, the performers at the contemporary jam sessions in large part consists of amateur musicians or aspiring musicians, and they offer these performers the opportunity to learn and develop their musical craft, learn stage behaviour and musical communication skills, and offer them a community of like-minded individuals with whom they can connect. To a certain extent, the contemporary jam sessions work in such a way that traditional distinctions between performer and audience are broken down as the performers on stage switch rapidly and become audiences, and vice versa, while audience members are constantly encouraged to participate to the musical sound and occasion through singing along, clapping, dancing, and bring with them behaviours and values that contribute to the meaning of the musical occasion. Contrary to more traditional concerts, these jam sessions are less about presenting a musical product, and more about creating an environment and an experience in which people can come together, express their identities and cultural preferences, and form social and musical communities among themselves. In other words, rather than being a presentational performance occasion, they are a participatory performance occasion in which the goal is to encourage as many people to participate as possible, invoking a sense of performance in which musical meaning is attributed to actions related to the musical occasion, not to the piece of music itself. They represent a tolerant musical and social environment in which individual performers are not penalized for lacking musical abilities or understanding of the social proceedings.

Jam sessions hold a special position in the ecology of live music events in Oslo as not simply concerts, but not simply informal and secluded musical practices either. How then, can these sessions help us better understand the value of leisure music activities in the context of an urban live music ecology? Is there any point in distinguishing these events as a scene in its own right? If so, how can our knowledge of the contemporary jam sessions in Oslo highlight the continued relevance of the concept of scenes?

7. Contemporary jam sessions as a leisure music scene

How then, can we use what we have examined about the jam sessions in Oslo to further a conversation about music's ability to generate a sense of community? There have been many attempts at conceptualizing the social powers of music, within the context of an urban city environment, within single neighbourhoods, and on a broader, more global scale. The concept of scenes is one that has attracted much attention and that has been used widely both within, and outside of academic circles. In this case, how can we apply the concept of scenes to better understand the significance of this particular cultural activity in the context of the live music ecology of a city? This concept can be used to examine how different musical practices produce a sense of community within the context of an urban city environment, which applies to the events researched for this thesis. Even though Hesmondhalgh (2005) argued that the concept of scenes has been too widely applied to various descriptions of the copresence of people through various cultural practices, many of the ideas about scenes proposed by Straw (1991; 2006; 2015) still carry validity. The fact that the term has attained such common usage both within and outside of academic circles is evidence of its ability to be grasped as something significant, of its ability to communicate a meaningful idea about the collective cultural activities of a singular group of people or of several heterogenous groups of people across cultures and borders. This is supporting the argument of both Straw (2015) and Silver and Clark (2015), that its ability as a concept to be pulled in several directions is a strength of the concept. It can be usefully applied to describe and understand the workings and values of dispersed cultural activities, how they become meaningful to those that participate in them, and how spatial dimensions of music making activities are important in grounding them to physical locations that signify a meaningful part of the scene itself.

The concept of live music ecology argues that all live music events in urban city environments are part of a wider ecosystem or infrastructure of venues, local authorities, social actors, and policy officials. Researching these ecologies are often done in the name of policy intervention, to highlight their strengths and benefits in order to affect policy decisions to sustain them. Van der Hoeven and Hitters (2015), as seen earlier in this thesis, discussed the social and cultural values of these ecologies. The values and qualities they attribute to live music ecologies resonates in the jam session researched for this thesis, as seen in the previous chapter. To quickly restate the three categories of cultural value they attributed to live music ecologies, these were musical creativity, talent development, and cultural vibrancy. The contemporary jam sessions are creative outlets for musicians of all skill levels, and while offering opportunities for social and musical networking, the core mission of the events is still to play music for its own sake, not for commercial success or acknowledgement, but for pleasure. Like jam sessions in the past and like other leisure music activities, they also serve as spaces in which performers can develop and perfect their musical craft. In terms of cultural vibrancy, it is clear that these events offer a unique experience for both performers and audience that are not easy to find anywhere else and contributes to a diverse cultural programme in Oslo.

7.1. Thinking in scenes

When thinking in terms of jam sessions, it is clear that these are events that, while geographically dispersed throughout various urban city environments around the world, share a common ancestry in the jazz jam sessions that emerged in the USA during the first half of the 20th century. Even though different jam sessions vary in character within a single city, in this case Oslo, they still represent a common leisure music activity in which musicians of various skill levels can congregate and share an experience through shared cultural preferences. If we think back to some of the things which scenes describe, it included such things as the recurring congregation of people at specific places, the movement of these people between these places, and the more geographically dispersed phenomena of which these instances are local examples. Jam sessions tick all of these boxes. They are continuously recurring at specific venues and at particular times, they share many of the same patrons and participants, and they represent local examples of the broader cultural phenomenon that is jam sessions in general. They are also subject to changes over time, and susceptible to influences from other cultural phenomena and activities. It is difficult to argue that the potential presence of open mic nights and karaoke sessions have affected these types of jam sessions directly, or even that open mic nights and

karaoke will look similar to the accounts previously described. However, as new jam sessions have emerged and become established institutions in Oslo, it is reasonable to assume that the organizers of these events have had some preconceived notions of what they should look like, how they should function, what types of people they wish to attract, and what types of music they want to feature. These ideologies have been shaped by the experiences of the people who established the jam sessions, and those that have become performers at these sessions have also brought with them their own cultural preferences and preconceived notions of how these events should function, which has led to them taking the shape that they have, while the continued influx of new performers continue to develop and reshape its workings and values.

Scenes inhabit both spatial and temporal dimensions, they are grounded in specific locations at specific moments in time and are susceptible to influences and change. Their situatedness in specific locations allow them to establish associations between these locations and the specific cultural practices that occur there, and by extension, the ideologies and values that follow these cultural practices. Seeing as the contemporary jam sessions in Oslo, as well as the jazz jam sessions, are bound to specific venues, and the participants of these jam sessions flow through many of them, they are able to establish and communicate a sense of a community based on shared cultural preferences through the related cultural practices that occur there. The associations that are generated become internalized in the minds of those that partake in these activities as abstract dimensions and mental constructs, and by participating in these activities, people are able to communicate significant parts of their identities and preferences to others. However, these venues are not necessarily exclusively musical venues, and so these cultural practices become entangled with ordinary rituals of eating and drinking, marking them off as different from other scenes that might revolve more specifically around a particular genre of music.

Through the interviews and fieldwork conducted for this thesis, a handful of specific values can be identified that pertain to what might called the jam session scene in Oslo. Firstly, the contemporary jam sessions communicate an idea of inclusivity. They are supposed to act as a safe haven for performers of all skill levels in which everyone is welcome and should be able to communicate their cultural preferences and artistic expression without facing scrutiny, harassment, or sanctions. This also involves learning the proper behavioural codes and the necessary musical language that apply to these situations in order to avoid steamrolling other performers and sustain the inclusive environment. Secondly, in order for the jam sessions to function as these inclusive playgrounds, it is also necessary that performers and audiences

practice tolerance. As illustrated in the last chapter, as long as performers did not go out of their way to highjack a performance, any shortcomings in terms of abiding to the behavioural codes and musical language would not be punished. Rather, it would be the objective of others to encourage performers to learn these codes and this language who had failed to perform them. Inclusivity in this context is not exclusive to musical skill and competence, it encompasses age, gender, and sexuality, as well as musical preferences and what instrument someone plays. This is not to say you will see absolutely anything at any given jam session, but through conversations with participants at various jam sessions, I was told of instances in which someone had played instruments such as violins, fiddles, and even bagpipes, about which people seemed particularly excited as it is not something you get to experience every day.

Third, all my informants, as well as others I talked to during my field observations, argued that jam sessions were one of the best, if not *the* best source of development and learning. This goes hand in hand with the idea about inclusivity and tolerance, and that performers should not be penalized for lacking musical skills or competence. Rather, performers who are not as technically proficient are encouraged to perform as much as possible in order to learn their craft and to assist in the creation of powerful musical moments. This connects to the idea of participatory performance, and the objective of the event which is to engage as many people as possible in the performance, regardless of skill level. Arguing that these events are participatory as opposed to presentational does not, however, mean that performers are not concerned with playing good music, or presenting something that can be perceived subjectively as good. Rather, it means that participants perform for the sake of the music, that it is music making for music's sake. On the other hand, even though these events are about performing music for music's sake as opposed to performing music to achieve commercial success, the music also serves another purpose. The participatory framework and the ideal of inclusivity and tolerance entails that the music is performed in service of the social interactions and the relationships that are generated through them.

Fourth, because the contemporary jam sessions are based on inclusivity and talent development, by extension they are also sites for musical experimentation. There is a diverse repertoire of songs and genres, and few, if any limitations or rules as to the constellation of the performing group in terms of instrumentation. Through this, various genre practices and performance conventions are brought together in ways that can challenge the abilities of the performers, inspire and change musical and cultural preferences, and can facilitate the flow state. Performance conventions and genre specific ways of playing various songs can be thrown

aside through the active transformative work of a skilled facilitator, a band leader, or a group of individuals working together to heighten the musical experience. Even though these jam sessions are more oriented towards popular music, they are still rooted in the jazz tradition, coming from the jazz jam sessions of the 20th century. Thus, they represent a musical event that are formed by musicians, for musicians, while still being open to the participation of anyone who wants to join. Even though these events pride themselves on their inclusiveness, tolerance and openness, the participants represent a largely homogenous group. Most participants (with some exceptions) are young, white, middle-class people with varying musical backgrounds. This makes it necessary to ask whether these events work in accordance with their ideologies and values, or if they are practically (if passively) excluding. These events might be unconsciously perpetuating already existing conditions of socioeconomic differences and racial inequalities in society, which might render these events less accessible to people of minority backgrounds, while still being open to them in the instances when they are represented.

Arguing that these events together constitute a scene necessitates some clarification. The concept of scenes, like other concepts such as subcultures, are tied to the idea about popular music and its implication for youth cultures. In its fullest capacity, scenes also encompasses styles, and the use and transformation of various materials and resources and the ways in which these all interact with musical practices to form scenes. What might be called the jam session scene in Oslo, however, being a very particular musical practice that encompasses people from a multitude of different cultural backgrounds, ages, genders, sexualities, etc., falls somewhat outside of this way of thinking. What becomes the key signifier of this scene is not particular styles of clothing, the cultural use of various materials and resources, age cohorts or political affiliations. Rather, what comes to signify this scene is the specific musical activity and the locations in which they take place. The appropriation and active transformation of values that are historically rooted in a very specific musical activity, and the relationships that are generated and realized through this activity, is what comes to signify the collective identity that is generated through these events. This can be likened to what Shelemay (2011) has called affinity communities in that this scene is based in individual preferences and the desire of individuals for social proximity to others. In the case of the contemporary jam sessions, the resources and materials that become the focus of an active transformation is the music itself, regardless of genre. As was mentioned by Henrik, they were actively attempting to rework various songs, whether Amy Winehouse or Dua Lipa, adding to their harmonic foundation, changing the groove, and adding sections for individual expression through improvised solos.

Similar to what Silver and Clarke (2015) argues, this also stresses the importance of space, in other words, the actual, physical locations in which the sessions take place. As mentioned previously, one of the jam sessions in Oslo that can most clearly be framed as a jazz jam session is also host to performances by established local musicians, as well as international acts. This particular venue thus becomes associated with those types of performances and attracts another type of clientele than the other more contemporary jam sessions in the city, affecting the values associated with the venue and the musical activities that occur there. The other sessions takes place in venues that are not in the same way associated with such high profile performances and are also home to other leisure music activities and other types of performances that might be conceived of as "less serious". As mentioned by several of my informants, the clientele at the contemporary jam sessions are different from the ones at jazz jam sessions, which in turn led them to experience less pressure and expectations at the contemporary sessions. This also relates to the point made by Silver and Clarke about the ways in which the same behaviour or activity might take on different meanings in different places, or that an act of legitimacy or authenticity might look different across various locations. The fact that the status of a particular venue can have impact on the musical activity, the behaviour within the venue, and the meanings generated through these activities are also reminiscent of Small's argument about a building's impact on a cultural activity. Even though the activity that is undertaken at the various jam sessions are so similar and are derived from the same musical heritage, they still generate different meanings and communicate different values.

A strength of the scenes concept that makes it a good fit when researching the capabilities of music in creating collective identities is Straw's (1991) argument about the fixity of the group of people who make up the scene. As opposed to earlier conceptions of musical community formations, he argues that scenes account for the relatively unfixed and open ended nature of the social group. This group is not a stable entity, but rather open to changes and the joining of new people. They are permeable by new social actors, and like the event itself, prone to changes over time. These changes might go hand in hand as new participants join the activity and bring with them their own identities, values, ideologies, and cultural preferences. This also speaks the case for the temporal dimension of these scenes, that they are susceptible to changes over time. Even though new participants might be educated in the ways of the jam, their presence brings with it their own ways of playing, and their own ideas about the music and the organization of the event. This again ties back to the ideas about inclusivity and tolerance, that accepting the values, abilities, and ideas of all participants is an important part of the sessions.

This further resonates with the argument of Silver and Clark (2015) about self-expressive legitimacy, as it allows for the expression and actualization of personal identities.

Although scenes can be so much more than what this thesis is concerned with, it is a good concept to work with when examining these spatially bounded musical practices in a city. As a concept it is easily accessible as it has been used in a multitude of different contexts. The fact that it is a term that has been applied so widely both in scholarly work, in media, and in common speech has made it so most people have some sort of idea about what a scene might be. This is perfectly illustrated by the fact that Per was able to communicate what he saw as a collection of related musical practices by using the term and calling it the "jam session scene in Oslo". He is doing what Straw (2006) argues, which is recognizing a hazy coherence between a set of related musical practices or affinities. Applying this concept in conjunction with other concepts of musical community formations makes it easy to recognize the different aspects of regularized cultural practices that generate communities and communicate identities. Most of the aspects about contemporary jam sessions that have been covered so far and the values that are attributed to them resonates with the social and cultural values that are described in van der Hoeven and Hitters' (2019) article on live music ecologies. Such as the aspect of talent development or musical creativity that was mentioned earlier in this thesis. They also argued that live music can enhance both within-group cohesion and social ties between different homogenous groups, or social bonding and bridging as they called it, and that it can be a source of identity both on an individual level, but also that venues can come to signify the identities of specific cities or neighbourhoods. This is similar both to what Straw and others that have been mentioned have said about scenes, and what Shelemay has said about musical communities. However, these accounts of live music events, as well as van der Hoeven and Hitters analysis of live music ecologies, account more so for live music events occurring in venues with a stronger institutional status than live music taking place in venues such as bars and pubs (ibid: 269). Van der Hoeven and Hitters conclude their article by remarking this, saying that future research should give more attention to these types of musical events, as well as other live music events that take place outside of venues. This is where this analysis of contemporary jam sessions will conclude, with some attention paid to what these types of events might contribute to live music ecologies.

8. Live music ecologies and jam sessions

The events that make up the contemporary jam session scene in Oslo are not the only live music events that fall under the category that van der Hoeven and Hitters argue needs closer examination. Musical activities and events such as festivals, busking, and karaoke could very well be the subject of an analysis of live music ecologies, and there already exists a plethora of research on these issues. However, this thesis is concerned with a specific cultural phenomenon in a geographically defined area, and future research could very well include these other events in the context of Oslo to examine their position in the live music ecology of the city. As already illustrated, the contemporary jam sessions can be considered leisure music activities as they are largely undertaken in leisure time, with the exception of the band leaders and the rest of the house band who are in fact working. Through the previous chapter, it became clear that the contemporary jam session scene fulfils many of the same functions and carries largely the same values as van der Hoeven and Hitters ascribed the various live music ecologies they examined. These values being the dimension of musical creativity, or music for music's sake, the dimension of talent development, and the dimension of cultural vibrancy, or the contribution of live music to the overall cultural offerings of a city. They also explain that various musical venues facilitate social bonding and bridging and identity formation and expression. However, seeing as these are different events than those analysed by van der Hoeven and Hitters, they differ slightly in character. The fact that these values differ in character, even though they describe the same things is due to the fact that the reports van der Hoeven and Hitters are basing their analysis in are looking at music venues with a more established status, in which the performances can be described as traditional concerts, or as presentational performances. These venues might be small in size and not on the scale of large venues, concert halls and arenas, but are venues at which up-and coming artists might get their first gigs. On the other hand, the venues in which the contemporary jam sessions take place are not exclusively music venues, but venues that host a multitude of cultural activities and events and that have a musical infrastructure that can support a performance.

8.1. Musical creativity

When van der Hoeven and Hitters brings up the value of musical creativity, what they describe is the music and the performances of lesser known artists or band, musicians who have not and are likely never going to reach mainstream success. These performances are rather

played for the enjoyment of the music itself, and for the enjoyment of the audience it might attract (van der Hoeven and Hitters, 2019: 267). These are presentational performances by your regular singer/songwriter or local band that might otherwise be employed elsewhere, such as some of the participants at the open mic described by Aldredge (2006), and for whom music is a side endeavour. Or maybe these are performances by up-and coming musicians, small band projects, students or teenagers who want to play and experience what it is like to perform to an audience. No matter the group or artist, these are performances whose objective is not necessarily to reach commercial success. Similar venues to this in Oslo are those such as Uhørt Scene or the event *Sunday Digestive*[4] at Parkteateret which regularly features lesser-known acts and performers who are outside of the mainstream and commercial.

Van der Hoeven and Hitters argue that these types of venues are a crucial part of the live music ecology of a city because they offer performers a place in which they get to play and show their music to a dedicated audience who have come to see them perform. It is a space in which their musical expressions can come to the fore, while at the same time offering audiences an opportunity to discover new music. In the context of leisure music activities such as the contemporary jam session scene in Oslo, this value of musical creativity takes a slightly different form. Firstly, the performances that occur at a jam session are more so participatory performances than what would be the case for a traditional concert, and because they are participatory, it is not necessarily the objective of the performance to present a finished musical product. Rather, the music is "made up" on the spot, and audiences are attracted to this performance not because they know the artist and their music and wish to support them, but because they are intrigued by the uncertainty and spontaneity of the performance and want a spontaneous musical experience. The performance can still be regarded as music for music's sake, as Henrik stated he was concerned with serving the song, and any performance at these sessions are not undertaken in order to reach commercial success, this is partly due to the fact that most songs are covers, albeit with various alterations made to them and interpreted in different ways. However, even though these performances take the shape of music for music's sake, the performance and the music are also for the sake of the social relationships and community formation that is facilitated. Musicians that perform are given an opportunity to both develop and communicate their identities, and because you do not know what to expect

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[4] https://parkteatret.no/sunday-digestive/

when you go to one of these jam sessions, you can at least expect to hear music that you have not heard before.

8.2. Talent development

This aspect of live music further feeds into the next value (or function) of the same events, namely talent development. The venues van der Hoeven and Hitters mention that can be a source of musical creativity and identity formation are also sites for the development of musical abilities, both for musicians, but also skills pertaining to stage and sound technicians. This, they argue, is crucial to support the musical creativity of a city (2019: 267). The authors argue that venues need to take risks by booking lesser known and emerging artists in order to facilitate a space for these musicians to practice their musical craft, learn how to perform in front of an audience, and where they can network with industry representatives and other musicians. They also recommend that live music organizations can collaborate with music schools and other educational institutions to provide these opportunities. The contemporary jam session scene in Oslo does much of the same work as these smaller venues, however, in a slightly different way. Instead of venues and promoters having to book bands and artist to perform, any performer is welcome to join without prior appointment and planning, thus placing less risk and effort on the side of the venues. This also provides a more secure learning platform for performers who can then perform to their own abilities and skills without facing scrutiny or harassment, placing less risk on the side of the performer as well. As the jam sessions are open to the participation of just about anyone, without needing to be booked for a dedicated performance, any musician who are looking to improve their musical abilities and craftsmanship are given this opportunity at these sessions.

At the same time, the sessions in question are usually visited by both other amateurs, hobby musicians, emerging artists, and also more established musicians and professionals with a long running time in the industry. Like in other activities such as different sports, it is a common sentiment that one of the best ways to improve your skills within any given activity, including music, is to participate alongside others that are better and more skilled than you as this will surely elevate your own performance and encourage you to perform to the peak of your abilities, staying aware, focused, and in the moment. This becomes an important part of performing at jam sessions as more skilled musicians can often perform the role of core musician, allowing those who are not as proficient to experiment, elaborate, try, and fail, and

thus improve. Less skilled musicians also get the chance to learn the skills necessary to perform the core roles of a performance as well, which is the type of role that is most important in carrying a performance. Having a place such as this where performers can learn these various musical skills, learn to adapt to different ensemble constellations, to listen to what other performers are doing, and to experience the multitude of different playstyles that musicians have is undeniably a valuable resource for musicians, especially musicians who are not traditionally trained at various music schools. Another vastly important aspect of these sessions in this regard is the fact that performers are able to receive instant feedback on their performances from other performers and from audiences. Even though in cases where someone dislikes a performance that was given, individual opinions about these performances are rarely disclosed or openly offered as criticism can directly oppose the ethos of the jam sessions. One could argue that this is a negative side effect of these events as it might instil otherwise misplaced confidence which might come back to haunt a performer. On the other hand, one could argue that this will aid in the encouragement of performers to continue participating at jam sessions if they experience these as places where their musicianship is validated and confirmed, which would further help them develop and perfect their musicianship simply by continuing to participate.

Another strength of the jam session scene in this regard is the more relaxed atmosphere at these events as opposed to a traditional concert. This is not to say that all performers will be more comfortable in a jam session situation, as some are more comfortable performing something which they have prepared, in front of an audience they know have come to see them perform. However, as the value base and ideology of the contemporary jam sessions revolve around inclusivity, tolerance, and solidarity, performers are allowed to fail, are able to experiment and try things during the performance, while at the same time learning the same stage behaviours and skills as they would learn by playing a concert at a small venue. As the jam sessions are more so a participatory performance, any level of skill (within reason) is acceptable, and any performer can participate to the extent to which they are comfortable. This makes the jam session act as a self-regulating activity in the way that Howell et.al. (2017) described, allowing performers to regulate the intensity of their experience through their chosen level of involvement in the musical performance. Seeing as the jam sessions also require performers to be on their toes and ready for anything, they also learn skills at the jam sessions that they would not normally learn at a concert performance. As my informants so firmly stated, listening to your co-performers becomes a crucial part of the jam sessions, which carries

significance for musical performance in other situations as well. These type of musical, and by extension, social skills will come in handy when performing at other concerts as well. For instance, technical issues can occur at any given moment during a concert performance, having the necessary tools to deal with such situations are invaluable, and the jam sessions offers the opportunity to learn not only the necessary musical skills to deal with musical situations, but also social skills.

8.3. Networking, social bonding and bridging

In terms of networking among musicians and others present at various live music events, van der Hoeven and Hitters seem to argue that this is part of the talent development aspect, and that it is an important part of live music ecologies that spaces are facilitated in which networking can take place. They also mention the fact of social bonding and bridging which they connect to ideas about social capital, saying that it allows people to connect to each other. This is certainly the case for jam sessions as we have already mentioned. However, it is not made explicitly clear whether the in-group cohesion and the social ties between different groups amount to any significant relationships or social ties that goes beyond a common mental framework among people who belong to these social groups. In other words, these types of social relationships they mention might be conceptual, in such a way that people feel they are part of a larger cultural movement, or a niche musical community, without actually making social ties with others. This, however, changes in the jam session scene, and likely within other leisure music activities. As participants start to become regulars at the various jam sessions, actual social relationships and friendships are formed through this act of collective music making and participation. This undoubtedly strengthens the in-group cohesion and creates social ties between groups at different jam sessions. It is the strong social character of these events that mark them off as different from the traditional concert events that van der Hoeven and Hitters are referring to, which makes them more directly facilitate social connections and collective identity formations. This might be due to the size of these venues and the amount of people who gather at them as opposed to more traditional concert events, but also because of the strong social character of the events, and the ethos of participatory performance.

At larger live music venues, hundreds and sometimes thousands of people gather who share affinity to a common artist or musical genre, but these events do not facilitate the same intimate social connections and interactions as jam sessions does. Even at smaller venues with

performances from less established performers, this tight knit social environment is not guaranteed, as these performances are presentational and do not facilitate social interaction to the same degree as jam sessions do. As jam sessions to a certain degree can be ascribed the role of a sequential participatory performance event, the threshold to perform is lowered as there is a guarantee that you will not be the only one to perform. This also means that they offer an opportunity for performers to more directly interact with others who they see as potential musical collaborators. This is something Henrik mentioned that he saw as a key difference between traditional concerts and jam sessions. He argued that you can go to a concert, and you might meet someone there whom you know, and you might exchange some words and talk a little bit between songs if there is time. At jam sessions, however, the bar for talking to someone is much lower, and you might talk to someone you do not know, and you might end up performing with them that same evening.

8.4. Cultural vibrancy

As for cultural vibrancy, contemporary jam sessions contribute in the same way as does other live music events. Live music is a significant part of what creates an exciting and diverse cultural sector, this includes all types of live music performances from busking, to jazz clubs, to rock shows, to the philharmonic. What is essential, however, is that there is a wide variety of live music options to choose from that will ultimately showcase different genres, and that there are many different venues at which these performances can take place. While it is easy to imagine a city having a diverse cultural sector offering many different types of cultural expressions, this is still a vague concept without any precise metrics as to what constitutes diversity. This idea is based in scholarly literature and future research might try to offer some clear idea as to what constitutes a diverse cultural sector. In this regard, it is difficult to argue that jam sessions are anything special in the grand scheme of things, as they are just another option for the audiences. However, seeing as there are several jam sessions in the Oslo area, and in the city centre in general, it undeniably has a significant contribution to the live music sector in Oslo. The fact that Oslo as a major city is fairly small on an international scale and with what can be deemed a good public transportation infrastructure, these sessions become accessible to most who would want to attend one. One unique aspect of jam sessions in this context is the fact that they are internally diverse with regard to musical genres, and so offers not only audiences an opportunity to hear a wide variety of music, but it also offers performers the opportunity to perform many different genres as well, which also feeds into the talent

development aspect. Furthermore, seeing as they are based in inclusivity and tolerance, they also provide an opportunity for just about any type of musician to perform, not restricting participation to just jazz musicians, just singer/songwriters, just metalheads, or just club DJs.

8.5. Identity

This thesis has already touched on this last aspect several times already, but there are still some things that remain to be said for it in the context of live music ecologies. Identity is treated as a separate category by van der Hoeven and Hitters, but more importantly it is used to describe the spatial dimension of live music and the attachment of particular venues to a sense of collective identity. As they say: "a music venue can define the character of a street or neighbourhood. Legendary venues are part of the unique cultural heritage of cities." (2019: 267). However, specific intangible practices and annual performances or musical traditions could also be indicators for collective identity. In the context of the live music ecology of Oslo, this could refer to such cases as the venue Gamle Logen which was home to the only performance Django Reinhardt would give in Norway, or the status of venues such as Victoria Nasjonal Jazzscene, or the collective pride felt by citizens of Oslo for the opera house both as a cultural institution, but also as a tourist attraction. It could also be institutions such as the Øya Festival or the Oslo Jazz Festival. In the case of the jam session scene in Oslo, few, if any, of the venues are able to generate such esteemed status as cultural institutions as they are part of a niche cultural practice unknown to most. However, even though several of the jam sessions in Oslo are very similar and share the same core ideologies and ethos, belonging to either one of them seems to instil some sort of pride in individuals. For instance, Per felt particularly connected to one of the jam sessions as it had been the first of the jam sessions he had attended and at which he had learned much and developed as a musician. This particular jam session was incidentally also the one that has existed for the longest time out of all the jam sessions I attended and has taken place at the same venue since its beginning.

More important, however, than particular venues, recurring cultural practices, or annual performances communicating a sense of shared identity among individuals, is the part the jam session scene in Oslo and the individual jam sessions play in the construction, development, and communication of individua identities. This connects to the ideas of musicking and theories of performance discussed earlier in this thesis by Small (1998) and Turino (2008). While being part of these jam sessions can certainly generate a sense of belonging such as was the case with

Aurora who expressed how she felt that she was part of the jam sessions group, these acts of performance can help individual performers develop and express their personal identities as well. Through the aspects previously described, especially those of musical creativity and talent development, musicians are able to experiment with their musical sound and abilities, negotiate stage performance, and experience and discover new music and genres that they would not otherwise have experienced. As a scene based on inclusion, tolerance, and solidarity, performers are able to try out new ideas and techniques without fear of being excluded or penalized, which can carry over into other aspects of their musicianship, instilling performers with a sense of confidence in their own abilities. This aspect of the ability of the jam session scene in helping to develop and communicate identities might be particularly important to the amateur musicians who perform at them. These are the performers who might not otherwise have the chance to experiment with their musical identities, preferences, and affiliation, and so this becomes their creative outlet. This aspect of the jam session scene is arguably the most significant of all the aspects as it carries importance for not just how performers ultimately carry themselves and the ideas they communicate about themselves within the jam session scene, but also because this has bearing on their conduct throughout the rest of the live music ecology of which they might be part, throughout other performances at other venues at which they might be booked to play. If the jam sessions are instrumental in the shaping of performer's identities and musicianship, this undoubtedly carries through the rest of their musical endeavours.

Ultimately, jam sessions are particularly important in the context of amateur musicianship and leisure music making, especially to those performers for which jam sessions are one of their only opportunities for musical performance. This is not to say that jam session performers are exclusively amateur performers or hobby musicians, but the majority of them are not what would otherwise be considered as professionals. For these performers, jam sessions offer a unique opportunity to negotiate and develop their musical identities, and function as a creative outlet that differs from their everyday lives. When considering what impact the jam session scene in Oslo has on the city's live music ecology, this is partly the reason I would argue the cultural and social values of the event are more significant than the economic and profit oriented aspects of the events. The economic aspects are certainly important, as the venues in which the jam sessions are hosted certainly need revenue in order to remain open, pay their licenses, afford proper noise isolation, pay their staff and so forth. However, as has already been made clear, these are not exclusively musical venues, and so these jam sessions are not their main source of revenue. The nights in which jam sessions are hosted, the sessions

likely help generating more customers, all drinking and dining, generating more revenue. This becomes especially important considering the sessions are usually hosted during weekdays and even Sundays in some cases, which are not peak business hours. Thus, the jam session scene is ultimately reliant upon these venues for their continued existence, while the venues might to some degree rely on the sessions for parts of their revenue. However, when making the case for the place of jam sessions in the live music ecology, social and cultural values are the more important parameter on which to judge them.

9. Final reflections

Jam sessions as a cultural phenomenon have evolved greatly since their inception in the first half of the 20th century. From being conceived of as a ritual of purification in which jazz musicians could rinse their mouths of the taste of commercial music they had to play for the squares in order to make ends meet, it has become a regular pastime for musicians of all skill levels and preferences in the metropolitan Oslo area, while certainly still existing as something reminiscent of its original form in other places as well. The contemporary jam session scene in Oslo plays an important part in the live music ecology of this city and can help us recognize some of the important work that leisure music activities do for the live music ecology in Oslo. Through highlighting values such as musical creativity, talent development, networking, cultural vibrancy, and identity, this thesis illustrates how these events differ from other live music events that might be considered traditional concerts. Because these performances are participatory, the music performed at these events are played for its own sake, not for the sake of commercial success, and famous songs are continuously reworked and played in different ways, encouraging participation and highlighting the social interactions among the performers. Not only is the music played for its own sake, but also for the sake of strengthening social bonds and relationships between participants. Through this experimentation with musical sounds and expressions, talent development and learning are facilitated as all performers are encouraged to participate and challenge themselves in these spontaneous moments of musical creativity. This facilitation of artistic development is important for the musical creativity of the city, as new performers are given the opportunity to perform and develop their music craft and learn stage behaviours that might aid them in their future musical endeavours.

Through the social interactions that are facilitated at these musical occasions, musicians can network among themselves and find potential future musical collaborators, and these

activities can strengthen social bonds between participants and within the group, while also creating social connections between different groups across different sessions. Because of the variety of people who attend these sessions, with their different backgrounds and musical preferences, these sessions offer a plethora of different music to be experienced for those who attend them, adding another possibility as to the cultural expressions that Oslo has to offer. This supports the cultural vibrancy of the city, making it a more attractive cultural alternative to other cities. These events are also crucial in the development and communication of personal and collective identities. This is both due to the fact that individual participants and patrons are given opportunities to negotiate and develop their identities through the cultural practices that are undertaken at these events. However, the aspect of identity is also connected to the idea of different venues becoming significant parts of the identities of individuals who feel strongly connected to them, and also becomes significant parts of the identities of local neighbourhoods.

While economic aspects might play a big part in other aspects of live music, this thesis argues that cultural and social values are significantly more important when considering these and other leisure music events, as they offer creative outlets, a sense of collective belonging, and arguably uplifting experiences that are necessary in the lives of many. They likely contribute to the economic profit of the venues in which they take place, while simultaneously contributing great value to the musical landscape of urban areas. Even though these events shed important light on the value of leisure music activities for the local live music ecology of a city or metropolitan area, future research into live music ecologies could benefit from examining the plethora of others leisure music events one might be able to locate, and other live music events that exist outside of ordinary venues and concert performances. This includes researching open mic nights and karaoke sessions in various bars, troubadours playing sing along songs in bars, busking in the streets, club culture, and various festivals. These might contribute more to the understanding of, for example, the cultural vibrancy of a city or talent development in other areas of the live music ecology.

These contemporary jam sessions pride themselves on their ideologies of inclusivity, tolerance, open structure, and sense of solidarity, while at the same time being culturally conditioned, having established codes of behaviour and ways of playing the music that stems from the event's historical heritage rooted in the jazz tradition. However, the relative absence of racial diversity begs the question of whether these events actually work as their ideologies intend them to, or if they passively perpetuate existing conditions of socioeconomic and racial inequalities. It would be in the interest of future research to examine the socioeconomic and

racial barriers to participation in leisure music scenes, and what can be done to challenge these barriers. This extends to the cultural sector of Oslo as a whole, not just leisure music activities.

As a performance event, the jam sessions can largely be considered participatory as the ethos and main goal of these sessions is to have as many people participate in the musical occasion as possible. They are markedly different from what might be considered traditional concerts in this regard, which are more so concerned with presenting a musical product for a paying audience. Even in cases in which the performer or group is less known or not yet a household name, and the performance is not undertaken in order to achieve commercial success, the difference is significant. As Henrik said: the jam session is a feeling, while a concert is a product. This also has significant bearings on their social character and power of jam sessions to generate communities of shared cultural affiliation and preference.

It is because of the power of these events to generate feelings of community and collective identities that this thesis argues for the continued use of the concept of scenes.[5] These events share key similarities in the ways they are organised, the music that is played, the ideologies that carry them, and the patrons who attend them. Scenes becomes a useful conceptual tool when trying to understand the workings of these events and how music is used to facilitate these collectivities, and further, how musical meaning and value is created, and how music facilitates strong social bonds between individuals with similar cultural affiliations. Conceiving of these performance events as scenes allows us to recognize both the spatial and temporal dimensions of leisure music making activities, how they are intimately tied to notions of space and place and are permeable by new actors and other cultural impulses of change over time. The spatial dimension in particular allows us to examine how different types of venues affect the structuring of events, the appropriate behavioural codes that are implicitly claimed and expected, and the values and meanings these activities carry. This dimension also highlights how these events become a part of other ordinary activities such as drinking and dining, as they often occur in pubs and bars.

Describing them in terms of a scene is also a good way to effectively communicate essential aspects of the events, as the term scene has been widely applied and has achieved favour in many different circles, from scholarly work, to media, and even in common speech.

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[5] I am aware of the recent book by Fabian Holt *Everyone Loves Live Music: A Theory of Performance Institutions* (2020) which I know poses significant challenges to established notions of the relationships between culture and community in live music literature. Unfortunately, I was unable to get access to a copy of the book in time to include it in the thesis.

This makes the concept especially available and well suited to communicate something meaningful about a cultural practice such as this. It is possible to designate this collection of cultural practices as scenes because they are continuously recurring cultural practices organized in specific locations in which groups of people regularly congregate, and the people move through these different spaces. Specific cultural objects and resources are continuously used and reworked in ways that allow for people to develop and express personal and collective identities.

Ultimately, the flexibility of scenes as a concept of musical community makes it easy to work with and makes it useful to communicate the social powers of music as a tool to engage people in performance. As a scene, the collection of contemporary jam sessions are also important as sites of networking among musicians, as places in which both professionals and amateurs can connect with each other and establish musical collaborations with other likeminded performers. Like the jazz jam sessions of old, they are important institutions or academies in which musicians can learn and develop their musical craft, experiment with musical ideas and their own sound, however, without worrying about sanctions or punishment due to the inclusive nature of the events. As an important institution in the lives of not only professional musicians, but also for amateur and hobby musicians, they have become important players in the world of leisure music activities, alongside other events such as open mic nights and karaoke sessions with which they certainly share similarities. Taking place in the evening, mostly in bars and pubs with some musical infrastructure, they are largely accessible to most who wish to experience and participate in them. Because of their nature as a participatory performance event, participants can perform to their own skill level and comfort, and each participant brings with them their own values and meanings to the events. Finally, these cultural practices are local examples of a broader, more geographically dispersed phenomenon, which in this instance is the global musical phenomenon that is jam sessions.

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Appendix: Interview guide

Hei, takk for at du stiller til intervju i forbindelse med min masteroppgave i Musikkvitenskap. Jeg ønsker å høre litt om dine tanker og erfaringer rundt jam sessions. Jeg tar opptak av intervjuet for senere transkripsjon og alt er anonymt. Høres det greit ut?

Kan du si litt om deg selv og musikkbakgrunnen din? Når begynte du å drive med musikk?

- Hva fikk deg til å begynne?
- Spilte/sang du med andre? Hvordan opplevde du det?

Hva var ditt første møte med en jam session eller med konseptet jamming?

- Hvordan var førsteinntrykket ditt av det?
- Drar du på flere jammer?

Hvordan fant du ut av det var jammer å dra på?

Var du nervøs da du først begynte å dra på jam?

Hva er din rolle når du opptrer på jam?

Opplever du at det er noen spesielle forventinger til deg når du opptrer?

- Er det noe du ikke kan gjøre?
- Har du opplevd at du ikke har innfridd disse forventingene?
- Hva skjer dersom du ikke innfrir?
- Hva skjer hvis andre ikke innfrir?

Hva slags forventinger har du til andre på en jam?

- Er disse ulike på forskjellige jammer?

Hvordan er kommunikasjonen mellom dere som musikere?

- Er det annerledes enn på vanlig konsert?

Hvordan opplever du dynamikken mellom publikum og artist på jam sessions?

- Er den annerledes enn på andre konserter?

Hvordan bestemmer dere hva som skal spilles?

- Mange jammer fremstiller seg som åpne for hva som helst, opplever du at dette stemmer for jammene du drar på?

- Opplever du at det er noen «regler» eller forventinger til hva slags musikk du kan velge/foreslå?

Spiller du andre konserter? Hvordan opplever du det sammenlignet med jam sessions? Opplever du samme press der som på jam?

På jam session går man fort fra å være artist til å bli publikum. Kan du si noe om hvordan du opplever den overgangen? Hva går gjennom hodet ditt i det øyeblikket?

Hva slags posisjon har jam sessions i musikkmiljøet i Oslo?

Har jam sessions noen spesiell funksjon?

- Hva betyr den for deg?

Hva syns du er det beste og eventuelt det verste med jam sessions?

Er det noe du vil legge til? Har du noe på hjertet?