

[Punjab Sounds: Affect, Technology and the Aural across Region and Nation](#)

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Call for Papers

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Call For Papers

Punjab Sounds: Affect, Technology and the Aural across Region and Nation

Deadline for 350-word abstracts: 1 June, 2020

Workshop Dates (TBC): Summer 2021, University of Sheffield

Punjabi music, characterised by the sounds of the *dhol*, *bhaṅgrā* music and the bass-laden beats of rap-infused Punjabi lyrics, has a ubiquity and global popularity that are perhaps rivaled only by the Hindi film song. In the process, it is often homogenised. We wish to complicate this prevalent stereotyping by excavating the twentieth-century genealogies of Punjab's sounds and mapping the several alternative trajectories of sound and music in the region. Sitting at the interstices of history and sound studies, this edited volume aims to sound-out the region, in this case, Punjab: to open it up through the vectors of the (trans)nation, technology and affect. Our interest is not limited to forms of music, sounds and genres that are typically identified as Punjabi, i.e., music composed in the Punjabi language, or that characterised by particularly Punjabi folk instruments, the tonalities of the region's languages etcetera. We view Punjab in a heteroglossiac way, by testing the limits of Punjab through the inclusion of languages on the periphery of Punjabi and also by exploring the connections with neighbouring regions – Sindh and Haryana, among others. This heterogeneous focus on Punjab, structured through its sounds, affords us the opportunity to examine the imbrications between the local, the regional, the national and the transnational as thought through aurality, technology and affect. We invite contributions to reflect on these issues.

Possible topics and questions could focus on the following thematic areas:

I Space and Geography: Considering the Local, Regional and the (Trans)National

- How is the region produced, sonically? Historically, how have certain distinctive sounds and sonic patterns, for example the *tumbī* (single-plucked instrument), the *ḍhol* (Schreffler 2010), or the *kaharwā tāl* (eight beat cycle), come to connote regional identity ?
- How do geographical features and rivers, mark themselves sonically and feature centrally in the love legends and folk poetry of Punjab, the ‘land of the five rivers?’ In other words, how does Punjab sound, when expressed ecologically?
- How do Punjab’s unique musical histories and Punjabi influences on the Hindi film song and musical forms like *ghazal*, *qawwalī*, pop music etcetera, nudge the hitherto narrow nation-centric narratives of music in South Asia? Further, how do they allow us to query the category of ‘region’ for Punjabi and ‘nation’ for Hindi/ Urdu?
- What are the implications of the popularity of these Punjabi musical forms with non-Punjabi-speaking populations across the world, for considerations of the national and the transnational?
- How are the interstices between the local/regional/(trans)national, registered through the sonic, especially given the history of Punjabi migrations, both local and global?

II Technology

- How did specific aural technologies of recording, transmission and playback mediate Punjabi identities in South Asia (through tactile musical exchanges across the border) and in the diaspora?
- How does a Punjabi regional identity allow us to reflect upon the nature of the techno-sonic? And, how do technologically-produced sounds, such as EDM, techno-beats and/or the use of MiDi and other softwares, re-articulate Punjabiyat?
- How do technological objects associated with a specifically Punjabi identity, such as the ubiquitous *soṭī* (stick) and farm tractors, mark themselves sonically?
- What are the connections between sound technologies and interiority, for example through platforms like Coke Studio?

III Affect

- Allied to this, what are the ways in which the sounds of Punjab bring together the techno-material and the affective?
- How can the sonic, the affective and the regional/(trans)national be brought into conversation with each other through Punjab's sounds?
- What are the connections between affect, sound and materiality in Punjab, given their co-productive and mutually reinforcing ways?
- How does an examination of Punjabi music ask us to consider sonic and musical affect with respect to established cinematic codes and cultures in South Asia?

By seeking connections between sound, region, affect and technology in the context of Punjab, this workshop provides an opportunity for scholars to reflect on the exciting history of sound and music in the region. We welcome contributors exploring the connections between sound and regional/national identities; the networks between migration, media and technology; and the overlooked impact of affect and sound in constituting the region. The workshop will result, in an edited volume that, for the first time, locates Punjab and its sounds in a broader historical, geographical and technological context. Researchers with specialisms across disciplines, from social/cultural history, ethnomusicology and cinema studies, to literature, sound and performance studies and beyond, are encouraged to apply.

Tentative Timeline

Abstracts Due: 1 June 2020

Notification of Acceptance: 1 July 2020

Essay Submission Deadline: 30 March 2021

Workshop dates : 3-4 June 2021, University of Sheffield (TBC)

Editors' Review of Essays: 31 July 2021

First Revisions Due: 1 December 2021

Submissions

Please send 350-word abstracts and a brief bio-note (50-100 words) by 1 June 2020 to punjabsounds@gmail.com with "Abstract for Punjab Sounds" in the subject line.

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