

The Commons and Music Education for Social Change

Alexandros Kioupkiolis

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece.

Abstract¹

This paper spells out the value of an alternative paradigm of the commons for thinking social change and for refiguring education, in general, and music education, in specific. It sets out from the different strands of thought on the commons as a collaborative mode of living, acting and organizing on terms of collective autonomy, equal freedom, creativity, diversity and participation. It analyses the bearing of the various commons on contemporary music practices –horizontal work, open-source musicianship, individual experimentation, collectivized authorship- and education. Education as commons is transformed into a collective good which is co-created by all parties involved on a footing of equality, autonomy and creative freedom. Commoning music education, more specifically, would imply: an opening of music, and education in music, to any and all; a blurring of the divides between professionals and amateurs, teachers and students, producers and consumers; an endeavour to minimise unequal power relations, whereby the teacher relinquishes the role of the authority and becomes an assistant, an advisor, an animator and a facilitator; collective self-governance of educational processes; equal freedom through individual creativity, diversity, openness, collaboration, hybridity and experiment.

Keywords: commons, music, education, social change

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Alexandros Kioupkiolis²

This paper will seek to draw out the value of an alternative paradigm of the commons for thinking social change and for refiguring education, in general, and music education, in specific. It will engage, first, the different currents of thought on the commons as a historical alternative to dominant state and market forms of collective organization and action. The commons consist in a collaborative mode of living, acting and organizing in terms of collective autonomy, equal freedom, creativity, diversity, sharing and participation, eschewing top-down, centralizing logics of the state and a profit-driven individualism of neoliberal markets. The commons make up thus an alternative value paradigm –alternative to strongly hierarchical, unequal, centralized, individualistic and non-mutualist modes of agency and organization- which is embodied in a variety of social practices and relations, both older and new. The paper will work out, then, the bearing of various commons practices and logics on contemporary music practices –horizontal work, open-source musicianship, individual experimentation, collectivized authorship- and education. When it is animated by the spirit of the commons, education becomes a collective good which is co-created by all parties on a footing of equality, autonomy and creative freedom. The paper will spell out, finally, the implications of the commons

² Aristotle University, Thessaloniki, Greece. E-mail: alkioup@polsci.auth.gr

for contemporary music education, suggesting that the latter could foster social change in the direction of the commons by consciously and creatively cultivating their values and logics in the field of music pedagogy.

These values and logics share a common ground, but they are diverse and vary according to the different patterns of the commons. Hence, their implications and manifestations in music and music education are variable. They emerge, for instance, as an emphasis on reciprocity, sharing and collective creation in traditional music or as open sharing, diversity and free individual creativity within the commons in contemporary digitally-based music.

Praxis-oriented approaches and the commons

According to music educators who have critiqued modern traditions (see e.g. the Mayday Group 1997), certain pedagogic approaches to music, such as those endorsed by classical conservatories, often minimize the relevance of influences from outside music, promoting insularity from other arts, the sciences, and the wider social context. By contrast, praxis-oriented views aspire to broader knowledge and communication with new practices. They value openness to a wide range of musical meanings and experiences (Mayday Group 1997: xxiv-xxv). In a praxial perspective, music education pits practice against ritualization and fixed rules, while musical values are connected with the social values and the contexts in which they have arisen (Mayday Group 1997: xxxiii). Praxis-based ideas hold that the values of musicianship are socially and politically modulated. They are relative to the ways they serve human living, and they should be subject to ongoing critical assessment (Bowman 2009: 5). Hence, praxial approaches to music and education seek to further critical reflexive musicianship (Bowman 2009: 3). They are focussed on the actual difference that music education makes in the lives of students and society, displacing technical-rational understandings of musicianship.

Which values could animate and promote such an approach to music education in our times, so as to ‘serve human living’ in our world? No doubt, there is no single scale of values and no universal conception of the human good in our era, quite the opposite. We are witnesses to a proliferation of antagonistic values amidst the globalization of culture and communication, a flattening of values and the ecological ruin of the world.

This paper introduces the value paradigm of the ‘commons,’ which fosters a different way of building and living our cosmos, nourishing democratic ideals, egalitarianism, creativity and sustainable relations between humans and nature. After laying out the basic content and the main different strands of the commons paradigm, the argument will tease out its implications for the performance of music, education and music education. The logics and the ethics of the commons can be recognized and advanced in past, present and novel practices in all these fields, claiming more space and conscious cultivation alongside other value paradigms and traditions of music, education and music education (the present argument does not advocate an ‘imperialism’ of the commons in music and education).

There are many different kinds of commons, from natural common-pool resources (fishing grounds, irrigation canals etc.; Ostrom 1990: 30) to common productive assets, such as workers’ co-operatives, and digital goods, such as open source software (Benkler & Nissenbaum 2006; Dyer-Witheford 2012). However, they can all be included in the same value paradigm insofar as they share a set of core features.

Most basically, the commons refer to goods and resources that are collectively used and produced. Access to them is provided on equal terms, which may range from totally open access to universal exclusion from consumption, with many possibilities in-between. Second, the common good is collectively administered in egalitarian and participatory ways by the communities that manufacture or own it.

Thirdly, sharing is a fundamental process which lies at the heart of the commons. ‘These things we share are called commons, which simply means they belong to all of us’ (Walljasper 2010: xix).

Furthermore, it is now widely held that all commons in their diversity are not only (collective) goods or communities but tripartite systems of action. Most definitions render commons as a social construction which consists of three main components: (a) *common* resources/goods, (b) institutions (i.e. *commoning* practices) and (c) the communities (called *commoners*) who are implicated in the production and reproduction of commons (Dellenbaugh et al. 2015: 13; see also Bollier & Helfrich 2015: 3). Critical thought on the commons insists today that the commons are not primarily resources or goods, but *practices of commoning*, that is, of actively forging and reproducing communities of collaboration and action around different dimensions of social life and the environment. Commoning activities are shaped by the drive of commoners to self-devise ways to meet their needs and to pursue their desires in partial independence from the state and the market, engineering diverse, complex and evolving systems and flows (see Linebaugh 2008; Dardot & Laval 2014; Bollier & Helfrich 2015: 2-5).

Seen as a value paradigm, the practices of the diverse commons at their best are governed by the values of collective participation, self-management, equal freedom, sharing, fairness, creativity and diversity. These values inform the terms of producing, managing and distributing the shared resources we call ‘commons.’ They are ‘alternative’ in that they deviate from or even contest the dominant logics of private-corporate and state-public property insofar as these are hierarchical, highly unequal, centralized, bureaucratic, exclusionary or profit-seeking (Benkler & Nissenbaum 2006: 394-396; Dyer-Witheford 2012; Hardt & Negri 2012: 6, 69-80, 95; Ostrom, 1990: 1-30, 90).

Despite their commonalities, different types of common goods are associated with different manners of commoning and different figures of self-governed communities. It is important to highlight these differences, as they carry divergent implications for music, education and music education. The main division is between natural, material ‘common-pool’ resources and ‘immaterial’, digital and information commons. Natural ‘common-pool’ resources, such as water, fisheries and forests, are expendable and they are run by bounded communities. By contrast, ‘immaterial’, cultural and digital commons, from open software to music and language, are not depletable and they are created by open, potentially global communities (see e.g. Bollier & Helfrich 2015: 7; Dellenbaugh et al. 2015: 9; Ostrom & Hess 2011: ix-xi; Walljasper 2010: xix).

Elinor Ostrom’s original research (1990) delved into natural Common Pool Resources (CPRs), which are small-scale and located in a single country, involving 50 to 15000 persons who are heavily dependent on the CPRs. The populations in their specific settings had remained more or less stable over time. They had worked out common norms of proper conduct which secure their long-term interests. Ostrom (1990: 90-91) put forth a set of ‘design principles’ which explain success and failure in local CPRs: equitable distribution; collective participation in the making of the rules; mechanisms for monitoring rule adherence and imposing graduated sanctions; local arenas for the immediate resolution of conflicts. Crucially, the homogeneity and the boundedness of the relevant communities, their members’ attachment to the land and to one another, are key features that mark off the effective self-organization of the commons in these cases (Ostrom 1990: 88-89, 166, 185; Ostrom 2008).

Since the turn of the century, with the diffusion of new digital technologies and the Internet, a large body of thought and action has shifted attention from the ‘commons of nature’ to the ‘immaterial’ commons of culture, information and digital networks (Bauwens 2005, 2009, 2011; Benkler 2006; Bollier 2008, 2016).

Technological change has given rise to new modes of production and collaboration, which enact novel patterns of association and self-governance. These new schemes do not only reinvent and expand the commons as a culture of co-creation and social sharing outside their traditional bounds of fisheries, forests and grazing grounds. They realize, also, new forms of community and collective self-governance beyond the closely knit, stable and homogeneous communities of face-to-face interaction (Bauwens 2005; Benkler 2006: 117-120; Bollier 2008: 2-4).

Spanning diverse fields, from software development to online encyclopaedias and social media platforms, the new digital environment enables the proliferation of decentralized communities. These combine individual freedom with autonomous social collaboration, holding the promise of more democratic participation, openness, diversity, creativity and co-production without the hierarchies of the state and the market (Bauwens 2005; Benkler 2006: 2; Bollier 2008: 1-20, 117). Wikipedia, the free, Internet-based Encyclopaedia, is a signal example of digital commons. It is a public good, freely accessible to anyone and collectively authored through the autonomous inputs of a multiplicity of volunteers without top-down command. It is also collectively self-managed by the community of its producers and users in ways that enhance the power of anyone to participate in policy-making and enforcement according to their interests and abilities (Konieczny 2010).

In the 'new digital commons,' communities do not simply welcome the active participation of 'peers.' They are also internally heterogeneous, open and potentially global rather than local, homogeneous and narrowly circumscribed. Their networks of association and collaboration introduce new patterns of sociality, whereby co-operation on equal terms goes along with enhanced individual autonomy and creativity (Bauwens 2005). Hence, the contemporary webs of information and communication seem to embody the vision of a community of open, expansive and plural encounters without any fixed centre or identity, which has been set out and

valorized by philosophers such as Jean-Lyc Nancy (1991), Roberto Esposito (2010) and Giorgio Agamben (1993).

Moreover, ‘digital commoners’ argue that the networked information commons immensely expand the commons paradigm beyond its traditional, small-scale natural location in forests, land, irrigation channels and fishing grounds. In effect, digital commons are held to be motors of social change to the extent that they remake in their image a wild diversity of social fields, from music to business, law, education and science, remodelling them after the logic of open, plural, creative and participatory commons (Bauwens 2005; Benkler 2006: 2-3; Benkler & Nissenbaum 2006; Bollier 2008: 14-18) and disseminating the values and the practices of the commons –sharing, free collaboration for mutual benefit, egalitarian self-organization, openness (Bauwens 2005). According to Bollier (2008: 190), this amounts to a ‘Great Value Shift’ which has brought about a crucial transformation in subjectivity by propagating a deeply different conception of wealth as commons.

On a higher level of abstraction, Hardt and Negri have sought to capture the rise of this new form of collaboration and community, which has been enabled by the new digital technologies, through their picture of the multitude.

The ‘multitude’ designates a collective subject and a political logic that have arisen at the turn of the century from post-Fordist forms of ‘immaterial labour’ or ‘biopolitical production’ (Hardt & Negri 2004: 66, 109, 114-115, 198, 219, 350). This mode of production is flexible, relatively decentralised and extensively interconnected. Through widespread nets of communication, the global circulation of information and knowledge, the extension of social relations and collaboration through new digital technologies, immaterial labour produces new commons of knowledge, ideas, communication, affects and social relationships (Hardt & Negri 2004: xv, 114-115, 125-129). The multitude incarnates thus a distinctive type of social and political organization which creates the contemporary commons. In this figure of

collective action and association there is no principal actor who rises vertically above other differences, and community does not subordinate differences to a collective identity. Community consists, rather, in the interaction and collaboration among the singular constituents themselves. Participation and collective decision-making take the place of unaccountable representatives and leaders. The swarm intelligence of the multitude can coordinate action through the autonomous input of its singularities, which can operate mediating structures and govern their community without centralised leadership or representation.

Hence, the commons ‘of nature’ are often attached to bounded and internally homogeneous communities, while ‘digital’ and ‘immaterial’ commons are engendered by open, diverse communities of autonomous subjects. Between the two poles, a third class of commons, the contemporary ‘urban commons,’ the commons situated in urban spaces and citizens’ self-government of the city, introduce a third possibility in the formations of community and collective action.

Cities have become the foremost site for constructing the new commons of knowledge, voluntary associations and community gardens. Common urban spaces, such as community gardens, technological ‘makerspaces’ or neighbourhood centres, can be organized in at least two distinct ways. They may be structured as a closed system which explicitly defines shared space within a fixed perimeter and belongs to a specific community of commoners. Or they may assume the form of an open network of passages, through which emerging and always-open communities of commoners communicate and exchange goods and ideas (Stavrides 2016: 3). Several common spaces in contemporary cities initiate processes of opening their circuits of sharing, co-production and collaboration to newcomers and new possibilities by rejecting rigid boundaries. A praxis of ongoing questioning, expansion and redefinition of existing bounds unfolds at the heart of spatial urban commons, along

with a commitment to keep limits porous, receptive to diversity and hospitable to strangers.

This approach charts a promising way beyond both the closures of Ostrom's small-scale commons of nature and the presumed infinity and abundance of digital commons, in which there seem to be no bounds and no exclusions along class, ethnic, gender, racial, ability and other axes. There is no community without some delimitation from its outside and without operational rules which dictate what can or should be done in its midst and, accordingly, who can be included or not. Minimally, expansive open commons should resist, combat and seek to reduce racism, sexism, patriarchy, unjustified discrimination, domination and privatization (cf. Stavrides 2016: 244-245). In urban commons, however, there are spatial constraints (e.g. how many can cultivate a community garden), exclusions and inequalities based on gender, class, political positions, race, ability, knowledge etc. (who can co-exist and collaborate in a neighbourhood association or a makerspace, among others), and community rules themselves. Inequalities and exclusions affect not only the accessibility of urban commons to different subjects but the internal operations and the everyday life of urban commons. Accordingly, urban commons which value plurality, openness, equal participation and the sharing of the common goods embrace practices of ongoing self-reflection, open debate, critique, expansion and redefinition of actual limits, through which the foregoing values become a permanent concern and an endless but always imperfect pursuit.

This 'urban' approach to the commons, positioned between and beyond the two extremes of rigid bounds and homogeneity (in natural commons) and an unlikely full inclusion and openness (in digital commons), is of critical relevance for the commons of music and music education. Access to and involvement with communities of music composition, learning, enjoyment and education are almost always beset with multiple asymmetries and exclusions along different lines: who can

access and use new digital media of music composition, how gender or class inequalities play out in different genres of music and music learning, from classical music to electronic and rap...Hence, in a manner akin to urban commons, plurality, openness, sharing and equal participation in the commons of music and music education tend to constitute a horizon of desire, action, struggle and transformation rather than a condition that could be fully realized.

In sum, the ‘common’ offers a principle of organizing society and collective activities which enjoins that social goods and activities are made, governed and shared by communities on the basis of egalitarian, horizontal participation (Hardt & Negri 2012: 71, 92). Commoning consists then in the practice of making and managing a collective good in a manner of openness, equality, co-activity, plurality and sustainability. The fulfilment of these terms is never perfect, but remains an ongoing aspiration and an object of lasting endeavour.

Commons and music

How do the commons appear in music and reconfigure it? In effect, the commons paradigm, in its diversity, has infiltrated both theories and practices of music in recent years. Within the literature on the commons, in his ‘field guide to the commons’, Jay Walljasper (2010) adduces Bob Dylan and DJ Spooky as two examples of musicians who think and act as commoners. This means that they consciously draw on a vast, free and common inheritance of music, to which they creatively contribute, embedding themselves in a broader, collective self. Commoners rely and build on the existing commons, but they also add creatively to them, sustaining and renewing the commons. Dylan has described in his autobiography how, for his first album, he made up compositions ‘rearranging verses to old blues ballads, adding an original line here or there...I would make things up on the spot all based on folk

music structure' (Walljasper 2010: 198). He further notes that, on these grounds, he identified himself with Arthur Rimbaud's line 'Je est un autre' (Walljasper 2010: 199).

DJ Spooky is another embodiment of the collaborative ethic of the commons. His CD remixes and dj performances borrow materials from the most heteroclitic sources, from Yoko Ono to the minimalist composer Steve Reich and Jamaican pop tunes from the 60s. He travels constantly to music cultures around the world and then composes something new. In his book on the philosophy of remix culture, he points out the artificiality of authorship. No one conjures something entirely new. Accordingly, no one can claim exclusive property rights to their creations, as copyright law mandates. Societies which honour the reuse of work from the past are keeping the past alive and they engage in an ongoing conversation with their ancestors (Walljasper 2010: 200).

In his 2008 book, *Viral Spiral*, David Bollier explains how certain contemporary musicians exemplify in their practice a conception of music as vehicle for community values. He cites the band Grateful Dead, who invited their fans to record their concerts and to freely circulate their homemade tapes as long as they shared their music with others and did not sell it. This initiative generated a community of shared values: a committed community of fans who loved this music and archived, edited and distributed Grateful Dead tapes. The Internet has greatly facilitated this sharing ethic and the formation of communities of amateurs who freely distribute and celebrate different genres of music (Bollier 2008:161). For Bollier, the commons emerge in music most vividly in the practice of remix. In the 1970s and the 80s, hip-hop artists used turntable scratching and digital sampling to transform existing songs into something new, reproducing music from others in defiance of copyright law. However, by the late 80s, the freedom of the commons, which had given rise to hip-hop, was under siege by record companies who invoked copyright law to demand payments for the tiniest samples of music (Bollier 2008: 161).

Hardt and Negri have not explored the workings of the multitude and its biopolitical production in the creation of music. However, they deploy a metaphor from music which discloses the implications of the multitude for music. They claim that in the contemporary webs of production by the multitude, the open, non-hierarchical cooperation of a diversity of creative singularities is coordinated like ‘an orchestra...without a conductor, [that] would fall silent if anyone were to step onto the podium’ (Hardt & Negro 2009: 173). Moreover, they suggest that the community of the multitude is *polyphonic* (Hardt & Negri 2004: 217-218, 222, 288) and cultivates the free expression of singularities and their equal connection, overcoming exclusion, domination and antagonistic relations.

The spread of a commons paradigm in the understanding, the making and the distribution of music is witnessed also within contemporary theories of music. We will consider here the appearance of this paradigm in examples drawn, first, from traditional music, second, from contemporary music, and, third, more specifically, from the ‘compositional turn’ in music practices of recent years.

First, in the domain of traditional music, much of which has been historically lived and made as a commons of culture. Among others, Christopher Smith (2006), a practitioner and a teacher of traditional Irish music, argues that there has been a long-time conflict in this field between commodity and community, between the marketplace and music, which continues to be felt today. He submits, however, that ‘it remains possible both to create human value and to combat social problems -as well as to teach people how to play- by developing strategies that return the inspiration, tools, and practices of making art to individuals in local settings’ (Smith 2006: 9).

According to Smith (2006: 11), the historical period of enclosures in Europe (16th-19th century) brought about also a creative dispossession of the population. The self-, home- and community-based creation of culture declined, and the production of

poetry, music, dance etc. was increasingly consolidated in a professional creative class. The products of this class entered markets which were driven by banking, credit and manufacture, and were less and less conducted via direct interpersonal forms of exchange. Through successive new technologies, such as music engraving, mass-produced instruments etc., musical behaviour veered away from the model of direct, face to face experience. The creation and reproduction of music was divorced from its consumption, and the commons of expressive culture were increasingly 'enclosed', that is, reduced to an object of private ownership for purposes of profit. As a result, in traditional Irish music, 'Celtic' musicians put their personal copyrights on anonymous traditional tunes formerly owned by all (Smith 2006: 12).

However, contemporary creative communities strive to reclaim the shared processes and the local means of *cultural production*, which were historically the sources of a common, freely enjoyed culture (Smith 2006: 13-14). These personal enjoyments can generate socio-political effects which facilitate social change. Making art in common, by learning to sing, to dance, to play music in a local community with shared interests, is a way of retrieving the cultural commons, the means of crafting community culture, which contrasts with mass media and commercial culture. These ways of making art play down the role of the individual artist as a special genius or talent. They are more sensitive to community roles and the possibilities of artists working on different levels of professionalism (Smith 2006: 13-14). Smith (2006: 14) refers to 'great roots musicians' who manifest not only artistry and technical facility, but also mutual respect and a sense of a place for all within the community. These aspects are perceived by him as an expression of care and compassion, and they offer a vision of what musical communities could accomplish.

In folk music of this kind, however, communities tend to be culturally homogeneous, local and bounded along the lines of Ostrom's communities of natural commons. The difference of present-day digital commons and their new

communities is the ampler room that they often open up for individual creativity, expression and variation on common themes or practices.

Turning now to contemporary popular music, Evan Tobias (2013: 30) sheds light on the ‘participatory culture’ that has taken shape in late modern years, whereby web-based media, digital technologies and communication result in individuals interacting with the creative work of other people. The wide expansion of active participation in music has been facilitated and promoted by the new digital media which have opened access to means of music making, remixing and reproducing to millions of people in those privileged countries and those social strata which have effective access to new digital technologies. Typical ways in which people engage with music in contemporary participatory culture include performing replications or variations of original songs; re-orchestrating an original work for new musical contexts; parodying and satirizing by altering the lyrics or video; remixing original works with other musical contents to modulate the content or the genre; creating mash-ups of original works with different works to generate new composites and new ways of hearing the original; producing videos of tutorials that teach others how to perform or to compose the original (Tobias 2013: 30).

New media technologies have made it possible for average individual consumers to archive, to annotate, to appropriate and to recirculate media content in new ways. The growth of this participatory culture voices a public desire to partake in media, rather than simply consume them, to connect with others, to pass along experience to novices, to manufacture and to share creations with others. To satisfy their desire for music, the audience for music turns increasingly to the *co-creation of content* instead of merely attending the concert hall (Lebler 2007: 206).

Today, several musicians who participate in this culture release their music as tracks in mobile interactive applications, in which others can alter the mix and play the music in new ways. Applications and advanced software enable people to share

their playlists and to mix their music as DJs, blurring the boundaries between playing, creating, improvising and performing. In the 21st century, people do not only play music. They also play with music and through music.

Tobias (2013: 31) has argued that ‘transversal’ practices are not exclusive to popular music. Orchestras, such as the Brooklyn Philharmonic, have hosted remix contests of classical Symphonies (Beethoven 9). Performers, such as the cellist Yo-Yo Ma, have allowed the public to remix their performances. Composers have also embraced the ethos of remixing and release their compositions under Creative Commons licenses, which entitle people to remake the original score. Other artists, such as Imogen Heap, have opened their creative processes to the public, posting updates on their progress in composing and performing music. Heap has asked her fans to provide feedback on her work, transforming the practice of composition into an open collaborative process. These new practices, means and ethics of participatory culture energize multiple interactions between professionals and amateurs in music, reaching out to a broader audience beyond their immediate environment (Tobias 2013: 31).

Along similar lines, Randall Everett Allsup (2013) has made the case that a compositional turn has occurred in certain practices of contemporary music, in which writing, playing and distributing take place within and across open discursive fields. In Allsup’s account, sharing, openness, creativity and collectivity, the defining traits of the digital commons, suffuse contemporary musical practice. He argues that today’s Internet composers-musicians signal a shift in social and musical relationships, citing the example of Kurt and Jake who have a million followers on YouTube (Allsup 2013: 57-58). Kurt and Jake deploy diverse strange instruments, and they mine YouTube and other sources for visual and musical content, which they recompose in stunning arrangements of classical and popular tones. Imbued with a sense of humour, they travel through different musical styles, instruments and digital

technologies. Such composers-musicians produce, exchange and consume collective efforts and artefacts, digital and acoustic, across diverse genres of music and art. They are playful, and their identities are hybrid, unclear and confusing. Through sound and text, they compose not only music but their own selves (Allsup 2013: 59-60).

By contrast, according to Allsup (2013: 60-61), in a certain model of composition that prevailed in classical music, institutional boundaries were drawn around what counts as music (the masterpiece), its audience (the cultured), and its proper interpretation (fidelity to the creator). The composer-individual genius sought to tighten the relationship between his work, the musicians who executed it, and the audience who were expected to understand and appreciate his intentions. As a result, a conservative turn and closure took place in western music, codifying knowledge and procedures and giving a conservative inflection to conservatories and music education. In a musical praxis of closed forms, a performer must accurately represent the will of the composer and must display a mastery of traditional codes (Allsup 2013: 61-62).

The musicianship underlying any activity of music-making and listening is anchored in specific communities of practitioners, who sustain a particular tradition of musical thinking and practice. Hence, different figures of community and different traditions give rise to disparate modes of musicianship. A musicianship of the commons can be closed and conservative, as in Ostrom's scheme of natural common pool resources which are administered by bounded local communities. But, as in the case of digital commons, musicianship may display creativity, open boundaries and diversity. According to Allsup (2013: 62-63), these are precisely the hallmarks of new practices of music making, creating, sharing and learning, which are performed independently of a sovereign originator and beyond a circumscribed cultural tradition.

The new style of composing music that Allsup (2013) highlights creates a form of open text, an unfinished field in which a plurality of signifiers, sounds, touches, words and affects interact. The relative value of an explicit code, such as a perfectly tuned octave, is determined through its relationship to other signifiers in the larger field in which it is composed. Hence, a contemporary composer-musician like Kutiman can combine pieces of perfect intonation with samples from amateur musicians who do not play in tune. The new mode of composing promotes openness and the participation of laypeople in the manner of digital commons. This new style of composition is not confined to elites of professionals, and it challenges received notions of talent, purity and extraordinary excellence. The novel manner of producing music displaces these notions by nurturing a care for the many, for many unknown, ordinary, but singular others (Allsup 2013: 62-64). Hence, it is an instance of a new music as commons, that is, of music open to ordinary people. Moreover, in the style of digital commons, opening music to lay communities, the collective sharing and making of music goes along with enhanced individual autonomy and creativity. Individuals come together in loose, free and diverse networks rather than being subsumed in anonymous collectives and conforming to uniform standards.

Today's musicians-composers become, thus, commoners. They navigate freely the commons of culture, which encompass all musical and other traditions, and they tap into these cultural commons openly and irreverently. In effect, contemporary musicians-commoners are curiosity-seekers, nomads and democrats. They approach freely any kind of music. They read musical texts as open codes to be reinterpreted, remade and relived in diverse ways, exerting their democratic right to sample whatever musical language they find useful without showing much reverence for any authority and tradition. For them, as for most contemporary commoners, tradition is not an authority or a fixed truth. Tradition is, rather, a common good on which they draw freely and whose rules they can fashion and refashion, in a process of endless deliberation, negotiation, contestation and re-invention (Allsup 2013: 65-67).

The growth of the commons in the ways that people enjoy and compose music today attests to a flourishing of the commons paradigm and its distinctive values in this specific field of culture. This indicates that the ‘commoning’ of music today is an integral part of broader social changes, which draws on these transformations towards greater freedom, creativity, sharing, diversity, openness and participation, and also fosters in its turn these cultural shifts. We should note, nevertheless, that insofar as the new ‘commoning’ of music relies on new digital technologies, it is still subject to considerable exclusions as a consequence of the ‘digital gap’ in the knowledge of these technologies and the differential access to them in different social sectors, genders and parts of the world.

Commons, education and music

Turning now to education and the commons, how can we rethink and refigure education as a commons and education for the commons? From a critical perspective, such endeavours should be situated in the context of contemporary neoliberal trends and forces which push for the deregulation of markets, the privatization of services, the expansion of competition in more social fields and the shrinking of the welfare state. Under neoliberal regimes, subjects are forced to take upon themselves the costs and the risks of contemporary economic conditions, in which the labour market becomes all the more unregulated while the welfare state is being dismantled, breaking apart social security nets. Under such circumstances, neoliberal entrepreneurship is mainly about coping with poverty and the lack of social benefits. It is about managing one’s accumulating debts, and adapting one’s skills and employability for the volatile needs of the market in the face of job insecurity and rising unemployment (Dardot & Laval 2010; Harvey 2007; Lazzarato 2011).

As a result, education becomes reduced to a private good and a commodity. But it also turns into a means of constructing docile, indebted and ‘entrepreneurial’

subjects. These two tendencies are acutely manifested in two patterns of enclosure in contemporary education. The first consists in human capitalization, which transforms persons into stocks for a volatile and precarious labour market. Individuals undertake thus processes of self-valorization, pursuing 'lifelong learning' and the accumulation of credentials. The second tendency assumes the form of privatizing educational institutions and, more broadly, of turning them into sources of profit by introducing fees, student debts etc. (Means et al. 2017: 3, 5).

In order to stage, thus, a critical concept and practice of education, the commons should operate as the constructive opposite of these modes of neoliberal capture (Means et al. 2017: 3). By thinking and performing the commons in education, we can advance struggles over the remaking of common sense in ways which cut against contemporary forms of enclosure along the lines of class, race, gender and nation. The commons in education could animate attempts to transform the substance of our relationship to teaching, learning, research and institutions of education in accord with the spirit of the commons. Education would turn, then, into a collective good which is created, governed and enjoyed in common by all parties of the educational community. The co-creation and co-determination of learning would unfold on a basis of equality and in ways which nurture openness, fairness, equal freedom, creativity and diversity, breaking with the profit-driven, competitive ethos of the market and the top-down direction of the state in ways which facilitate broader social and cultural changes.

The pedagogical common would disrupt the conventional divides between teachers and students. Students and teachers would seek to communicate beyond these hierarchical orders and identities in a process of common inquiry and learning, which is inventive, continuing, critical, in the world and with each other (Bourassa 2017: 81). Educational life as a whole, from dress codes to curricula and the daily program, would become co-determined and co-produced by all its members on terms

that seek to approximate equal power and equipotential participation. No doubt, equal power, participation, co-determination and co-creation are horizons and tendencies whose degree will, and should, vary according to context and purpose. Co-determination and co-creation may be larger and freer in contemporary activities of remixing, composing or experimenting through digital technologies rather than when the aim is to master particular arts or traditions of music which require effective guidance and a disciplined transmission of knowledge and skills.

Christopher Smith (2006) has indicated how commoning could proceed in music education in more traditional contexts. He argues (Smith 2006: 16-17) that the 'ethos of the commons' in the specific context of grassroots Irish music can cultivate reciprocal sharing in engaging music, and it can animate deeper and more nuanced social interactions contributing thus to wider cultural changes. The 'ethos of the commons' calls on music teachers to make decisions that fuel reciprocity and the growth of interpersonal community. This may be expressed in free tutorials that take place regularly in open public spaces. In Smith's own instruction, which has been limited to repertoire and ensemble concerts, players learn gradually to trust the process of learning by ear. Over time, they gain the confidence of playing more tunes, but they also learn to listen to and appreciate each other. Progressively, they come to think of themselves as part of a musical community. The educational community set up by Smith organized multiple pub sessions, teaching sessions, informal performances, participation in seasonal festivals etc. The demography of this educational community displayed the characteristics of an egalitarian community of the commons. It was open to newcomers and diverse people, extending across age groups and degrees of expertise. The experience of reciprocity through diversity was strongly felt and had a positive impact on individuals. Community values nourished sharing, humility, hard work in collaboration, respect for others and responsibility for the collective (Smith 2006: 18-19).

It may look as if these values and practices of common music education pertain to a traditionalist figure of community which is more in tune with Ostrom's bounded and homogeneous communities of the 'commons of nature', and contrasts with the open and plural worlds of the new 'digital commons.' Although this is not the case in the foregoing example, in which learning processes are receptive to newcomers and differences, how could we enact educational commons of music if the focus shifts decidedly to contemporary society, the diffusion of new digital technologies, peer-production and the attendant values?

Evan Tobias (2013) has broached this question. According to Tobias (2013: 31-32), if music education is to assist students in participating in the ways in which people engage with music in present-day societies, connecting thus education with musical life beyond school, the pedagogic practices should be imaginatively transformed to forge such links.

Applying participatory culture and emerging musical practices in school music programs calls for expanding from a model where music is interpreted by music educators and rehearsed and performed by students to a more open process where young people interpret, analyze, transform and perform works in ways that might not have been intended by the original creator (Tobias 2013: 31-32).

In this other process, students reinterpret composers' music through new aesthetic sensibilities. Moreover, they share their works with others, undertaking different projects as individuals and groups. Music education aims at capacity-building in a participatory and autonomous pedagogy, which motivates self-directed, inventive and community learning (Tobias 2013: 31-32). Students learn computer music applications and other skills and technologies which enable them to craft popular music in a broad sense, including composition, performance and recording. Rather than working under the direction of a teacher-master, music learning becomes a self-

assessed and peer-assessed engagement, which heightens reflectivity, self-awareness and self-reliance. Students craft their compositions and performances through a circuit of recording performances, of critically reflection on the works, of peer feedback, modifications and new recordings. The implicit practical knowledge which is acquired by making music rises to consciousness through self-and peer assessment, peer interaction and collaboration by way of hearing recordings of other students (Lebler 2007: 210-212). In the true style of digital commons, individual autonomy and invention unfold here within expanding, open networks of collaboration and sharing among peers.

In these particular learning practices, music educators turn into *facilitators and co-creators*. Hence, music education and composition is a commons shared among teachers and learners. Acting as members of a community, educators provide feedback and guidance. They help students to reflect on their musical engagements by raising questions about particular choices e.g. to craft a certain mash-up of music. The role of the teacher shifts from that of instructor and evaluator to a more nuanced and complex function of co-production and co-assessment. In the commons of music pedagogy, then, learning and work are largely self-directed within a structure offered by the educational program and with the support of teachers and fellow students. This is a form of schooling which recognizes the capacities of students, addresses them respectfully, and amplifies their autonomous creativity rather than do work *on* them (see Lebler 2007: 213, 217-218).

It is worth noting that, as in all digital and cultural commons, participatory modalities of creative interaction with existing musical works may face interference from copyright law. Music educators should make ongoing judgments as to how their new elaborations of existing works can qualify as fair use. Music educators should perhaps invert the ratio of copyrighted works and works in the public domain, or under Creative Commons licenses, to ensure that students have access to

considerable material without restrictions so that they can remix, reuse and share their works with the world (Tobias 2013: 34). At this point, the clash between the commons, the state and the market breaks out in the field of music education itself. Educators are called upon to act critically towards state and market forces and to deliberately defend and advance the commons of music creation and education.

The elective affinity of contemporary music learning with the distinctive diversity, creativity, openness and global outreach of the digital commons, which have been associated with dynamics of social change, comes into relief in the pedagogic practice of music as composing –the ‘pedagogy of open texts’ according to Allsup (2013: 67)- whose primary objective is to produce works rather than perform pre-existing ones. In this ‘common’ music pedagogy, learners are seen as potentially equals, who are equipped with multiple capacities and are able to acquire any skills. Music education aims at communication and it addresses ‘anyone,’ ordinary people, ‘anonymous players’ and amateurs, rather than only professional virtuosos and distinguished practitioners. Music education uses open source materials, it affirms diversity and it is self-governed. Tradition is treated as a ‘guest,’ with whom we can exchange ideas and we communicate, rather than as a master we have to obey. Music education as commons is democratic and immersed in networks (Allsup 2013: 67-69). It teaches young people a musical genre, e.g. jazz, in order to enable them to do something with it, in the spirit of the (digital and cultural) commons whereby the common good is a collective resource which we use and to which we contribute new ideas and creations.

In this specific form of education as a commons, which weds autonomous invention to sharing and peer collaboration, the teacher becomes a guest and a facilitator who helps students to become commoners, that is, self-directing, creative individuals who draw on the cultural commons –the various existing traditions of music- but they also embark on their own innovative explorations, renewing

inherited forms and inventing new ones. Hence, the teacher, even as s/he acquaints students with the given codes of a traditional art form, negotiates with them the terms of apprenticeship. S/he enables them to become autonomous creative musicians who take their cues from the common cultural heritage, but they also reconstruct it, conjuring new ideas and works, communicating with other creative singularities and participating thereby in the renovation and the expansion of the cultural commons (see Allsup 2013: 68-69). The teacher forsakes the position of a master who transmits a fixed, authoritative tradition. By contrast, s/he treats students as equally capable actors who bear singular capacities and creative energies. S/he assists them in becoming free commoners, that is, individuals who are integrated in the commons of music but navigate their own course through them.

The pedagogy of ‘critically reflective musicianship’ is a further case in point. Enacting the idea of the commons in music education, critically reflective musicianship seeks to promote ‘newer, refreshed, more realistic, inclusive, holistic and creative forms of musicianship’ (Johnson 2009: 18) animated by the realities of contemporary global cultures and digital, 2.0 technologies. While certain strands of classical musicianship (McCarthy 2009: 31, 34) tend to oppose improvisation and autonomous performers, critically reflective musicianship educates musicians who can make musical choices independently of a teacher or conductor. This school of thought and practice holds that, in early twenty-first century education, musical values should be informed by diverse sources, from political democracy to social justice campaigns and individual preferences. According to McCarthy (2009: 35), a new worldview has emerged which acknowledges the diverse ways of being musical. There is an increased amateur- and community creation of music. Musicians collaborate across the world, and hybrid musical genres have come into being. By their direct participation in a tradition, students can add to a dynamic musical culture, seeing themselves as creative musicians.

The approach of ‘critically reflective musicianship’ resonates powerfully with Hardt and Negri’s take on the commons insofar as this musicianship challenges top-down authoritarian ensembles modelled after the symphony orchestra (Johnson 2009: 19-20). Classic institutions of music education often valued technical virtuosity, competition, individual talent and achievement, the classical repertoire, aesthetic idealism, and the model of the professional musician (McCarthy 2009: 30). Moreover, in the classic orchestra, the scores tend to represent the authority of the great composers of the past, while the conductor is a living embodiment of authority and power (Johnson 2009: 21). ‘The conductor is the last bastion of totalitarianism in the world,’ as Johnson (2009: 22) has put it with some exaggeration. By contrast, ‘new musicianship’ is collaborative, interactive and it integrates electronic and digital technologies (Johnson 2009: 23-24). New musicianship calls on musicians and educators to break with the past, in which music education imagined itself as a citadel of quality guarding the gates against the banalities of the mob. New musicianship is inspired by different scenarios: (a) students bringing in examples of the music they listen to and share with their peers; (b) music labs with instruments and interactive technologies; (c) students working on tracks for their own music in the computer lab etc. (Johnson 2009: 25).

Of course, access to these practices of music pedagogy is socially and geographically uneven. So, their proliferation presupposes, indeed, wider socio-economic transformations. Moreover, the commoning of music education should not be identified with specific scenarios, such as the foregoing, which may be less suitable for particular educational contexts or objectives, e.g. for learning to play demanding musical instruments. Commoning aspires mainly to the enactment of a set of values -collective autonomy, equal freedom, sharing, creativity, diversity and participation- through practices of collaboration whose specific forms will vary according to contexts and intentions. Hence, commoning music education may imply in certain settings a higher degree of reciprocity and co-determination, leaving

more room for improvisation or personal initiative on the part of students, rather than an absence of effective guidance and transmission of knowledge by teachers.

Furthermore, the pedagogical common assumes the equal potential of each and all to learn, to invent, to communicate, to govern and to develop themselves. However, it should also attend to actually existing hierarchies and exclusions which prevent this potential from unleashing itself within education institutions due to class, gender, racial and other inequalities. Hence, the pedagogical common in the mode of an egalitarian co-production of learning, educational life and community by all parties involved is an orientation, a horizon and an objective for which educators should strive, critically and reflectively. The common as potential is already there. But, as an always imperfect condition of fully free and equal co-activity of singularities, it is now and ever *not-yet* there (Bourassa 2017: 87-88).

A liberating pedagogical common should permanently seek to empower all people to enhance their senses and their ability to think, to feel, to create and to relate to each other, beyond fixed identities and closed communities. It would embody neither the firmly bounded, homogeneous ‘commons of nature’ à la Ostrom nor the apparently already global and infinitely open commons of digital networks and open source. An emancipatory pedagogical common would be more akin to contemporary urban commons, in which actual limits, exclusions and inequalities are subject to endless contestation and redefinition with a view to always making the community more open, equal and diverse. In this form, the pedagogical common could help to fashion social relations and subjectivities which would be more disposed to pursue wider social transformation in accord with the value paradigm of the commons.

The music value of commons theory

It turns out that the contemporary thought and practice of music education have already grappled with the question of what music education as commons, or the

commoning of music education, would imply: an opening of music, and education in music, to any and all; a blurring of the frontiers between professionals and amateurs, elites and mobs, teachers and students, producers and consumers, specialists in one music genre and specialists in another; an active and ongoing effort to minimise hierarchical divisions, central direction and unequal power relations, whereby the teacher relinquishes the role of the authority and becomes an assistant, an advisor, an animator and a facilitator; collective self-governance of educational processes; equal freedom through individual creativity, diversity, openness, collaboration, hybridity, mixture and experimentation. So, how could the contemporary theory of the commons enhance music education in the broad direction of ‘critical reflective musicianship’?

From the perspective of alternative commons, the objective would never be to frame and direct the contemporary commons of music creation and education from outside, on the basis of pre-established theoretical schemes or political ideologies alien to the actual praxis of musicianship itself. Such an ideological framing runs counter to the spirit of commons thinking and action, the drive towards free collective self-determination and open collaborative creation through the interaction of singular individuals in autonomous communities.

Contemporary reflection on the commons could stimulate, however, communities of music creators and educators to further probe the meaning and the scope of their current practices and values. It can help educators to gain clarity about their actual, present-day pedagogy or even pedagogies of the past, and to situate them within broader socio-political movements and explorations. A better acquaintance with the wider paradigm of the commons can also help music educators to draw inspiration from related activities and processes of the commons in other fields of socio-cultural creation. It can nourish, moreover, an ampler understanding of alternative ways of commoning and the different figures of community creation and

education—more or less closed and bounded, more or less horizontal and diverse—with which they could experiment.

Hence, within music education, raising awareness about the alternative world of the commons could not only bolster new music pedagogies. It could also help to associate the practice and the values of contemporary music creation and education with wider socio-political movements and aspirations to a better world, which is freer, more equal, open, diverse, fair, collaborative and sustainable. It could spur on students of music to participate in the diffusion of these alternative values and movements not as a result of political catechism from without but as an extension, a realization and a deepening of actual pursuits and values within music education and practice today.

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About the Author

Alexandros Kioupkiolis is Assistant Professor of Contemporary Political Theory at Aristotle University, Thessaloniki, Greece. His research interests are focussed on radical democracy, the commons, social movements, and the philosophy of freedom. He is directing an ERC COG project on these topics (Heteropolitics, 2017-2020) and has published numerous relevant books and papers, including the monograph *Freedom after the critique of foundations* (Palgrave Macmillan 2012), and the collective volume *Radical democracy and collective movements today* (Ashgate 2014). His last monograph is entitled *The Common and Counter-hegemonic Politics* (Edinburgh University Press 2019).