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**MUSICKING THE CITY: POPULAR MUSIC AND THE SPATIO-RHYTHMS
OF AARHUS, 1960s-1980s**

**The music festival as a temporary space:
Aarhus Festuge in the mid-1960s**

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Introduction

Every year since 1965, Aarhus Festuge (Aarhus Festival Week) has taken place during nine days in early September. The festival marks the passage from summer to autumn. Conceived as a festival for all Aarhusians, it includes both the fine and the popular arts and sports, and the balance between them has been the topic for sometimes heated debates since day one. In the early years, traditional indoor events like concerts, exhibitions, and theatre plays taking place in established institutions constituted the main part of the official, printed programme. This programme carried only few traces of the more mundane events like street parades, variety shows, sports events, and outdoor serving that were actually part of the festival as well. These were mainly outdoor activities taking place in the streets, in Den Gamle By (an open-air museum close to the city centre), and in the sports stadium.

In the following I would like to focus on some of the outdoor activities in the early festivals and suggest how this may contribute to the analysis of city-based music festivals as sets of practices based on Christopher Small's concept of musicking and Henri Lefebvre's rhythm and space analysis. The article is a preliminary study as only a few sources constitute the background for my analytical remarks: A few films festivals of the 1970's, some newspaper clippings, and a few documents from the Aarhus Festuge archive constitute the primary sources; secondary materials are anniversary publications from the girls' marching bands, along with studies of city history, the history of the festival week and parade participation; a

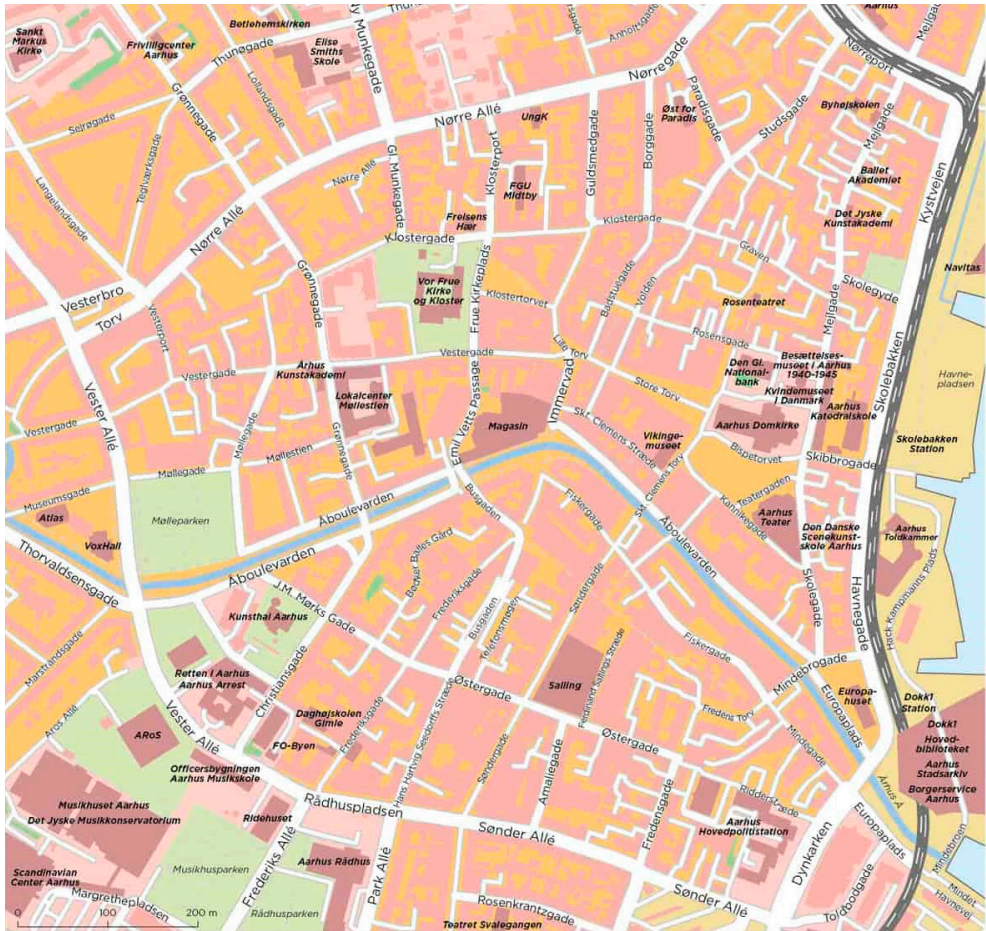


Fig. 1: Aarhus city centre, ca. 2010. The cathedral, Bispetorvet and Skolegade left, the town hall in the bottom. Skt. Knuds Plads/Bruungsgade, south and Den Gamle By west of the map. Permitted by Trap Danmark.

tertiary material are my own experiences of musicking. All of these will have to be complemented by interviews and a lot more archival work in the future..

Out-door popular music events

The concept of musicking is a cipher for an ontological shift in musicology from music as an object to music as something you do – from a music to to music, from a noun to a verb. Not only the musicians' musick but everyone who take active part in the events in one capacity or another contribute to the musicking. Audiences

ushers, television viewers etc. all musick. This conception is rather useful when trying to understand how music works in festival and other live music contexts.¹ Musically, open-air events tend to draw upon popular music genres and their practices. For example, marching bands have been part of many Aarhus public events since the 1950s and amplified popular music groups have been part of the Aarhus Festuge outdoor events since its first year. It is as if events associated with popular culture seems to be connected with larger gatherings and a notion of the general population in contrast to the bourgeois culture of the concert hall and the art exhibition with its tickets on sale and implicit codes of conduct.

Most outdoor events take place during the day, and they take place in streets and squares. This influences the way musicians produce the music and how audiences receive the music, that is, it influences what goes on when musicking: it changes the rhythm and the space of the city for a time. In the case of Aarhus Festuge this happens for instance when Nørregade is filled with the sound of marching bands or Bispetorvet is used as a festival site rather than the parking lot it normally constitutes. During the festival the spaces of everyday life are transformed through a gesture of *Verfremdung*.

Temporariness

Most festivals are temporary. They have marked beginnings and ends and typically last two to ten days. Normally, they recur each year at approximately the same dates thus producing both repetition and change or cyclical and linear time to use Henri Lefebvre's terminology. Following Lefebvre, we may even talk about the festival as "appropriated time" which is a "time that forgets time".² Lefebvre's rhythm analysis is basically comparative, and here, the comparison between everyday and festival time is the focal point. The festival makes sense on the background of the everyday as the everyday functions of the city and its aesthetic qualities are put into relief by refunctionalising spaces during festivals (traffic gives way to people, large-scale actions are necessary to make a mark in the large-scale surroundings). The city spaces need such a refunctionalisation of purpose to become festival spaces, but at the same time they "live" in the doubleness of their original and

1 Christopher Small defines musicking like this: "To music 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", and he adds a utopian element: "Musicking is about relationships, not so much about those which actually exist in our lives as about those that we desire to exist and long to experience ... during a musical performance, and musical performance anywhere and at any time, desired relationships are brought into virtual existence so that those taking part are enabled to experience them as if they really did exist". (Christopher Small. *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (London: Wesleyan University Press, 1998), 9, 183.

2 Henri Lefebvre. *Rhythm Analysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life* (London & New York: Bloomsbury, 1992/2004).

temporarily changed functions. For example: The buildings of the city remain the same and look the same but gain a partly new and expanded function as part of an acoustic space that reverberates the sound of the bands passing.

As a preliminary overview I would like to suggest four categories for outdoor events at Aarhus Festuge. They are partly overlapping, but each has its own identity within the interplay between musicking and Lefebvrian rhythm and space:

- The streets through which mobile marching bands or bands on trucks pass
- The city's squares with stages where musicians (and most of the audience) remain throughout the performance
- The pedestrian areas where local bar owners temporarily annex the public space in front of their shops for impromptu and planned music performances
- All other kinds of outdoor music during the festival week (carillions, stadium shows, etc.)

The streets: Music on the move

Historically, marching bands (e.g., Aarhus Pigegarde, the Aarhusian Tyrolian marching band Tonica, Harmoniorkestret Kærne) have been very popular with the festival audiences. Each year, six to ten bands took part. In the festival's first year it included – as a festival within the festival – a festival for railway employee marching bands which brought eight European orchestras to the city.

A marching band's instrumentation consists of woodwind, brass, and percussion instruments, that is, instruments that may produce very loud sounds that can dominate the auditory space of the streets. The combined sound is massive (the sheer loudness of it), but also volatile, as the wind may carry away some of its frequency spectrum and volume, especially in the higher register. The bands consist of 40-70 musicians, be it girls or men, and they may walk or march one to four kilometres in one session.

The audiences participating or musicking may either stand still and let the musicians and their sounds pass by or follow in the footsteps of the bands. Musicians' and audiences' bodies may become integrated with the music (sensing the music corporeally as well may be a more intense way of musicking than just watching the band pass).³ (Fig.2, p. 6)

Al in all, we have a musicking situation where audiences and musicians take part in producing an everchanging musical sound and rhythm in a Lefebvrian sense. By this refunctioning the participants conquer the city space sonically for a

3 Some of this can be seen in a documentary film from 1973 at Aarhus Stadsarkiv <https://www.aarhusarkivet.dk/records/000278249>, visited October 3, 2023.



Fig. 2: A musicking situation: Aarhus Pigegarde in action in June 1956 when they took part in the celebration of Valdemarsdag (the Danish flag day) by marching through the Aarhus suburb Viby. The police escorted the band and a large audience either saw or followed the band. Børge Venge, Aarhus Stadsarkiv.

brief transitory moment, ordering its rhythms to their taste. When the band moves on and traffic resumes, nothing has changed fundamentally, but those musicking may be an experience richer – maybe serving as a memory if experiencing similar situations in future festivals.

Squares: Situated music

Squares have always functioned as meeting points for citizens and foreigners, not least in markets and other intermittent events, so it came naturally for the organizers of Aarhus Festuge to incorporate these in their programme. At first only a few central squares, but over the years a growing number of central and suburban squares has been included.

The opening ceremony at the first festival in 1965 took place at Bispetorvet. Several photos and a few newspaper articles document this. First and foremost, the ceremony afforded a multimodal play for all the senses. It was raining (tactility); the audience, standing close, sensed each other (tactility); the audience was treated to roasted (*in situ*) lamb and drinks (taste and smell); doves and balloons were released (visuals); the music played (audio); and the marchers and the dancers went through their motions (indirect tactility).⁴ Music figured heavily. Århus Pigegarde and several of the railroad workers' bands performed first, followed by a harmonica player and a singer, then a folk-dance ensemble. Afterwards, a Polish ballet ensemble took to the stage. Local beat group The Victors closed the event.

A journalist tried to describe the atmosphere:

*The organizers had ensured that the excellent marching bands arrived at appropriate intervals, so that both trot and melodies intertwined over our heads in something that tasted of the unusual. [...] In the corner, the scent of the sacrificial lambs rose into the heavy September air. You could crawl under cover and get yourself a glass of beer, a soft drink or a glass of wine. Together with a piece of roast lamb.*⁵

Bispetorvet was established in the 1920s and served as a parking lot most of the time since then, so once again we have a temporary refunctioning of the space. In addition, the space was dominated on one side by the long side of a large 15th century red stone cathedral, tying the festival opening to the city history (and to religion).

By 1969 the festival hosted a series of outdoor late afternoon beat concerts in the town hall square: three beat and three trad jazz concerts. There were three modes of attending this: standing up, sitting down or dancing (some more intensely than others) – or passing by.

Pedestrian areas: Background music

A regular pedestrian street, Strøget (Søndergade/Skt Clemens Torv), only came about in Aarhus in 1972 and was quickly followed by others in the so-called “fre-

4 By indirect tactility I wish to refer to the more less conscious mimicking of musicians' and dancers' movements by walking with the bands or just standing, softly swaying along with dancers and the music they dance to.

5 O.I. “Århus Festuge har indtaget stillingerne” [Århus Festuge has Manned the Ramparts]. *Aarhus Stiftstidende*, 5 September, 1965, 11.



Fig. 3: A 1969 interim restaurant offering pigs' meat and wine (a "grisefest" which was popular with Danish tourists travelling to Spain at the time), music, and dance – all of it in the shadows of the cathedral. Aarhus Stadsarkiv, Public Domain.

deliggørelse af indre by" (the production of a peaceful inner city) as mayor Jensen expressed it.⁶

1969 became the year when outdoor activities besides marching bands blossomed. The streets at Clemens Bro and Bruungade/Sct. Pauls Plads were temporarily closed, and Skolegade was closed to traffic during the whole festival week. In all the places, shop owners annexed the streets setting up makeshift tables and chairs. In pictures it looks like veritable open-air beer gardens, densely populated and with intermittent music and impromptu dancing).

Skolegade and other intermittent pedestrian areas constitute a somewhat longer occupation of the streets than the marching bands. The patrons and the bar owners produce their beer garden rhythms and related musicking – live or maybe taped.

Other kinds of outdoor music

Among other outdoor, sounding activities were the town hall's four-octave, chromatic carillon. Here, carillonists could be heard in concert every day during festival

6 pedro. "En festuge i Århus Centrum hænger sammen med byplanen" [A Festuge in the Centre of Århus is related to the City Plan]. *Aarhus Stiftstidende*, 11 September, 1966, 5.



Fig. 4: An accordion player entertains people drinking, eating, and listening at Bruungade/Sct. Pauls Plads in 1969. The local butcher (not in the picture) had manned the grill. Per Sauer, Aarhus Stadsarkiv.

week, some of them lasting as long as 45 minutes. The repertoire was folk music from various countries, Viennese music, Danish songs, and popular evergreens. There are really no conventions for listening to this and there is nothing to look at. This music of the air is somewhat ethereal and fragile because of the light bell sounds, their dependence on the wind for being heard louder or softer, and because it is often hard to pinpoint the sound source (even when you have been told).

Another activity was the open-air museum Den Gamle By (the old town) just outside the city centre. The museum introduced old style markets and during the day it had its own town musicians, the spoof marching band, Harmoniorkestret Kærne, a female ballad singer, a mechanical organ and a barrel organ. All of it in a loose imitation of a market day in a nineteenth century provincial town.

The stadium, which is placed roughly two kilometres south of the city centre, hosted the closing event which was a big afternoon festival show. Marching bands (they were busy all through the festival!), trucks etc. were included in a parade moving from the city centre to the stadium. From 1966 the old concept of *Fagenes fest* (a kind of competitive meeting of the craft guilds) became the template for the show. It included tattoos by the ever-present marching bands.

In the following decades, large outdoor concerts were held south of the city as pop and rock became normalized. Concerts organised by the anti-nuclear movement were held at Moesgård, some kilometres south of the city, in 1981 and 1982,

and in 1982 the nationally acclaimed, local pop group Gnags played a concert at Tangkrogen, allegedly drawing a crowd of 15.000. Here, the sensitivities of the rock festival became part of Aarhus Festuge.

Some conclusions

Mixed arts festivals like Aarhus Festuge are extremely polyrhythmic in a Lefebvrian sense as the programme include theatre, the arts, music, parades, sports etc. Each category has its preferred rhythms, and even each item on the programme has its characteristic rhythms. In addition, the overall festival space is a highly complex one, and once again each item contributes with their own unique spaces. Within these spaces various musicking practices take place from the contemplative symphony concert to the vibrant dance tents. This is common festival knowledge. Here, I have tried to dig a bit deeper by suggesting four categories for outdoor popular music events. I am planning further studies and will need to reflect more upon indoor popular music events that became more common as the festival evolved.

In this talk I have demonstrated a few aspects of such a city-based festival by pointing toward the musicking practices around Aarhus Pigegarde and the multi-modal experience of the 1965 opening ceremony. That is: the many different ways of participating, the different experiences of rhythms and spaces (here with the sonic and the visual at the centre). The term “affective sonic networks”⁷ might be relevant here as a way to grasp the complexity of festivals as it stresses the always emergent qualities of such events and the constant interaction between music, sound, bodies, and physical materials or in the words of Michelle Duffy: the “ongoing fluid co-constitutions of communal bodies arising in response to rhythmic structures ... [which] in turn help give rise to the constitution of bodily spatial belongings and spatial subjectivities”⁸.

Finally, I have hinted at a cultural perspective, namely the ongoing negotiations of the high and the low by politicians, artists, and audiences within the common framework of the Aarhus Festuge and the temporary results of these negotiations being apparent in ascribed status in the official programme, in the assignment of performance spaces (for example indoor/outdoor), and in press coverage. This could very well lead on to an analysis of the practices taking into consideration that the festivals have taken (and take) place in a traditionally social-democratic city (and country) like Aarhus (and Denmark) and thus the balancing (or not)

7 Michelle Duffy: “The Emotional Ecologies of Festivals”, in Andy Bennett, Jodie Taylor, and Ian Woodward (eds.), *The Festivalization of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), 237.

8 Loc. cit.

of the cultural interests of various groups in the populace. In the early years the festival took place as national governments articulated a cultural policy based on a view of culture more in terms of cultural practices than as a series of transhistorical masterworks.⁹ It could lead on to an analysis the rhythms of the high vs the rhythms of the popular (and their entwinement), which almost equates indoor vs outdoor, established institutions vs new og temporary institutions, focused vs distracted reception/perception.

9 This shift was quite clearly stated in a 1969 report from the Ministry of Cultural Affairs: "The objective for a versatile cultural policy must, in addition to efforts to strengthen artistic development, include many other efforts to promote the individual's potential for development, their preoccupation with and participation in the design of our common existence. The implementation of this objective requires openness, imagination - and breaking away from many habitual notions" (*En kulturpolitisk redegørelse, Betænkning nr. 517*. København: Ministeriet for kulturelle anliggender, 1969, 7 (my translation)).

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