



**19th International Conference of Students of
Systematic Musicology**

22, 23 and 24 July 2026.

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Keywords: cognition, emotion, individual difference, perception

Session L11: Culture, Politics and Identity

From Furniture to Coercion: Erik Satie, Brian Eno, and the Ambivalence of Musical Affective Niches

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Abstract

Background:

Atmospheres are quasi-objective affective realities perceived pre-reflectively by the lived body (*Leib*). Drawing on 4E Cognition and theories of affective scaffolding (Colombetti & Krueger, 2015), music is defined as an *affective technology*: a practice that reconfigures physical space into an inhabited, affectively charged dimension by modulating sensory-motor dynamics. *Affective niches*, in turn, refer to environmentally structured contexts that selectively afford and sustain particular emotional states.

Aims:

This paper investigates music's role in constituting affective niches to regulate emotional states, exploring the ambivalence of soundscape manipulation along a spectrum ranging from homeostatic support to psychological coercion.

Main Contribution:

The study reappraises Erik Satie's *Musique d'Ameublement* (Vogel, 2010) as a structural inquiry into sub-personal atmospheric shaping and a form of affective scaffolding, a trajectory further developed in Brian Eno's Ambient Music. Empirical data (Ehret et al., 2021; Hsu & Chen, 2020; Cuesta et al., 2018) confirm music's behavioral influence in environmental settings. Conversely, the paper analyzes the weaponization of these atmospheric strategies in documented cases of music torture (Grant, 2013), where sound is instrumentalized to dismantle psychological integrity. In this context, music constitutes a pathological inversion of affective scaffolding, insofar as the environment no longer supports but actively destroys the agent's affective autonomy. The original contribution lies in framing both poles (aesthetic design and coercive manipulation) within a unified theoretical account of musical niche construction.

Implications:

Understanding the legacy of Satie and Eno in affective niche management reveals music as a potent conditioning tool. This calls for a critical awareness of contemporary mediascapes as a condition for reclaiming experiential autonomy.

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Keywords: aesthetics, 4E cognition, environment, perception, philosophy and semiotics

Attitudinal and behavioural effects of music advocacy – Replicating concert research online

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Abstract

Background:

Music is heralded for its power to create change (Schreiber, 2019), yet the psychological mechanisms of attitude and behaviour change are unclear. In a previous live study, we investigated the advocacy effects of a music performance about wrongful imprisonment. Both in-person and livestream participants showed increases in awareness and connectedness, while empathy predicted charitable behaviour (Schlichting, 2025). However, our sample was smaller than

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