

Why Applied Ethnomusicology?

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During a time of increased valuing and rapid growth of ethnomusicology in use, this article considers the naming of current ethnomusicological trends and the discursive location of applied ethnomusicology within those. Applied ethnomusicology has acquired specific and internationally shared meanings and uses within a growing tendency, across the social sciences, arts and humanities, towards the societal usefulness of academic work. It is both distinct from and related to ethnomusicology in the public interest, public ethnomusicology, public sector ethnomusicology and engaged ethnomusicology.

First we have to name what it is that we do. Changes in our praxis should be reflected and indeed generated by changes in the language on our websites and in our mission statements—whether those of our academic societies or of our programs and departments. Course syllabi and concert programs can also include language that both transcends the academy and addresses its changing politics. We have to name our goals and aspirations for the field and to emphasize the relevance of our unique training for a world beyond the academy. And we have continuously to imagine and to articulate this activist awareness to our students, our colleagues, our administrators, our audiences, and to the doubters, whose facile tropes of simplistic condemnation need correction. Beyond, before, and in addition to the pure professorate, with its ideal balance of teaching, research, and governance, we need to imagine and contribute to the options available for our younger colleagues who have chosen the academic field of ethnomusicology as their training ground. As the pure professorate shrinks, we have to confidently assure them that they have made the right choice.

Anne Rasmussen

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Because I chair an international study group called Applied Ethnomusicology,² I have been pondering how many terms there are for ethnomusicological work that has social and cultural impacts. Names like public sector ethnomusicology, public

1 Rasmussen 2016, 4.

2 The Study Group on Applied Ethnomusicology of the International Council for Traditional Music.

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ethnomusicology and engaged ethnomusicology are often used in an unclear way. Although the two largest learned societies of ethnomusicologists, the Society for Ethnomusicology (SEM) and International Council for Traditional Music (ICTM), have official sub-networks devoted to “applied ethnomusicology,” the societies as wholes promote contexts where “applied” is not used but emphasize the same trends that “applied ethnomusicology” describes. It is time to explore and question if applied ethnomusicology is the term to go with. Definitions gather together ideas and set limits, but it is important not to gloss over them—doing so contributes to the erasure of intellectual traditions, and increases the likelihood of wasting energy on “reinventing the wheel.”³

The article studies how applied ethnomusicology and related terms have been used; how the monikers have been defined vis-à-vis adjacent scholarly fields; and what are their strengths and weaknesses. It argues that what to call new developments in ethnomusicology depends on the perspective that one takes to them, and the contexts in which they operate, in which applied ethnomusicology always has its own specific meaning.

Public + Ethnomusicology

Terms that pair “public” with “ethnomusicology” include ethnomusicology in the public interest, public sector ethnomusicology and public ethnomusicology. In the first issue of the SEM journal *Ethnomusicology* about applied ethnomusicology in 1992, Jeff Todd Titon defined *ethnomusicology in the public interest* as “[ethnomusicological] work whose immediate end is not research and the flow of knowledge inside intellectual communities, but, rather, practical action in the world outside of archives and universities’ while stating that ‘as a way of knowing and doing, fieldwork [which is constitutive of ethnomusicology] at its best is based on a model of friendship between people rather than on a model involving antagonism, surveillance, the observation of physical objects, or the contemplation of abstract ideas.’”⁴ Ethnomusicology in the public interest was a term intended to evoke Habermas’ notion of the public sphere.⁵

Public sector ethnomusicology, by contrast, has been often interpreted to mean ethnomusicologists who are employed by government, or the public sector.⁶ In the USA, this would include employees of the Library of Congress, the Smithsonian Institution, the National Endowment for the Arts or states arts councils, for example.⁷ In other interpretations, place of employment is not mentioned specifically; it is

3 Rylko-Bauer et al. 2006, 186.

4 Titon 1992, 315, 321 in Titon 2015a, 26.

5 J. T. Titon, pers. comm., 6 July 2016.

6 Titon 2015a, 8.

7 Ibid.

vague whether the term refers to work done outside of the academy by someone employed in the public sector, or work done outside of the academy regardless of employer. For instance, an organizer of the 2016 SEM pre-conference “Soundings: Public Sector Ethnomusicology in the 21st Century” described the event as a “discussion that focuses on ethnomusicology outside of the academy ... whether that be different types of programs incorporating public-sector work; whether that be exploring the skill sets needed for public-sector work; [or] whether there are specific or model projects that might be highlighted.”⁸

Such initial definitions of public sector ethnomusicology can be criticized as exclusionary and US-centric. Titon writes that sectors of society, outside of academia yet not in the public sector, are excluded:

By definition “public sector ethnomusicology” is unable to include applied ethnomusicology as practiced by those who work in the private sector, in NGOs such as museums, historical societies, foundations, and various non-profit organizations, even when part of their funding comes from government grants; nor does it describe the work of applied ethnomusicologists in corporations and client organizations.⁹

If the term public sector ethnomusicology is used outside of the US, which has many private universities, confusion may result. For example, in Australia or EU nation-states, ethnomusicologists who work inside the academy also work in the public sector when government funds universities and colleges. Yet there is also a “grey zone” of universities and colleges only partly funded by government, for example in Canada. In such cases, the above definitions of public sector ethnomusicology are also inadequate.

The sector and country-exclusive aspects of public sector ethnomusicology originate in the term’s history. Titon notes that

US-development of the term public sector ethnomusicology is mainly a borrowing from the abandoned term public sector folklore. (Folklorists used the term public sector folklore in the 1970s and 1980s but in the 1990s the preferred term became public folklore, which it remains.) Historically, in the US, public sector folklore developed both outside the academy and inside of government institutions.¹⁰

In the 1970s and 80s, public sector folklorists—who were academically trained—participated in scholarly societies (like the American Folklore Society) and published academic work. Today, US-based ethnomusicologists who promote public sector ethnomusicology are in a similar position. Although they may be employees of public sector institutions, they participate in scholarly societies like the SEM, and publish

8 J. Gray, email message to SEMNotices-L, 16 Nov. 2015.

9 Titon *ibid.*

10 J. T. Titon, pers. comm., 6 July 2016.

academic articles and books.¹¹ If one is unfamiliar with histories of folklore, “public sector ethnomusicology” could seem also to include academic work by the “pure professoriate”¹² on the public sector, which in practice the field has not. However, evaluations of cultural policies including (but not limited to) those of government have been one of the most common foci of applied ethnomusicological work.¹³

Public ethnomusicology refers to a public, but which one? What is that public lacks definition. It can only be said definitively that it refers to “applications in the public arena,”¹⁴ or, if not applications, ethnomusicology that in some way involves a “public.” This is vague too.

Recently the SEM at the initiative of its Presidents and Executive Board has promoted the terms public sector ethnomusicology and public ethnomusicology. In addition to holding the pre-conference on public ethnomusicology, in 2015 the SEM first awarded the Judith McCulloh Public Sector Award, which “recognize[s] the valuable impact of many types of ethnomusicological work that benefits the broader public and typically engages organizations outside academic institutions.” The awardee each year is: “1) an individual or organization/institution carrying out a major public-sector project that has attained significant recognition; or 2) an individual or organization/institution whose ongoing work contributes significantly to public understandings of ethnomusicology.”¹⁵

In SEM contexts, public sector folklore and public folklore influenced 1990s developments of what became commonly called *applied ethnomusicology*.¹⁶ In 1992, Martha Ellen Davis noted that public sector folklore “refers to practical projects in cultural conservation undertaken by folklorists as employees or consultants of government—federal, state, or local—and non-profit cultural-conservation organizations such as historical societies and museums. Such projects are intended to facilitate conservation of aspects of expressive culture (music, dance, crafts, and so forth) by their respective culture bearers in their traditional social settings.”¹⁷ In 1993, the volume *Public Folklore* made an intellectual case for dropping out “sector.” Editors Robert Baron and Nick Spitzer also promoted “collaborative efforts of tradition bearers and folklorists or other cultural specialists” towards cultural innovations based on folk traditions—particularly folklorists’ purposeful “reframing and extending [of] tradition in collaboration with folk artists, native scholars, and other community members.”¹⁸ In public folklore, folklorists work not only in conservation, but also in and with contemporary social contexts and broadly defined publics, for

11 For example, academic works by the co-organizers of the 2016 SEM pre-conference include Gray 2015 [2001] and Groce 1999.

12 Rasmussen *ibid.*

13 Titon 2015a, 6.

14 *Ibid.*, 8.

15 Society for Ethnomusicology 1997–2013b.

16 Harrison 2012, 510–511.

17 Davis 1992, 362.

18 Baron & Spitzer 1992, 1.

example folklife festivals, or initiatives continuing, exhibiting and marketing culture within contexts of urban renewal and gentrification.¹⁹ SEM leadership has used public ethnomusicology and public sector ethnomusicology interchangeably even though the parallel terms in folklore have significantly different meanings.

Applied Ethnomusicology

In 1998, when 38 ethnomusicologists founded the first scholarly network of applied ethnomusicology—what became the Applied Ethnomusicology Section of the Society for Ethnomusicology, USA—“applied ethnomusicology” was a growing field in the US. Yet, Titon recalls, “Until [a founding] meeting, a single name for [applied] activity had not yet risen to the surface; among those in circulation then were ‘applied,’ ‘active,’ ‘action,’ ‘practice,’ ‘public,’ and ‘public sector’”²⁰—even though mentions of “applied” work is threaded through the history of ethnomusicology.²¹ The SEM group’s founders, Martha Ellen Davis and Doris Dyen, respectively identified with applied ethnomusicology and public folklore; the group was said to represent a safe space where ethnomusicologists employed outside academe could gather and through which applied ethnomusicology could be advocated for as an “alternative” career to an academic one. Various other founding members who worked in universities, though, did not share this view and identified with applied anthropology. One could also observe a sociocultural anthropology orientation widely shared among members, reflecting the historical and continuing focus of the SEM general. As Section leadership changed, the group abandoned the idea that applied ethnomusicology was a constituent within SEM that was opposed to academic ethnomusicology, a view also abandoned by SEM leadership today.²² Titon writes that “[i]n the new millennium, as applied ethnomusicology has become increasingly popular among graduate students and welcomed inside academic institutions, the Section has become an SEM meeting-place and platform for ethnomusicologists based both inside and outside of academia as long as they are doing applied work.”²³ Recently, the Applied Ethnomusicology Section has taken the broad focus of “ethnomusicology that puts music to use in a variety of contexts, academic and otherwise, including education, cultural policy, conflict resolution, medicine, arts programming, and community music.”²⁴ The Section meets at a business meeting held at each SEM annual conference.

19 See also Hansen 1999, which describes such “cultural interventions” as based on academic theorizations and contributing to those.

20 Titon 2015a, 27.

21 Ibid.

22 Rasmussen *ibid.*

23 Titon 2012, J. T. Titon, pers. comm., 6 July 2016.

24 Society for Ethnomusicology 1997–2013a.

By 2007, when a group of 44 ethnomusicologists formed the International Council for Traditional Music's Study Group on Applied Ethnomusicology, applied ethnomusicology was the main term in use internationally too.²⁵ Attendees were interested in solving concrete problems via research and practical interventions. Problem-solving is also generally regarded as the task of applied anthropology. The study group defined applied ethnomusicology in 2007 as "the approach guided by principles of social responsibility, which extends the usual academic goal of broadening and deepening knowledge and understanding toward solving concrete problems and toward working both inside and beyond typical academic contexts"²⁶—a definition adapted from an applied anthropology textbook.²⁷ Founding chairperson Svanibor Pettan added (also in 2007; again borrowing from the applied anthropology textbook) the aim that the group "advocates the use of ethnomusicological knowledge in influencing social interaction and course of cultural change."²⁸

By 2008—when the ICTM Study Group on Applied Ethnomusicology started holding its biannual symposia so far on four continents, and specifically focused on solving concrete social problems—ethnomusicology in the USA had developed in diverse directions. US discourses of ethnomusicology substantially influence the field's global discourses because the USA has the largest number of universities and colleges, as well as ethnomusicologists working within them, of any single country. For example, Titon had proposed in 2003 that applied ethnomusicology focuses on practical problems: "To me, ethnomusicology is the study of people making music. Applied ethnomusicology, then, is the application of that study: beyond mere documentation, beyond interpretation, beyond theory-building, and toward the solution of practical problems in the world outside the academy,"²⁹ which is likewise congruent with applied anthropology. Also in 2003, other US academics ventured different definitions. Ethnomusicologist Amy Catlin-Jairazbhoy wrote that applied ethnomusicology is "ethnomusicology with a sense of purpose, and the purpose is to engender change, to participate fully as scholars in the world of practitioners, and to collaborate with them in the design and creation of new modes of musical being, using all the intellectual tools available to the otherwise 'normal' ethnomusicologist."³⁰ Folklorist Lucy Long, who researches food and foodways, emphasized ties of US applied ethnomusicology to public sector folklore and public folklore,³¹ which supported applied "academic emphases on individual bearers of tradition, on music as one outlet of expressive tradition within a culture, and on the

25 Harrison, Mackinlay & Pettan 2010.

26 International Council for Traditional Music 2010–2016a.

27 Spradley & McCurdy 2000.

28 International Council for Traditional Music *ibid.*

29 Fenn & Titon 2003, 130.

30 Caitlin 2001 in Alviso 2003.

31 See, e.g., Sheehy 1992.

significance of the situated performance context in constructing meaning.”³² Today, a diversity of definitions in the USA continues to be reflected in Internet webpages of the SEM Applied Ethnomusicology Section. Stating “applied ethnomusicology is elusive to define,” the pages post Section-member attempts at definitions.³³

Certainly there was room for many understandings of the international field of applied ethnomusicology. That was the approach taken by Pettan and Titon when they edited *The Oxford Handbook of Applied Ethnomusicology* (starting in 2009; publication date, 2015).³⁴ The editors deliberately did not supply their own or in fact any single definition of applied ethnomusicology for the contributors whom they invited to write for the book.

However, Titon’s introduction distilled a new and revised definition of applied ethnomusicology from the sort of work he saw in the field when he edited the handbook and in 2013–2014:

Applied ethnomusicology puts ethnomusicological scholarship, knowledge, and understanding to practical use. That is a very broad definition. More specifically, as it has developed in North America and elsewhere, applied ethnomusicology is best regarded a music-centered intervention in a particular community, whose purpose is to benefit that community—for example, a social improvement, a musical benefit, a cultural good, an economic advantage, or a combination of these and other benefits. It is music-centered, but above all the intervention is people-centered, for the understanding that drives it toward reciprocity is based in the collaborative partnerships that arise from ethnomusicological fieldwork. Applied ethnomusicology is guided by ethical principles of social responsibility, human rights, and cultural and musical equity.³⁵

An introductory text by Pettan re-asserted the focus on solving concrete problems³⁶ important to the ICTM Study Group on Applied Ethnomusicology.

Chapter authors seemed to agree that applied ethnomusicology involved making an “intervention” with intention to stimulate a benefit or solve a problem.³⁷ By 2015, these among other scholars had formed a coherent set of ideas about what applied ethnomusicology was, and what it was not,³⁸ in international perspective, in English.

32 Long 2003, 98.

33 Society for Ethnomusicology *ibid.* See Dargie, this volume.

34 Pettan & Titon 2015.

35 Titon 2015a, 4.

36 Pettan 2015.

37 Pettan & Titon *ibid.*

38 Pettan *ibid.* (after Harrison & Pettan 2010, 16–17) reviewed what applied ethnomusicology was not:

1. Applied ethnomusicology does *not* stand in opposition to the academic domain, but should be viewed as its extension and complement.

2. Applied ethnomusicology is *not* an opposition to the theoretical (philosophical, intellectual) domain, but its extension and complement.

3. Applied ethnomusicology is *not* an opposition to ethnographic, artistic, and scientific research, but their extension and complement.

This understanding also is consistent with definitions of applied anthropology. For example, the Society for Applied Anthropology currently describes itself as promoting “the investigation of the principles of human behavior and the application of these principles to contemporary issues and problems.” Although applied anthropologists work in a range of settings like academia, business, law, health and government, the unifying factor is “a commitment to making an impact on quality of life in the world.”³⁹ Today, the American Anthropological Association (AAA) strongly emphasizes applied and practicing anthropology, about which it includes a description on its webpages:

Applied or practicing anthropologists are an important part of anthropology. ... Applied anthropologists work to solve real world problems by using anthropological methods and ideas. For example, they may work in local communities helping to solve problems related to health, education or the environment. They might also work for museums or national or state parks helping to interpret history. They might work for local, state or federal governments or for non-profit organizations. Others may work for businesses, like retail stores or software and technology companies, to learn more about how people use products or technology in their daily lives.⁴⁰

A process-inclusive definition is found in John Van Willigen’s *Applied Anthropology: An Introduction*: “applied anthropology is a complex of related, research-based, instrumental methods which produce change or stability in specific cultural systems through provision of data, initiation of direction action, and/or the formation of policy. This process can take many forms, varying in terms of problem, role of the anthropologist, motivating values, and extent of action involvement.”⁴¹ Today, applied anthropology and practicing anthropology are synonymous.

Applied ethnomusicology—influenced as it is by applied anthropology—deals with solving problems and enhancing quality of life. It is research-based in that it puts ethnomusicological knowledge to use, although “instrumental” methods or the “practicing” aspect could also include musical arts-making or -organizing.

Engaged Ethnomusicology

Applied ethnomusicology has been engaging what today is fashionably called “engagement” for decades.⁴² Yet it’s difficult to find out exactly what is *engaged ethnomusicology*.

The term “engaged” is engaging. Beyond this, the engaged ethnomusicology literature is confusing. Tina Ramnarine equates engaged ethnomusicology with

39 Society for Applied Anthropology n.d.

40 American Anthropological Association: Advancing Knowledge, Solving Human Problems 2016.

41 Van Willigen 2002.

42 Dirksen 2012.

applied ethnomusicology, as defined in Seeger 2006,⁴³ and also “ethnomusicology as advocacy.”⁴⁴ In a 2003 article, Gage Averill equated engaged, applied and public ethnomusicology.⁴⁵ In 2010, Averill explained that he preferred “engaged” because it faintly echoed “Paris ’68 and the call to an engaged intelligentsia.”⁴⁶ He found public ethnomusicology “too allied to a Habermasian notion of the ‘public sphere’”; and “advocacy ethnomusicology ... too rooted in political instrumentality.” He threw out “applied” because it “was often framed in the context of alternative career choices to academia, and didn’t yet ring with a broad obligation for ethnomusicologists (whether inside or outside of academic institutions) to share their experiences, training, and understanding widely.”⁴⁷ However, it would seem that “engaged” is just as caught up in instrumental rationality, a term developed by Adorno and Habermas, as “applied.”⁴⁸ Other ethnomusicologists echoed Averill’s preference and reasoning. Diane Thram adapted Averill’s 2003 use of engaged ethnomusicology for archival contexts, particularly at the International Library of African Music at Rhodes University, South Africa.⁴⁹ In 2010, Eric Martin Usner, a graduate student in Averill’s at New York University, advocated for “engaged,” explaining that he reacted against the SEM Section’s aims. The Section’s webpage read at that time that it was devoted to “work that falls outside of typical academic contexts and purposes.”⁵⁰

If one looks beyond the views of the SEM Applied Ethnomusicology Section’s founders and their immediate predecessors,⁵¹ to the Section membership generally and the international field of applied ethnomusicology, it has never been true that applied ethnomusicology refers more to non-academics than academics. Titon writes that “more practitioners of applied ethnomusicology are employed within academia than outside it.”⁵² Seeger argues that distinguishing academic from non-academic in applied work is unhelpful.⁵³ The current, internationally resonant concept of applied ethnomusicology does not make any imaginary distinction between academic ethnomusicology and non-academic applied ethnomusicology, mimicking as it does applied anthropology.⁵⁴ Rebecca Dirksen notes that some

43 222–26.

44 Ramnarine 2008, 84–85.

45 Averill 2003.

46 Averill 2010, 8.

47 Ibid.

48 J. T. Titon, pers. comm., 6 July 2016.

49 Thram 2014, 312.

50 Usner 2010, 88.

51 Titon 2012.

52 Titon 2015a, 24.

53 Seeger 2015.

54 The AAA definition of applied and practicing anthropology does not distinguish between “academic” and “applied,” as one notices on a careful read.

ethnomusicologists also “favor ‘engaged ethnomusicology’ for its ability to reflect the researcher’s desire for a deep and sustained engagement with the community. But ... it is incorrect to claim that ethnomusicologists working within academia are not in fact engaged with the groups and individuals who participate in their research.”⁵⁵ In Dirksen’s thinking, “engaged” seems redundant when used in connection with ethnomusicology.

Adding to the confusion, the title of the first-ever forum of the SEM and ICTM, held in Ireland in 2015, evoked engaged ethnomusicology whereas its description aligned with public sector ethnomusicology. According to a Call for Papers, “Transforming Ethnomusicological Praxis⁵⁶ through Activism and Community Engagement” aimed to feature “some of the finest thinkers and social activists within the global academy of music scholars together with public sector actors/advocates/activists who understand the relevance of sound and movement studies in addressing social, political and environmental issues of urgent importance.” The stated motivation for the Call made the same points that had already been made in the same way in the applied ethnomusicology literature:⁵⁷ “while there is now a long history in ethnomusicology of initiatives that have sought to address problems of inequality, conflict and oppression, and a shorter history pertaining to such matters as health and environmental change, the symposium⁵⁸ will focus, not on the problems per se, but on the methodologies that could best enable our work to have greater social impact.”⁵⁹ The stated focus is surprisingly the same as may be found in the applied ethnomusicology literature focused on method.⁶⁰ If the forum did not define anything new, why promote other concepts?

Comparison of Terms and Uses; Inspiring Ideas beyond Ethnomusicology

Ethnomusicological writings have theorized “applied ethnomusicology” to a much greater extent than “engaged ethnomusicology” and combinations of “public” with “ethnomusicology.” The latter are yet relatively weak terms to use from a scholarly standpoint. However, ethnomusicologists working in all of these areas are part of large-scale transformations happening in ethnomusicology. Such scholars and practitioners are transforming ethnomusicology.

55 Dirksen *ibid.*

56 “Praxis” here was at odds with the idea of community engagement. Presenters at the conference spoke in academic terms, to an academic audience, and not in the communities supposedly engaged with.

57 Summarized in Harrison 2014, e.g., 22, 30.

58 I.e., the SEM-ICTM forum “Transforming Ethnomusicological Praxis through Activism and Community Engagement.”

59 International Council for Traditional Music 2010–2016b.

60 E.g., Bendrups 2015, Harrison 2015, Schippers 2015, Tan 2015, Titon 2015b.

If one wishes to work further on theorizing the latter terms, there is the possibility to strengthen ethnomusicological theorization with scholarship from adjacent disciplines. In anthropology, however, labels like “public interest anthropology” or “public anthropology” mostly have been said to “exist more as sets of ideas or frameworks than tested strategies of action.”⁶¹ There is one case in which public anthropology is no longer vague, and easy to critique as “indistinguishable” from (other) applied work.⁶² In 2001, Prof. Rob Borofsky founded the Center for a Public Anthropology. Borofsky’s public outreach projects, and publications including the book *Why a Public Anthropology?*,⁶³ have aimed to foster “accountability standards in which anthropologists are evaluated less by the number of publications produced and more by the degree to which their publications address social problems”; to embrace “transparency—allowing the larger society to understand why to date the field has not lived up to its potential for serving the common good”; and to call for “the revision of anthropology’s ethical code ... [so that i]nstead of focusing on ‘do no harm,’ anthropologists need to embrace a standard of doing demonstrable good.”⁶⁴ Borofsky’s public anthropology has been critiqued though with the argument that “this image of anthropologists ‘reaching out’ from protected academic positions to a vaguely defined ‘public’ is elitist and out of touch with the working conditions of many anthropologists, especially those junior and untenured.”⁶⁵

Public folklore of course is well-developed as a field particularly in the USA; indeed, it has been called “an American invention.”⁶⁶ Yet public sector folklore and public folklore’s attention to heritage and conservation, while persistently “hot” topics in applied ethnomusicology, has limited potential for ethnomusicology as a whole, as a cross-disciplinary inspiration. Contemporary ethnomusicology more broadly interprets music as and in culture, and people making music—any kind of music, including popular, jazz, art, “traditional” and so on. To some extent, though, public sector folklore and public folklore resonate with the terms that couple “public” with “ethnomusicology”—since they emphasize employees of the public sector and dialogues with “publics” (although publics, in folklore, are defined around “vernacular” expressions, heritage and conservation issues⁶⁷).

Engaged anthropology could serve as a point of inspiration for further developments in ethnomusicology. SETHA LOW and SALLY ENGLE MERRY reframe the entire history of anthropology as having “engaged” aspects, writing,

61 Rylko-Bauer et al. *ibid.*, 185.

62 Van Willigen *ibid.*, 8.

63 Borofsky 2011.

64 Center for a Public Anthropology 2011. A somewhat similar example to Borofsky from folklore is the American Folklore Society’s (n.d.) Position Statement on Promotion and Tenure Standards and Review, which seeks to educate university tenure committees on the value of public folklore work.

65 Field & Fox 2007, 6.

66 Baron 2007, xiv.

67 Belanus & Hansen 2000, Feintuch 1988.

anthropology has pursued many paths toward public engagement on social issues. These avenues include (1) locating anthropology at the center of the public policy-making process, (2) connecting the academic part of the discipline with the wider world of social problems, (3) bringing anthropological knowledge to the media's attention, (4) becoming activists concerned with witnessing violence and social change, (5) sharing knowledge production and power with community members, (6) providing empirical approaches to social assessment and ethical practice, and (7) linking anthropological theory and practice to create new solutions.⁶⁸

The authors consistently discuss “engaged,” but mention “applied” only twice. Anthropologists like Jeanne Simonelli, Jonathan Skinner⁶⁹ and Merrill Singer⁷⁰ critique the reinvention of public anthropology, including as engaged anthropology, for showing how “the hierarchies of academic/applied and the hegemony of academy anthropology marginalize applied/practicing anthropology’s long history of public work.”⁷¹

As engaged anthropology has framed applied aims in ways that can easily be relevant to academic research, applied anthropologists have increasingly opposed distinguishing between pure and applied research. Ethnomusicology has joined in on this history at a time when the applied/academic binary has already been rejected in anthropology⁷² as well as folklore and sociology.⁷³ What one finally names current trends in ethnomusicology is yet undetermined—although as in anthropology, applied scholarship has the largest and most fully developed literature. It should also be kept in mind that attempts to rename and rebrand applied anthropology—via “public” or “engaged”—have been unsuccessful compared to “applied.” One result of disciplinary-political infighting is that applied and practicing anthropology have attained hegemonic status in how the American Anthropological Association publicly defines anthropology. For example, on the “Advance Your Career” webpages of the AAA, anthropology is defined as including four sub-fields—archaeology, biological anthropology, cultural anthropology and linguistic anthropology—and all of these fields can be “applied” or “practicing.”⁷⁴ The AAA career webpages actively promote not only academic careers, but equally careers in each of the public, private and third sector, offering appropriate online career support for both academic and applied paths.

If anthropology continues to be foundational to ethnomusicology as it is today, it would be a mistake to forget that applied and practicing anthropology have a lot to teach ethnomusicology’s applied, engaged, public or other societally relevant

68 Low & Merry 2010, 210.

69 Simonelli & Skinner 2013, 558.

70 Singer 2000.

71 Singer *ibid.* summarized in Low & Merry *ibid.*

72 MacClancy 2013, 18.

73 Dasgupta & Driskell 2007, 4.

74 American Anthropological Association: *Advancing Knowledge, Solving Human Problems* *ibid.*

formulations. If we are searching for what is now the most commonly used term in anthropology among those discussed, “applied” is it.

Seeger asks since many fields have “applied” disciplines, why use a different word in ethnomusicology?⁷⁵ There is much that ethnomusicology can still learn from rich histories of applied scholarship in certain other disciplines. Pettan explains,

scientific and scholarly disciplines have their applied domains. To mention just some, there are applied mathematics, applied physics, applied biology, applied geography, applied sociology, applied anthropology, and then ... applied musicology ... If hydrology, for instance, is the study of water and encompasses “the interrelationship of geologic materials and processes of water” (Fetter 2001: 3), then “applied hydrologists are problem solvers and decision makers. They identify a problem, define the data needs, design a field program for collection of data, propose alternative solutions to the problem, and implement the preferred solutions” (ibid., 11). Applied sociology refers to “any use of the sociological perspective and/or its tools in the understanding of, intervention in, and/or enhancement of human social life” (Price and Steele, 2004), while applied anthropology refers to “any use of anthropological knowledge to influence social interaction, to maintain or change social institutions, or to direct the course of cultural change” (Spradley and McCurdy, 2000: 355).⁷⁶

“Applied ethnomusicology” can be used if only for the sake of consistency with other disciplines.

Applied ethnomusicology is a powerful covering term around which to continue to organize scholars around a specific set of ethnomusicological practices it describes—for instance ethnomusicology in the public interest, public sector ethnomusicology and public ethnomusicology.⁷⁷ The term “applied ethnomusicology” is also politically necessary because without it, the field can end up being swallowed up in the larger discipline of ethnomusicology and marginalized further than it already has been historically.⁷⁸ Applied ethnomusicology is intellectually motivated: it is distinct from ethnomusicology being “properly practiced” especially because of its focus on problem-solving. The term is practically necessary so that people doing a similar thing can exchange ideas with one another and develop best practices. Due to a rapid increase in applied ethnomusicological work,⁷⁹ the field is also necessary to support in undergraduate and graduate-level university education.

Yet there are critics. Samuel Araújo in one conference paper said, contrary to the argument given above, that all ethnomusicology is applied ethnomusicology and that the prefix applied is redundant.⁸⁰ This was also the view of two of five ethnomusicologists who anonymously gave their perspectives to Pettan’s

75 Seeger *ibid.*

76 Pettan *ibid.*, 34–35.

77 Seeger *ibid.*; Titon 2015a, 8.

78 Titon *ibid.*

79 Harrison 2014.

80 Araújo 2015.

introduction to *The Oxford Handbook of Applied Ethnomusicology*.⁸¹ Supporting that, the erroneous claim is made that “activism and community engagement [are] fundamentals of everything we do in the discipline” of ethnomusicology, therefore one can choose “not to bracket” applied work.⁸² This is incorrect because it ignores various areas of ethnomusicology. For instance, it ignores the analytical priorities of music theory-oriented ethnomusicologists like those associated with the group Analytical Approaches to World Music. These scholars are best not described as primarily “activist,” nor would they want to be described as such. Ethnomusicologists doing historical research, for example those associated with the ICTM Study Group on Music Archeology, may not focus on currently existing communities. “Engaged” connotes contemporary contexts, as described above. In the case of music archeology, “community engaged” does not accurately represent the main focus of the work if it is archeological and historical. In contemporary contexts, not all ethnomusicological actions are “activist” or “community engaged.” However, other ethnomusicologists observe a central place of applied work in large-scale shifts in the analytical and methodological orientations of large numbers of ethnomusicologists, not to the exclusion of different ethnomusicologies. Sally Treloyn⁸³ writes of the Australian context, “To some extent the ubiquity of applied approaches ... reflects a global shift towards praxis in ethnomusicology (Araújo 2008) and demonstrates the notion that all ethnomusicology entails social impact insofar as it involves engaging with musicians (Cottrell 2011, 229).” As Treloyn goes on to explain, and this article has described, there is much more to applied ethnomusicology than that.

Ethnomusicology in Use

Ethnomusicology today, to an increasing and great extent, requires pragmatic engagement with societal issues. This means, for applied scholars, as anthropologist John Van Willigen writes, “the commitment to action is a given; the challenge lies in continuing to find ways of acting more effectively and ethically while linking the specificity of local problem solving to larger sociopolitical contexts.”⁸⁴ Culture-theoretically-driven ethnomusicologists are shifting disciplinary focus towards “current problems, as they are defined within the context of the larger social order’ and away from problems defined solely ‘within the context of our discipline’”⁸⁵—an example of which in ethnomusicology is a current interest in affect theory. Even

81 Pettan *ibid.*, 48.

82 Diamond 2015, 3.

83 This volume.

84 Van Willigen *ibid.*, 185.

85 *Ibid.* after Baba 1994, 175.

ethnomusicology's cultural theory is intended to be put to use by larger social orders.

Coming back to Rasmussen, as ethnomusicological praxis changes, “we have to name what it is that we do.”⁸⁶ Ethnomusicology's shifts in the past two decades have included an increase in: participatory research practices; closeness of dialogue with research participants, who are often called consultants, friends or colleagues (We no longer use the word informants because it is a dialogue); awareness of impact; self-reflexivity of the researcher combined with the questioning of “objectivity”; and attention given to research ethics. Even though we may do all of these things, the result is not “applied” research or applied ethnomusicology, which refers specifically to the use of ethnomusicological scholarship, knowledge and understanding towards an “intervention,” made with intention to stimulate a benefit or solve a problem. The result could be a yet-broader-than-applied category of “engaged” ethnomusicology were we to replace “anthropology” with “ethnomusicology” in Low & Merry's definition of engaged anthropology.⁸⁷

Applied ethnomusicology is *one* of the results in an epistemic shift in academic work towards greater practical relevance. That both “engaged” and “applied” have been considered redundant prefixes to “ethnomusicology” is indication of a major epistemic shift in orientation of a significant number of ethnomusicologists towards pragmatism and relevance in society. This is part of a widespread change across the arts, humanities and social sciences. What you call aspects of this shift and how you parcel them out is a matter of perspective, individual positioning and politics. Applied ethnomusicology is part of the increasingly valued and fast-growing area of *ethnomusicology in use* although not all ethnomusicology in use is applied.

Introduction to the Journal Issue

The articles in this collection take up one research challenge evident from the terminological confusion, which is that applied ethnomusicology worksites are not yet well understood. The articles study applied ethnomusicology in relation to institutions and their practices, which in organizations includes policy.

The volume is the outcome of a multi-year process of the ICTM Study Group on Applied Ethnomusicology, with its 300+ international study group members, during my Chairpersonship since 2011 and founding Vice Chairpersonship beforehand. Papers and discussion groups at symposia in Europe, Asia, Africa and North America as well as ongoing collaborations between members showed that most commonly, ethnomusicologists do applied work, or direct it towards, diverse types of institutions.

86 Rasmussen *ibid.*

87 Low & Merry *ibid.*

According to sociologists Michèle Lamont and Mario Luis Small, institutions may be defined “robustly, as formal and informal rules, procedures, routines, and norms (Hall and Taylor 1996), as socially constructed shared cognitive and interpretive schemas (Meyer and Rowan 1991), or more narrowly yet, as formal organizations.”⁸⁸ Institutional economist Geoffrey Hodgson, in his well-known essay “What Are Institutions?” proposes a complementary definition,

Without doing too much violence to the relevant literature, we may define *institutions* as systems of established and prevalent social rules that structure social interactions. Language, money, law, systems of weights and measures, table manners, and firms (and other organizations) are thus all institutions.⁸⁹

Organizational theorist Stephen R. Barley and sociologist Pamela Tolbert write that institutions are, more simply, “shared rules and typifications that identify categories of social actors and their appropriate activities or relationships.”⁹⁰

Whereas this introduction focused on the question “Why applied ethnomusicology?” vis-à-vis scholarly fields and learned societies, the rest of the volume takes a diversity of institutional perspectives. A first main section considers organizations in three sub-sections respectively on governments; universities and music conservatories as well as learned societies; and the Christian church. The second main section considers the special case of self-organized institutions, which are comparatively informal and spontaneous.

Most of the authors chose to write about organizations. Hodgson writes, “Organizations are special institutions that involve (a) criteria to establish their boundaries, and to distinguish their members from nonmembers, (b) principles of sovereignty concerning who is in charge, and (c) chains of command delineating responsibilities within the organization.”⁹¹ Organizations can occur within the public sector, public sector or third sector. Most of the organizations discussed here are public sector. They include government-funded universities, conservatories and performing arts schools in Australia (in articles by Jennifer Newsome, Sally Treloyn), South Africa (in articles by Bernhard Bleibinger, Dave Dargie), China (Zhang Boyu), the Seychelles (Marie-Christine Parent) and the UK (Muriel Swijghuisen Reigersberg) as well as a Seychelles’ government ministry (Parent). Dave Dargie, though, in writing about the Christian church that solicits donations from individuals, addresses the private sector. Muriel Swijghuisen Reigersberg and Emily Joy Rothchild write about the third sector organizations—those that neither are public or private, but have a range of funding sources. Rothchild considers an organization that is operated by “a recognized foundation, relying on governmental grants,

88 Lamont & Small 2008, 89.

89 Hodgson 2006, 2.

90 Barley & Tolbert 1997, 98.

91 Hodgson *ibid.*, 18.

other foundations' grants, and private & corporate donations."⁹² Swuijghuisen Reigersberg writes about academic societies of ethnomusicology including the SEM, ICTM and the British Forum for Ethnomusicology, which may make use of university resources (public and/or private) but also are funded by individual and corporate members and, at times, grants. Zhang's example also discusses music exam centres, as well as exam-related publishers and books stores, which have public sector (Chinese government) and private components.⁹³ These formal organizations all engage policies, either their own or other organizations'.

Jocelyn Moon uniquely focuses on largely informal routines, procedures and norms. She considers how sharing media files on the Internet can help sustain a musical tradition. These examples offer an opening to how the consideration of "institutions" as worksites of applied ethnomusicology can be further developed to include different sorts of "socially constructed shared cognitive and interpretive schemas."⁹⁴ If institutions are "systems of established and embedded social rules that structure social interactions,"⁹⁵ these can also exist outside of formalized rules and norms.

Moon's example can be called a "self-organized institution." This is a special type of institution that "arise[s] in an undesigned way through structured interactions between agents."⁹⁶ However, as Hodgson reminds us, "even self-organizing institutions require a (rudimentary) language so, with the exception of language itself, the concept of self-organization must be qualified by the acknowledgement of the prior and extrinsic organization of communicative or interpretative rules."⁹⁷ In Moon's case, rules of posting on the Internet were pre-existing, for example.

Some of the authors who write about organizations take the approach of administrative ethnomusicology. Pettan defines administrative ethnomusicology as a sub-type of applied ethnomusicology referring to "any use of ethnomusicological knowledge for planned change by those who are external to a local cultural group."⁹⁸ For example, Rothchild, based on research at a German hip-hop academy, offers insights on challenges of and best practices for music projects directed at migrant youth, and their integration into national societies and cultures. A critical evaluation, by Zhang, of China's Standard Grade Examinations in Music addresses the system's advantages from a learner's perspective, and disadvantages from business, administrative and learners' perspectives. Swuijghuisen Reigersberg's article is an activist intervention into an outdated ethics policy at the SEM and lack of any ethics guidelines at the ICTM; other articles offer other policy recommendations.

92 Pers. comm., E. J. Rothchild, 22 May 2016.

93 Pers. comm., Zhang B., 23 May 2016.

94 Lamont & Small *ibid.*

95 Hodgson *ibid.*, 18.

96 *Ibid.*, 13.

97 *Ibid.*

98 Pettan 2008, 90 after Spradley & McCurdy 2000, 411.

Articles by Dave Dargie and Jocelyn Moon offer examples of another sub-area of applied ethnomusicology that Pettan calls “advocate ethnomusicology.” This refers to “any use of ethnomusicological knowledge by the ethnomusicologist to increase the power of self-determination for a particular cultural group.”⁹⁹ Dargie and Moon made efforts towards sustaining traditional music practices respectively in South Africa and Zimbabwe. Some of the other authors list themselves as other types of advocates—for example, Rothchild, for migrant youth including in Germany; Newsome, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia; Bleibinger, for Xhosa people in South Africa studying music in university; and Reigersberg, for ethnomusicologists negotiating ethics clearances. Newsome sees advocate ethnomusicology as relevant to her case of Indigenous education.

In addition, several articles may be described as applied ethnomusicology research. For instance, Treloyn documents an “epistemic community”¹⁰⁰ of Aboriginal Australian song research, and government policies that encourage much Australian research to be “applied.” Parent offers a critical and thoughtful reflection on methodological and ethical problematics of collaborating with government towards applied aims, in non-democratic countries. Applied work in institutions that are ideologically driven brings benefits, challenges, but also risks.

Based on these articles, and the symposia of the ICTM Study Group on Applied Ethnomusicology associated with them, it can be claimed that applied ethnomusicology means the use of ethnomusicological scholarship, knowledge and understanding towards an “intervention,” made with intention to stimulate a benefit or solve a problem *within one or more institutions*. Such interventions occur in organizations classifiable as public, private or third sector, but also within informal rules, procedures and norms. All of the article authors in this volume intervene or analyze interventions in institutions including their policies or practices.

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99 Pettan *ibid.*, after Spradley & McCurdy *ibid.*

100 Harrison 2012.

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