Affordances of Music Streaming based on Exploratory Media Archaeology

A presentation of the completed PhD-project Liquid Streaming focusing the affordance of musicking for the public via the Spotify streaming service with an emphasis on method

In my dissertation, I have accounted for the affordances of musicking brought about by streamed music with the case example of Spotify. In order to perform a study orbiting the realm of music streaming, mainly digital sources have been used; Internet sources and software program of the streaming service. In the presentation, I will focus on issues concerning those two major roots. Within the latter I will present, problematize and conclude how; the Internet can be used as a field of sources, and on what terms the Internet can be regarded as an Archive. Also, what alternatives researchers can depend on when practising research within the realm of the Internet. The sources have, over time, been shown to change content, update, disappear, change resolution or package, which means that digital sources such as source material as well as methodology operating in such a field need to be problematized.

First of all, I will account for how a phenomenon such as the Spotify streaming service is a multidimensional feature where appearance and featured functions depend on a number of things such as geographical market zone, subscription zone, the digital device used for access, and previous user-generated history. Researching a platform based software program like this brings particular issues for the researcher. I will present how these issues have been recognised and managed in my research.

Secondly, I will address Internet as a base for research. The Internet provides a plethora of available sources, and as such Internet brings the affordance of accessing a tremendous amount of data opening up for possibilities that were not available prior to digitalisation. For instance, interviews and talks by interesting people might be available on-line whereas the same persons may be difficult or impossible to reach in ordinary life. Contemporary culture on the Internet, characterised by free culture and shared content further supply massive amount of data to be researched. Further, many services on the Internet provide access to local archives where content can be searched for, and a great number of sources can be screened regarding particular content.

The popular phrase: “Once on the Internet, always on the Internet” has been found to be a truth with modification. I will present four different examples of issues concerning using the Internet as an archive and how such issues can be tackled within research concerning questions of reliability and trustworthiness. The first (i) example is how content many times are personalised, why an "objective" or public view can be impossible to gain. Further, it can be impossible to gain access to how personalisation is conducted. The second (ii) example is how sources, such as music, can be limited to certain geographical restrictions and thus only accessed from certain IP-addresses for the researcher. The third (iii) example is how sources may be removed and deleted. This is the case with some personal information as individuals have a right to be forgotten. Another example is how documents from the government offices are removed when there is a new government in office. The fourth (iv) example addresses the
issue where a source might remain on the Internet but presented in a different digital format than the original content.

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