

# Investigating Multimodal Meaning Emergence through Cross-Paradigm Research

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The purpose of this paper is to present a study with the aim of exploring whether the perception of audio-visual media texts, combining moving pictures and music, brings forth meanings that transcend the expressive and semantic potentials of the modes themselves. Such notion is applied to legal thought by many theorists of film music (or sound) as well as theorists within the field of social semiotics, who consider *multimodality* or *multimediality* as a phenomenon of *emergence* (see e.g. Cook, 1998; Hull & Nelson, 2005). Accordingly, there exist a number of hermeneutic approaches to media text analysis with special focus on multimodal meaning emergence (MME) as an aesthetic quality, while the problem of investigating the phenomenon from a reception perspective remains largely ignored. Admittedly, there exists an experimental research tradition in the cognitive sciences of music that agrees with Chion's thesis of 'added value' (1994), and takes the pioneering work of Marshall & Cohen (1988) as a starting point. However, added value is not consistent with MME; indeed, true emergence is *not additive* in nature since a multimodal 'whole' cannot be deduced from the discrete component parts. Hence, I decided to combine the aforementioned two research paradigms in a single study where the epistemological framework is conformed to ideas about wholes and parts as known from the concept of emergentism. To be more concrete, two undergraduate students in musicology at Aalborg University have each manipulated an amateur video featuring the *Saules Akmens* building in Riga, Latvia (used by Hansabank, now Swedbank), creating alternative musical tracks including sound effects. The two audio-visual versions were firstly analysed for syntax and semantics in concordance with analytical procedures suggested by Middleton (1990) and Cook (1998), and secondly evaluated by high-school students, writing their associations and filling out questionnaires. The basic idea of the study was to test whether analytical findings regarding MME are supported by the respondents' reception of the videos.

*Theme: Teori og metode for multimodal analyse*

## *References*

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