

## Urban Futures Symposium | 21 – 25 August 2023

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**Presentation:** Work in Progress

**Title:** Role of Digital Technologies in Indian Hip Hop Culture: An Examination of Cultural Production, Circulation, and Networking

**Abstract:**

Practices of workaround and tinkering with media technologies is integral to the careers of musicians engaged with popular music in India. Owing to infrastructural constraints that are not only economic, but also spatial and social, musicians employ workarounds and tinker with digital technologies, often procured through informal markets, as part of their music-making and performance practices. Based on a 7-year ethnographic study of popular music practitioners in India, this study expands upon relevant literature associated with tinkering and Jugaad, the Indian parlance for workarounds. It does this by offering two conclusions for the purpose of this presentation. First, the practices of workarounds and tinkering are a necessity, rather than a virtue, for musicians involved with popular music in India. This is in sharp contrast to the DIY aesthetics of tinkering and maker-space cultures of the Global North. The other conclusion relates to the skill sets and the ecosystem around the musicians that act as enablers in the workarounds and tinkering practices. This ecosystem includes their technology-focussed education, their familial connections and social networks, as well as the informal markets in software packages and digital devices. Thus, these enablers need to be considered in conjunction with infrastructural constraints when it comes to the study of workarounds and tinkering by popular musicians in the Indian contexts.

