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Spaces and Networks of Musical Creativity in the City

Allan Watson¹, Michael Hoyler² and Christoph Mager³

¹ Department of Geography, Staffordshire University, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire
ST4 2DE, UK, E-mail: A.Watson@staffs.ac.uk

² Department of Geography, Loughborough University, Loughborough, Leicestershire
LE11 3TU, UK

³ Department of Geography, University of Heidelberg, Berliner Str. 48, D-69210
Heidelberg, Germany

Abstract

Urban geography, both material and imagined, is a crucial mediating factor in the production and consumption of music. The city provides the concrete places which offer spaces for musical creativity. While certain spaces such as recording studios are specifically organised for this purpose, music is produced in many spaces, from the bedroom, garage or home studio, to community and youth centres, to street corners and clubs. Cities also sustain networks that foster and support musical creativity. These networks come together in locales of creativity and production to find fixity in the concrete spaces of the city. At the same time the networks are fluid, with musical knowledge moving within and between cities through the mobility of skilled creatives and new technologies. A growing body of geographical literature is attempting to foreground the spatial in music studies by focusing on local scenes, musical production, and the particularity of certain places. This article aims to provide an overview of current geographical research and debates on music, with an explicit focus on the role of urban space in musical creativity, and on the musically creative networks at work within and between cities.

Introduction

Certain cities have a privileged history of creativity. Peter Hall's (1998) historical account of creativity in cities suggests a link between cities of large size and episodes of extraordinary creativity. Hall demonstrates how, throughout history, the most creative cities have been the true global cities of their time. However, musical creativity can spark in any city at any given time. Whether one thinks of classical music in 18th Century Vienna (Hall 1998), the guitar music of Liverpool (Cohen 1995, 2007) and Manchester (Halfacree & Kitchin 1996), or Motown in Detroit in the 1960s (Quispel 2005), specific types of music are associated inextricably with particular cities. More generally, the city provides the concrete places which offer spaces for musical creativity. Certain spaces, such as recording studios, are specifically organised for this purpose, although music is produced in many spaces, from the bedroom, garage or home studio (Connell & Gibson 2003), to community and youth centres (Hoyler and Mager 2005), to street corners (Toop 2000) and clubs (Todorović & Bakir 2005). However, music is not only made in urban spaces, but also for urban spaces. Specific sites link the production and consumption of music, for example night clubs and concert halls, but also abandoned and reclaimed spaces such as empty warehouses and former factories (Gibson 1999) and public spaces like the street. Urban geography, both material and imagined, is then a crucial mediating factor in the production and consumption of music (although we concede that musical creativity is not exclusively an urban phenomenon).

Cities also sustain networks that foster and support musical creativity. These networks may persist over time, or exist only for a short creative episode. Thus some cities are associated with one particular musical style, while others provide a constant stream of musical creativity (Kloosterman 2005). These networks come together in locales of creativity and production, for example live music venues, cafes and bars allowing networking, along with music industry infrastructure (see Watson 2008; also Scott 1999b; Power & Hallencreutz 2002), and therefore find 'fixity' in the concrete spaces of the city (Connell & Gibson 2003). However, networks of musical creativity are at the same time fluid. While mobility within musical creative networks has undoubtedly been enhanced by new internet technologies, allowing for the increased sharing of knowledge and for the wider distribution of musical products (Leyshon 2001, 2003), there is a materiality to this mobility that stretches further back than the widespread introduction of the internet. Musical knowledge has always moved within and between cities through mobile creatives, including musicians and DJs, producers and music industry executives. (Pre-)recordings have also always been mobile, having been sent and continuing to be sent throughout the world to be mastered and mixed in different studios by specific engineers.

Individuals with unique skills and creativity are thus the main prerequisite for the maintenance and renewal of these creative networks (Törnqvist 2004), with certain cities acting as magnets for talented individuals from across the globe (Scott 1999a). City diversity is seen to be a significant factor in encouraging skilled labour to locate to a particular city (Jacobs 1961; Hubbard 2006), contributing to an open, dynamic, and cool 'people climate' valued by creatives. Nowhere is this more

marked than in the buzzing, heterogeneous, ethnically diverse, and tolerant neighbourhoods of cities (Helms & Phleps 2007).

Consequently, in considering musical creativity within cities, it is crucial that the built environment and the population and socio-economic context of the city be studied in more detail. This article aims to provide an overview of current research and debates on musical creativity in cities, with an explicit focus on the role of urban space in musical creativity, and on the creative networks at work within and between cities. Due to the limitations of the article, we have chosen to focus solely on western music in western cities; however we would contend that many of the arguments developed will apply to musical creativity in urban spaces across the world.

Music, Place, and Geography

Notwithstanding all of the above, geographers have had relatively limited engagement with music, despite repeated calls to undertake studies of music in order to develop our understandings of space and place (Smith 1994; Leyshon *et al.* 1995, 1998; Kong 1995). Some of the earliest geographical literature on music was written from a more traditional regional geographic perspective (see for example Carney 1978, 2003; Nash & Carney 1996). However, since the mid-1990s, there has been a growing body of literature from geographers who have attempted to tackle the complex social, cultural and economic issues surrounding music. Indeed, for Adam Krims (2002), a leading musicologist, one of the more remarkable recent developments in popular music studies are the disciplinary

alliances with geography. For Krims, this alliance has performed the important task of “foregrounding the spatial” (2002, p. 166) in music studies by focusing on local scenes, musical production, and the particularity of certain places. These efforts, he argues, have produced some impressive results, “foregrounding music practices that might otherwise remain marginal” (*Ibid.*, p 166). Furthermore, this literature has provided a growing challenge to the visual biases of conventional geographical understandings of space and place and the ways in which they are made and remade (Ingham *et al.* 1999).

Work on geography and music was firmly put on the agenda of geography during the first half of the 1990s with the publication of three key articles. Smith’s (1994) paper *Soundscape*, called for music to be “integral to the geographical imagination” (p. 238), a call which *The place of music* (Leyshon *et al.* 1995) aimed to ‘amplify’. Kong’s (1995) work on music in geographical analyses argued that “geographers’ relative neglect of popular music...should not persist” (p. 183). To many, including ourselves, these articles provided a source of inspiration, and an opening to combine a personal passion for music with geographical research interests. Although progress has been slow, there has developed a small but distinct body of geographical literature focusing on music.

Leyshon *et al.*’s *The place of music* (1995) acted as an introductory paper to a special issue of the journal *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* (vol. 20, 4, 1995), a significant engagement by geographers with music. The articles in the volume demonstrated some of the ways in which music could be used to enrich geographical analyses. Topics ranged from the relationships

between music and urban regeneration (Hudson 1995), and the production of place (Cohen 1995), to cultural politics (Kong 1995), and transgressive spaces of sexuality (Valentine 1995). These articles would form the basis of a book, also entitled *The place of music* (Leyshon *et al.* 1998), a key point in the development of the topic. Subsequent studies into music and geography can be broadly categorized, if not neatly defined, into three perspectives. Firstly, there are those studies which have been concerned with the role of music in the social and cultural construction of place, space and identity. A second perspective from within social and cultural geography has explored soundscapes, sonic environments, and the performative aspects of music (Anderson *et al.* 2005). This finds overlaps with the interdisciplinary field of 'Sound Studies' (see Pinch & Bijsterveld 2004), a research area concerned with the material production and consumption of music. Thirdly, there are studies which have continued on the ground established through the cultural turn in economic geography, to consider the economics of the music industry as a cultural industry, economies of culture, and technological innovation.

Notable examples of work from social and cultural geographical perspectives include Halfacree and Kitchin (1996) on popular music in Manchester; Smith (1997) on art, industrialism, and the cultural politics of music; Krims (2000 , 2002) and Mager (2007) on rap/hip hop music and urban geography; Valentine (1995) and Skelton (1995) on music and sexuality; and Ingham *et al.* (1999), Smith (2000), Jazeel (2005), Knight (2006), and Wood *et al.* (2007) on sound and space. Significant bodies of work have also been produced by Kong, mainly focusing on Singapore (e.g. Kong 1997, 2006), and Gibson, predominantly focusing on Australia. The works of Gibson, along with Connell, have made a particularly

noteworthy contribution to the field. As well as writing *Soundtracks* (Connell & Gibson 2003), a key book on the topic, he has produced work on world music (Connell & Gibson 2004a), and on the relationships between music, tourism (Gibson & Connell 2005, Connell & Gibson 2004b), place marketing (Gibson & Davidson 2004) and urban redevelopment (Gibson & Homan 2004). Other publications cover the relations between migration, rural transformation and popular music (Gibson 2002) and culture, spatial politics and the Internet (Gibson 1999). Work from related sociological and anthropological perspectives includes, for example, the edited volumes by Stokes (1994) and Whiteley *et al.* (2004).

The smaller number of geography studies undertaken by economic geographers on the economics and spatiality of the music industry include the work of Power on the Swedish and Jamaican music industries (Power & Hallencreutz 2002; Power & Jansson 2004); Scott (1999a), Harrington (2005), Power and Hallencreutz (2007) and Florida (Florida & Jackson 2008; Florida & Mellander 2008) on the US recorded music industry; Watson (2008) on the UK recorded music industry; and Sadler (1997) on the music industry as information industry. Andrew Leyshon has continued to be at the forefront of this literature, with studies on digital music formats and the 'crisis' of the record company (see Leyshon 2001, 2003; Leyshon *et al.* 2005).

In addition to the above, a wide range of articles on music and geography can be found in special editions of the journals *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* (vol. 20, 4, 1995), *Built Environment* (vol. 31, 3, 2005), *Social and Cultural Geography* (vol. 6, 5, 2005), and *GeoJournal* (vol. 65, 1-2, 2006).

Musical Creativity in the City: Spaces and Networks

As simultaneously structure and event, creativity finds newness in both space and time through the mixing, encounters and contacts between people and cultures, across multiple spatial scales (Hastrup 2001). Therefore, while the imaginative capacities of an individual are indispensable to the process of creativity (Scott 2000), creativity does not reside exclusively within isolated individuals. To understand creativity there is then a need to understand the social and existential conditions that are its foundations (Friedman 2001). As Negus and Pickering (2004) describe:

...creativity is a social process, entailing a dynamic of according value and receiving recognition... it is never realised as a creative act until it is achieved within some social encounter. (2004, p. 23)

Furthermore, as Scott (1999a) contends, even at their most intimate moments of birth, creative moments and episodes connect with concrete social conditions. Therefore, it is important to give attention to the social and physical environments in which creativity happens. Notions of space and place are inherently tied to culture, with cultures not only forming within a certain place, but also being active in producing the identity of places. This link lies in the very complex and dense web of human activities that occur within all cultures and places:

Place and culture are persistently intertwined with one another, for place...is always a locus of dense human interrelationships (out of which culture in part grows), and culture is a phenomenon that tends to have intensively place-specific characteristics thereby helping to differentiate places from one another. (Scott 1997, p. 324)

Cities however do not only provide places and spaces for creativity. Certain cities act as leading 'cultural metropolises' in a global urban network (Krätke, 2003; Krätke & Taylor, 2004), and channel and articulate creativity from different (urban and non-urban) places to consumers in other cities across the world. In a global media industry that is concentrated in and around the key cities of global capitalism, if musical output is to be recognised as *creative* it must go through the cultural contexts and distinct spaces of specific cities.

Musicians and other artists have a historical tendency to concentrate in the creative and bohemian enclaves of particular cities in search of inspiration and experience; see for example Lloyd (2006) on the Wicker Park neighbourhood of Chicago, and Foord (1999) on the Hackney area of London. Therefore as Connell and Gibson suggest, a common element of literature on popular music is a "tendency to search for links between sites and sounds, for inspirations in nature and the built environment" (2003, p. 91). This literature has in particular focused on geographical roots in, and influences of, a particular 'scene' or 'sound' which musicians or producers identify with, thus attempting to locate them within a particular physical space:

Wild variants and cross blends, from major subcultural styles such as hip hop, reggae, punk, heavy metal, 'indie' rock and techno, to the specialised niches of acid house, speed garage, drum and bass, acid jazz, speed metal, dub, industrial techno, ragga, lounge and trance, occupy discrete social and material spaces in diverse settings... (Gibson 1999, p. 20)

For Florida and Jackson (2008) a scene can be thought of as a geographic location which brings together musical and business talent (artists, producers, engineers, industry executives, audiences) across social networks and physical space (neighbourhoods, recording studios, bars, clubs, and live music venues). A scene arises once communities and subcultures begin to come together in particular niches focused around clustered creatives in a particular location (Currid 2007a). For Straw (1991) local musical creativity is cosmopolitan yet fluid, loose, transitory and geographically dispersed in nature. He identifies scenes as created and produced through *alliances* of musical preferences, constrained or enabled by power relations across space, while Olson (1998) emphasises the *routes* over the musical *roots* in scene formation and creativity (for a more detailed discussion of music scenes, see Bennett & Peterson 2004).

While certain cities have developed an intimate relationship with music, and are celebrated as distinctive sites of productions for particular forms of music, cities are not however single homogeneous entities. Certain neighbourhoods and spaces within these cities are identifiable places of musical creativity, containing specific spaces of musical production and consumption. This creativity will be influenced by the physical landscapes and cultural diversity of particular neighbourhoods

(Hubbard 2006, see also Drake 2003). It will also be influenced by the presence of supporting networks of musicians, other creatives, audiences, and music industry players, and by a presence of a cultural and economic infrastructure:

Large cities usually provide both the socio-economic context (clubs, recording studios, inner-city bohemian neighbourhoods) and, perhaps, the inspiration of musical creativity, though this may be less from urban cultural diversity or unique landscapes, and more from everyday links with audiences, other musicians and composers. (Connell & Gibson 2003, p. 194)

Diverse neighbourhoods provide the opportunity for the mutual exchange of musical styles and practices amongst different cultural groups, increasing wider exposure to a set of *atonal ensembles* of diverse musical cultural expressions (Said 1990). Musical creativity from cultural fusion in and across such neighbourhoods has produced some of the most successful and influential genres of music. Hip hop, for example, finds its roots in the Caribbean but materialised as a distinct genre when mixed with urban musical cultures in Western cities. Emerging in the deprived inner-city neighbourhoods of US cities, in particular the Harlem and South Bronx neighbourhoods of New York, hip hop was and remains to be intense in its territoriality, and in particular in its focus on the *ghetto* as both a real and imagined space (Connell & Gibson 2003). Similarly, Allen and Wilcken (2001) describe how in New York Caribbean-American musicians have a history of interaction with African-Americans, which has resulted in the fusion of musical styles in the form of *Salsa* and *Soca*, as well as hip hop. Jazeel's (2005) examination of British-Asian soundscapes emanating from the UK highlights the

new soundscapes which develop when musical creatives draw on fluid, transnational cultural and technological influences in both their work and life. Jazeel draws on the example of the British-Asian musician and producer Talvin Singh to highlight how the mixing of cultures results in music that is difficult to place:

His sound combines tabla and turntable, sitar and sampler, it is a sound that emerges from his Brick Lane studio in London's East End, is played on the dance floors of hip UK and US clubs... His beats, tones, and chords, however, evoke geographical imaginations of Asia and elsewhere. Singh's sound belies easy placement. (Jazeel 2005, p. 234)

As Connell and Gibson (2003) suggest, 'cultural space' can be carved out of wider social space through musical praxis and the alliances which support musical scenes and performance spaces. The local infrastructure of production, including recording studios and live music venue, helps to solidify diverse musical scenes in space, through the ways in which musicians, audiences, and music industry professionals make use of the infrastructure:

The most famous scenes have all built upon local support, and featured particularly vibrant combinations of venues, local production and methods of information flow and exchange. Infrastructures of musical exchange solidify the presence of scenes, providing concrete spaces and emphasising cultural meaning for participants. (Connell & Gibson 2003, p. 102)

In Birmingham, UK, the British Bhangra music industry has grown due to a key concentration of music talent and expertise, the presence of key record labels, studios and distribution companies, and a culture of live DJ performance (see Dudrah 2007). Similarly, in Manchester, the existence of local record labels, promotional facilities, venues, and clubs such as the Hacienda nightclub, spurred the development of the 'Madchester' scene (Halfacree & Kitchin 1996). In New York, a major commercial centre for Caribbean jazz and popular music has grown around an unparalleled network of record companies, recording studios, broadcasters and performance venues (Allen & Wilcken 2001). The local infrastructure extends to include the cafes, bars, and clubs within particular areas of cities. Musicians, for example, may meet, collaborate, and exchange creative experiences, through sharing practice rooms and studios, and appearing on the same live music bill, but also through chance encounters when drinking in the same bars and clubs. Music industry professionals may likewise meet and exchange experience and information in informal ways (see for example Currid 2007a, 2007b), as well as within more formal music industry networks (see Watson 2008). These often fragile networks of links and relationships form creative *ecologies* that support creativity (see Shorthose 2004; also Grabher 2001, 2002), and allow creatives to move unhindered across the lines of different professional fields (Törnqvist 2004).

The production process in the first instance involves small-scale creativity from musicians, often as well as skilled professionals, meeting and creating music in city spaces such as garages, pubs and clubs, and recording studios. Gibson (2005) argues for a relational understanding of these spaces of creativity. Such an

understanding, he argues, must consider the ways in which creativity interacts with urban physical form, technology, and the various actors in networks of creativity and production, in complex ways. With this in mind, in the following sections of the article we wish to consider in detail some of the urban spaces where music is created, and the networks sustaining them. Firstly, we consider recording studios as formalised spaces of musical creativity in the city. We then move on to consider musical creativity and performance in the wider urban environment.

Recording Studios: formalised spaces of musical creativity

Recording studios are the most formal of all spaces of musical creativity in cities. Largely acting as an independent service within the contemporary recorded music industry, they form the direct link between the record companies and artists and the creation of the final recorded musical product. Many are owned and operated by entrepreneurial producers and engineers, whilst record companies maintain control over a number of larger studios. Recording studios are privileged to the most intimate moments of musical creativity and emotive performance. Viewed from Gibson's (2005) relational perspective, these creative moments are produced not by the musician alone, but through relations between musicians, producers, and engineers. While musicians are recognised as the creators of music, some commentators have termed studio producers and engineers *cultural intermediaries* (see for example Hennion 1989). The ability of musicians to make music is dependent on these other industry personnel (Shuker 1994; Pinch & Bijsterveld 2004). It is the insulated space of particular recording studios that gives

musical creatives the conditions required to experiment and create music. As Cogan and Clark describe with reference to America in the 1940s and 1950s:

The fact that these studios were little more than converted radiator shops (Sun Studio in Memphis) or fruit and vegetable refrigerators (J&M Studio in New Orleans) makes the recordings that came out of them, like “Great Balls of Fire” or “Blueberry Hill” all the more magical. Perhaps most significant, the studio provided a backdrop for more than mere hit making. It was a space, a sanctuary, where blacks and whites labored daily as artistic collaborators. (Cogan & Clark 2003, p. 12)

Available technologies mediate creative actions and offer the potential for high levels of innovation and creativity (Warner 2003). For Horning (2004), the recording studio is a site of collaboration between ‘technologists’ and artists, where maximum creativity requires a symbiotic relationship that requires skills which are at the same time both technical and artistic. As the musician Quincy Jones describes:

The technology only goes so far: the studio was where planned and unplanned collaboration happened. The genius of the musicians brushed against the genius of the engineers, producers and arrangers. You could go in expecting one thing and come out with something entirely unplanned... (Cogan & Clark 2003, p. 7)

Certain studios are known for the experience and skill of staff, particular acoustic qualities and the quality of recording equipment, along with their location and atmosphere. Certain sounds may become associated with specific studios,

particular producers or musicians, or through the studio's location with one particular place or scene (Pinch & Bijsterveld 2004).

Studio work is very expensive and is often performed under severe time constraints. Orchestral arrangements are therefore fixed before going to the studio, much of contemporary music is pre-produced in home studios, and many inspirational lyrics are written prior to the studio session. Crucially, recording technology affects the social organisation of creative musical processes in the studio. For example, the magnetic tape enabled a certain degree of social and geographical diffusion of sound recording to different towns and cities in the U.S., contributing to the rise of rock'n'roll in the 1950s (Gillett 1996). During the following decade the introduction of multi-tracking allowed the construction of musical textures and the production of illusionary song-sounds resulting in gradually shifting relations between musicians, composers, producers and technicians in the studio, exemplified by the work of George Martin with the Beatles in London's Abbey Road studios, or Berry Gordy's extensive control over Motown's artistic production processes. Musical recording in the late 1960s was recentralised in cities and strongly reconnected to the music industry as the new technology demanded considerable investments in studios and skilled personnel that only major record companies could afford. Groups like Genesis, Pink Floyd and Yes used these urban studio spaces to compose music and experiment with sounds in a bourgeois art sensibility by accumulating up-to-date technology and orchestral outfits for their 'bombastic' rock productions. Studios, then, could no longer be understood solely as enabling spaces of musical creativity but as spaces to centralise, control and channel creativity (Toynbee 2000).

Therefore, although recording studios are often regarded in the popular imagination as a closed and guarded environment (Warner 2003), it should be recognised that it is not only the relationships operating *inside* the studio that affect creative moments. Recording studios are at once insulated spaces of creativity, isolated from the city outside, and spaces influenced directly by the wider contexts in which the studios operate. As Théberge (2004) asserts, studios exist in neither a musical or cultural vacuum, and music scenes, local aesthetics, musicians and skilled labour play an important role in the development of approaches to recording and an influence on the resulting sounds. For Scott (1999a) the recording studio is a sort of microcosm of a much more extensive domain of activities in the creative field. As Krims (2007) describes, the attraction of creative workers to a city supports a different infrastructure, which in turn may correspond to concomitant developments in musical life in those same places. The location of studios within large cities thus reflects the locational preferences of musicians and skilled workers from throughout the music industry including the producers and sound engineers critical to the studios. This creative talent is crucial to the performance of the recording studios, being required to know how to operate technical complex equipment, but also to have the tacit knowledge and *craft skills*, gained from experience, which are indispensable to artistic creativity within the studio (see Horning 2004). In this sense the studio is a unique place of learning and knowledge transfer that may cut across artists, genres and styles. Here lay the roots of the current artist-producers in popular music.

The technologies used by these skilled creatives to produce music are in a state of continuous development, particularly in the case of popular music (see Warner 2003). These developments have often raised fundamental questions about the future relationships between recording studios and the cities in which they are embedded. Early recording technology, for example, was minimized to fit onto vans, allowing recording companies to send out mobile teams to record early blues artists in their hometowns in the countryside of the USA (Jones 1963, p. 116), with the post-production and distribution of the music centralised in cities. Today, tools and techniques continue to be developed for networking studios in geographically distant locations, in complex and intimate ways (see Théberge 2004). These developments are, in part, aimed at reducing production costs, but also at servicing highly mobile musical creatives, both musicians and producers/sound engineers, who may want to co-ordinate musical recordings on a global scale. In employing such technology, recording studios can be considered as *local anchoring points* in the cultural metropolises of the global urban network (Krätke 2003). However, there is an inherent contradiction here in scales; while some recording studios may enable certain mobile actors to create music on a global scale, they are also likely to be used by more local independent actors to produce very localised sounds. Thus recording studios can be considered as articulating the local with the global, resulting in new relational geographies of music creativity and recording across multiple spatial scales.

Secondly, the accessibility and diffusion of low-cost recording equipment throughout the world has encouraged independent and autonomous forms of local production (Théberge 2004). Professional quality recordings can be produced by

individual musicians and producers in modest recording facilities and home studios, enabling artists to control more aspects of the production process. For Warner (2003), this has resulted in the breakdown of the amateur/professional status in the production process. Connell and Gibson (2003), for example, examine the rise of 'Do-It-Yourself' production in Byron Bay, Australia, where home studios are used across a variety of styles of music, with artists only entering studios to mix their recordings. Another example is given by Bennett (1999) on the 'Rockmobil' in Frankfurt, a mobile unit sponsored by the city council, equipped with instruments and recording devices, which brings the studio to the artists. For Bennett, this has played a crucial role in providing the resources which have enabled hip hop to become a localised form of cultural expression. However, while such technological developments suggest the potential for democratisation and may act to decouple relationships between cities, recording studios, and technology, it will inevitably reconstitute them in new and exciting ways (Gibson 2005). Furthermore, while technology may empower musicians it cannot guarantee commercial success. Almost all music that is commercially successful has to pass through urban spaces, in which cultural innovators practice their vocations on products for both localised consumption and also distribution to more remote places (Krimm, 2007). Musicians may find it difficult to sell music without using the supporting industry infrastructure of such places. This infrastructure includes live music venues where consumers and record companies can see the music performed in a concrete space as opposed to the fluid space of the internet, serving to distinguish authentic products in a global market. Pubs and clubs remain the main sites for engagement with live music, and are central to the development of local music scenes (Shuker

1994); see for example Homan (2002) and Gibson and Homan (2004) on live music scenes in inner-city Sydney.

More established recording studios have inevitably responded to these technological developments to protect their interests in the industry. As Théberge (2004) notes, there has been a movement towards geographical *diversification* or *expansion* through acquisitions and joint ventures, which link studios globally across the major centres of music production. These allow studios to both consolidate their position in existing markets and to establish a physical presence in new markets. However, as Théberge suggests:

...what may become the most significant issue for studios as they become more integrated with one another (whether via the Internet or by other means) is the quality of the musical and social relationships that are made with and through them. (Théberge 2004, p. 779)

As such, perhaps the most interesting outcome from networked studios will not be to reinforce the position of the studio in the dominant global network of the music industry, but rather to allow the coordination of "...more autonomous forms of genuinely collaborative production that are at once local, regional and perhaps even global in character" (*Ibid.* p. 779).

Outside the studio: creativity and performance in the urban environment

While recording studios are amongst the most conspicuous spaces of musical creativity, urban creative spaces may take a variety of forms, from the bedroom and garages to clubs and street corners. Hoyler and Mager (2005), for example, examine the built environment of youth clubs and community centres as key sites of creativity and performance in the creation of 'first generation' hip hop communities in Germany. They highlight these spaces as being:

...multifunctional and palimpsestic – re-usable and re-writeable – for purposes as diverse as live concerts, theatre performances, exhibitions, lectures, discotheques or hip hop jams. (Hoyler & Mager 2005, p.252)

These clubs and centres facilitated cultural interaction and became the focal meeting points for hip hop artists in the same quarter or town, allowing the communication of ideas about personal experience, creativity, musical production technologies, and also a space in which to perform. This led to the formation of:

...sustainable networks in the form of friendships, information flows, musical collaborations and joint cultural productions. (Hoyler & Mager 2005, p.246)

These networks in turn were central to the establishment of infrastructures such as specialised magazines, stores, record labels and studios, which played a key role in creating, reproducing and distributing German hip hop music (*Ibid.*).

The advent of club cultures, raves and other forms of dance music, has predicated certain urban spaces being symbolically transformed by music (Connell

& Gibson 2003); see for example Gibson (1999) on the subversive sites of rave culture in Sydney, Australia, and Ingham *et al.* (1999) on warehouse parties in Blackburn, UK. This is due to the ways in which dance music producers have traditionally been quick to embrace new technologies and modes of production. Dance music focuses on DJs using and mixing pre-recorded material in a live environment, mediating “fragments of other texts from diverse geographical contexts in re-combined forms” (Gibson 1999, p. 25). Using available technologies to compose new sounds, dance music creativity links directly to the spontaneous moments of live performance, and spaces of performance are at once spaces of production and consumption of dance music. In such instances, as Wood *et al.* assert, “...music making is a material practice: it is embodied and technologised; it is staged; it takes place” (2007, p. 869). However, as Gibson (1999) and Ingham *et al.* (1999) describe, unlike more commercial forms of dance music performance which have permeated more widely into many diverse spaces of production and consumption, rave and ‘acid house’ performances deliberately took place in large abandoned spaces, often previously used for industrial and manufacturing production such as old warehouses and factories, turning the cracks in urban landscapes into temporary *lived* spaces and *imaginative* landscapes:

While ‘rock’ and ‘indie’ scenes often mythologise particular performance and production sites in an historical context (Abbey Road, Woodstock, etc), establishing fixed locations with rich traditions... the idealised ‘rave’ occupies space momentarily, before such industry narratives are solidified. Such events rely on the uniqueness of particular sites, and the transient ways in which otherwise ordinary spaces are transformed... (Gibson 1999, p. 22)

Briefly – usually for one night only – void spaces became venues, thus creating new spaces that were oriented around the aural; temporary autonomous zones that existed in a fleeting space-time of their own. (Ingham *et al.* 1999, p. 291)

These spaces are more than simply containers of activity; they are symbolic resources (see Sarup 1996). These unregulated spaces, when combined with music, and in many instances illegal drugs, particularly ecstasy (see Critcher 2000; Glover 2003), provide the setting for a temporary culture of hedonism, physical abandon, euphoria, and escape from everyday *real world* identities (McRobbie 1994; Goulding *et al.* 2002; see also Saldanha 2005 on the rave scene in Goa, India). They are at once both spaces of fixity, making use of permanent spaces in the urban environment of particular cities, and spaces of cultural and technological flows, as DJs and audiences enter into these spaces to transform them into places of creativity, performance and consumption. However, as Critcher (2000) describes, due to questions over the legality of place and measures to control raves and drug taking, by 1993 warehouse raves had virtually become extinct in the UK. Instead, rave culture diversified into legal venues and became incorporated into the structure of the night club industry and wider dance music culture (see for example Hesmondhalgh 1998).

Fraser and Ettlinger (2008) provide an analysis of British drum and bass (D&B) music, one of a number of musical forms that emerged from the rave scene in the 1990s. Characterized by a dub plate culture, in which music producers give unsigned records to DJs, innovation occurs again in a wide variety of spaces

ranging from those that are physically fixed, such as recording studios and homes, to collaborations in virtual space. However, “learning also occurs on the dance floor in raves, which become a testing ground, a laboratory, even a marketplace in which new, often unsigned music is played and consumed” (Fraser & Ettlinger 2008, p. 1649). The authors argue that “D&B events rarely occur in places designed for the music” (*Ibid.*, p. 1649), a conclusion that again underlines the importance of an urban environment that provides multiple locations for the expression of alternative musical creativity.

Conclusion

Certain neighbourhoods and spaces within cities have become identifiable places of musical creativity. It is in the more diverse neighbourhoods of cities, we argue, that creative moments are more likely to spark, through the mutual exchange of musical styles and practices amongst different cultural groups. Diversity alone is however not sufficient to sustain creativity. The presence of supporting networks is crucial in this respect, fostering and driving creativity in such neighbourhoods. These networks include musicians and creatives, music industry players, and live music venues and audiences, as well as the cafes, bars, and clubs where musicians and music industry professionals may meet, collaborate, and exchange creative experiences.

Urban creative spaces may take a variety of forms, from the formal creative space of the recording studio, to the informal spaces of bedrooms, garages, community centres, clubs and street corners. In the case of recording

studios, we have argued that creative moments happen through the relations between skilled creative technologists and artists. The location of the most successful studios within large cities therefore not only reflects the locational preferences of musicians, but also those of the skilled workers (producers, sound engineers) who are crucial to the performance of the studios. As tools and techniques for networking studios in geographically distant locations continue to become more sophisticated, studios are increasingly able to service highly mobile musical creatives, enabling them to co-ordinate musical recordings on a global scale. Thus we are seeing the development of new relational geographies of music creativity across multiple spatial scales. In the case of rave cultures, urban spaces are shown to be important symbolic resources in the creative process. This creative process, we argue, is a material and embodied practice that links directly to the spontaneous moments of simultaneous live performance and consumption. Large abandoned urban industrial spaces, such as old warehouses and factories, are transformed symbolically in imaginative landscapes through the material practices of musical creativity. This, we suggest, clearly highlights the need to situate creativity more squarely in its material and embodied contexts of production.

Throughout this overview of geographical research on musical creativity, the underlying theme has been the recognition of the concrete social and urban conditions that lie at the foundations of creative moments. To understand creativity, we therefore argue that it is crucial to consider the ways in which creativity interacts in complex ways with urban physical form, technology, and the various actors in networks of creativity and production.

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