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The spatial value of live music: Performing, (re)developing and narrating urban spaces

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the spatial value of live popular music by adopting an inter-disciplinary approach grounded in urban and music studies. What is understood of the relationship between live music and the built environment is improved, with a focus on how this cultural form contributes to performing, (re)developing and narrating urban spaces. The post-industrial city has become a stage for events that serve a wide range of social, cultural, economic and spatial objectives. However, the densification of the built environment has led to a debate about the extent to which live music's positive outcomes outweigh the nuisance experienced by residents in terms of noise and the unavailability of public spaces. Furthermore, small venues in many cities are struggling with issues of gentrification, implying that the spatial value of music is part of wider concerns about who owns the city and which forms of culture can be produced and consumed in urban centres. Against this background, the paper asks the following questions concerning the spatial value of live music: how can it be defined? What are the challenges to achieving it? How can it be supported in urban planning? The study is grounded in a qualitative content analysis of 24 live music reports and strategies, as well as 10 in-depth interviews with policymakers, festival organisers and venue owners. Also discussed is how the spatial value of live music can be supported in urban policies by building interdisciplinary networks, establishing strategies, and creating and sustaining places for live music events.

1. Introduction

This article examines the spatial value of live popular music, with a focus on how this cultural form contributes to performing, (re)developing and narrating urban spaces. Music events occur in diverse places, which vary in terms of their size, organisation and level of professionalism, and include bars and community centres, as well as big festivals and arenas. As we will argue in this paper, live music concerts should not be dismissed as just temporary forms of entertainment: they can have a long-term impact on the built environment and the way in which people experience the urban landscape (Wynn, 2015; Nunes, 2019; Richards, 2017).

In recent years, the role of the cultural form of live music has been more prominent in both the music industries and urban policy. Indeed, as the revenues from recorded music declined, that performed live became central to the former's business models (Mazierska et al., 2020). Roberts (2015, p. 7). This reminds us that recorded and live music have different geographies, with the latter literally requiring more space in cities: “[It] is in urban areas that the live music industry has carved out its augmented geography over the past decade.” New venues, like flagship music arenas, are testament to live music's value in urban development (Kronenburg, 2019). Indeed, the post-industrial city has become a stage for a growing number of events that serve a wide range of goals, including urban branding and increasing cultural vibrancy (Jakob, 2013; Van der Hoeven & Hitters, 2019; Wynn, 2015).

Nevertheless, live music's embeddedness in cities poses multiple spatial challenges: the densification of the built environment has led to a debate about the extent to which live music's positive outcomes outweigh the nuisance caused to residents in terms of noise and, for instance, the accessibility, or even unavailability, of public parks; the privatisation of urban spaces, which constrains the opportunities for live music events to be held in some cities (Cohen, 2007; Kronenburg, 2020); and many musicians and small music venues are struggling to cope with increasing rents (Shaw, 2013). This all suggests that the spatial value of music is part of a wider concern about who owns the city and which forms of culture can be produced and consumed in urban centres (Roberts, 2015; Sassen, 2017). Against this background, this paper answers the following questions in relation to the spatial value of live music: How can it be defined? What are the challenges to achieving it? How can it be supported in urban planning?

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The project contributes to the development of the concept of live music’s spatial value and examines how this can be achieved. It also adds to the field of urban studies by exploring the relationship between live music and the urban space. In doing so, we build on previous research on live music’s materiality, geography and architecture (e.g., Wood et al., 2007; Kronenburg, 2019). This enables readers to understand how the connections between musical performances and urban space develop and can be supported. While earlier studies have paid attention to the social, cultural and economic value of live music to cities (Behr et al., 2016a; Van der Hoeven & Hitters, 2019), this project takes a different approach by examining the impact on the built environment in its own right. Our scope is limited to popular styles of live music in cities in order to improve the focus of the study. We do, however, acknowledge that other forms of music have a spatial impact and their performance is not exclusive to cities.

Our article demonstrates that the concept of spatial value is contested and complex, being shaped by a wide range of different actors with conflicting interests. Moreover, the spatial value of live music needs to be understood in relation to wider political and economic forces that affect how and where it is performed and with what effects. These findings are grounded in 10 interviews with event organisers, directors of music venues and real estate experts in the Netherlands. We have also analysed 24 live music reports and strategies from eight different countries.

The next section discusses the existing literature on the relationship between music and urban space, enabling us to conceptualise spatial value. There is then a description of the research project and its methodology, followed by a discussion of the challenges to achieving spatial value. This distinguishes between the impact of and on the urban environment in which live music is embedded. Finally, we address how spatial value can be supported in urban planning and policymaking. Here, we discuss three vital steps for strengthening urban live music ecologies: 1) building inter-disciplinary networks; 2) establishing urban strategies; and 3) creating and sustaining places for live music.

2. Conceptualising spatial value

This section provides a conceptualisation of spatial value that is grounded in the existing literature on the relationship between music and the built environment. The concept of ‘value’ is used to achieve an understanding of the various benefits of urban live music ecologies, which can be understood as the networks of venues, festivals and social actors that support live music performances (Behr et al., 2016a; Van der Hoeven & Hitters, 2019). The importance of the intrinsic value of live music as an end in itself should be understood before turning to the values of live music ecologies. This intrinsic value is a necessary condition for realising any of music’s more instrumental effects (Behr et al., 2016b). In other words, our discussion of the uses of live music in cities is not intended to deny the rich personal, communal and aesthetic experiences involved in the enjoyment of this cultural form.

The spatial value of live music is understood as an addition to three other values that have been defined in earlier research (Van der Hoeven & Hitters, 2019): 1) social value refers to live music’s contribution to social relationships (i.e., social capital), the public engagement of live music organisations (e.g., charity, volunteering and activities for the neighbourhood) and a sense of identity; 2) cultural value is connected to musical creativity, talent development and cultural vibrancy in cities; and 3) economic value concerns financial benefits and the relevance of live music for cities in monetary terms (e.g., increased tourism and job growth).

Conceptualising spatial value is necessary if there is to be a more comprehensive understanding of how live music shapes, and is shaped by, urban spaces. As we will argue in this literature review, live music’s spatial value concerns the relationship between live music and the built environment, as constituted by the dimensions of performing, (re)developing and narrating the urban space (see Table 1).

2.1. Performing urban space

According to Adhitya (2017), the city is a stage for urban performances. The architecture and urban design shape the rhythms of our movements, just like music. Urban planners, Adhitya explains, compose how we go about our everyday lives in urban spaces. The literature in this section of our article supports the argument that music has an impact on how cities are used and performed (Connell & Gibson, 2003). Indeed, the musical activities taking place in dedicated venues or the urban environment, with street music (Bennett & Rogers, 2014; Bywater, 2007) and festivals being examples (Kronenburg, 2020), shape how we experience urban space.

Arguably, one of the most significant places in people’s experiences of music are the stages where performers and audiences meet. Here, we can make a distinction between festivals as temporary stages and permanent bricks and mortar venues.1 In relation to the former, Wynn (2015) observes a trend of festivalisation, in which an increasing number of temporary events are organised to achieve different spatial, socio-cultural, symbolic (e.g., urban branding) and economic objectives. Festivals often provide a spatio-temporal platform for alternative lifestyles (Friesen et al., 2014; Kears, 2014), addressing issues of inclusivity (e.g., all-age festivals and openness to cultural diversity) and sustainability (e.g., waste reduction). Wynn identifies three different spatial patterns for festivals, with varying levels of spatial control and consolidation. These include the citadell pattern in a bounded space with a single event, the more open core pattern, in which activities take place in and around a particular area, and the confetti pattern, where events are spread about a city in diverse locations. Fence-off festivals in particular, which each have their own stage lay-outs and facilities, can be experienced as a different world (Kears, 2014). In contrast, those without fences have a stronger connection to their urban surroundings. In terms of venues, Kronenburg (2011, 2019) makes a useful distinction between adopted, adapted and dedicated buildings for musical performances. Adopted venues are places that are not intended to be used for music events, but can be if only a few changes are made to an existing building. In the case of adapted venues, the original building is modified significantly, while dedicated venues are, in contrast, specifically designed and built as places for musical performances.

It is clear that the physical locations where music is performed greatly affect the relationship between live music and the built environment. In a study of the connections between performance and the geography of music, Wood et al. (2007: 869) argue that musical activities have a strong material dimension: “Music making is a material practice: it is embodied and technological; it is staged; it takes place.” Different event and building types each have their drawbacks and benefits; for example, the main problem with using existing buildings for live music is that they are not normally designed to optimise acoustics and service the needs of audiences. An advantage, however, is that they do not have to take the usually larger economic risks associated with dedicated music venues, which require significant investment (Kronenburg, 2019). Furthermore, adapted buildings like factories actually often add to the atmosphere of a concert through their character and historical associations (Bottà, 2012; Kronenburg, 2019). Indeed, the venue’s materiality in terms of smell, size, temperature and building materials shapes the live music experience (Behr et al., 2016a).

Notwithstanding the specificities of individual venues, it is the diversity of music stages that ultimately matters for a city’s live music ecology (Webster & Behr, 2013). As Mercado-Cela (2017) reminds us, the different stages form a spatially-dispersed network of both public and private actors. Rather than focusing on individual stages, his focus is on the mobilities between them. Indeed, the career of a musician can be understood as a spatial trajectory through the city, progressively...
moving from small and informal types of musical activity to more formal organisations (Cohen, 2012).

Finnegan’s (2007) concept of musical pathways enables an understanding of how music becomes part of the urban landscape. In her work, Finnegan focuses on amateur musicians, whose pathways consist of musical landmarks like places where they have rehearsed and performed (e.g., studios and music venues). These pathways are often invisible to others, but nevertheless have great meaning to specific groups or people:

“Such pathways form one important - if often unstated - framework for people’s participation in urban life, something overlapping with, but more permanent and structured than, the personal networks in which individuals also participate. They form broad routes set out, as it were, across and through the city.” (Finnegan, 2007: 322)

Although Finnegan developed the concept of musical pathways by studying amateur musicians, it is also relevant for understanding how other groups make sense of their urban experience through music (Espinosa, 2016). As an example, music is vital for migrants negotiating a collective identity in a new urban environment, which they do through performances and the creation of social spaces (Sánchez-Fuarrros, 2013). A study of the Pasifika Festival in Auckland demonstrates its role in the identity-building of migrants from the Pacific islands, promoting wellbeing and celebrating the contributions of Pacific peoples to the socio-cultural life of the city in which they now reside (Friesen et al., 2014).

Musical pathways are not static (Cohen, 2012): they evolve through changes in music scenes, artistic developments and new sounds brought about by migration. In that sense, places are relational, since they develop through connections to other localities (Andrews et al., 2014). Similarly, festivals bring a wide range of global influences and styles together in a bounded space (Kearns, 2014). In raising awareness of the evolving musical histories of cities, Cohen (2007:10) argues that urban spaces are marked by the physical and affective traces of the musical past, which turn the material environment into a “palimpsest space that offers chronological layers of musical significance, one superimposed upon another, with new layers coexisting with, rather than effacing, the earlier ones.” Cities are thus a rich setting for personal and collective memories associated with music-making and consumption. Urban trajectories become meaningful through, for example, songs about specific streets, knowledge of the location of album cover photos, and memorable concerts (Bottà, 2008; Brunow, 2019; Espinosa, 2016).

Similarly, the diverse urban spaces used for music performances are rich in meanings for audiences and participants in music scenes. Over the years, they are imbued with particular ideologies and memories, offering a sense of place to specific communities (Wood et al., 2007; Andrews et al., 2014). Alternative do-it-yourself scenes have always offered a sense of place to specific communities (Wood et al., 2007; Andrews et al., 2014). Underground music scenes, which set themselves apart from society’s ‘mainstream’, often find their way to a city’s hidden spaces, where they can avoid the control and surveillance taking place in the public realm (Brunner, 2013). As Bottà (2012, p. 123) argues about the use of urban space by the punk sub-culture:

“Punk scenes in industrial cities were able to rearticulate the private vacant industrial spaces, into public ones, both materially (by gathering in them) and at the imaginary level (by using them in pictures, lyrics and sounds). However, they also occupied public spaces and made them ‘private’, winning them as sub-cultural territories.”

While many venues have their roots in sub-cultural movements and youth culture, the relatively recent phenomenon of new dedicated buildings for live popular music marks a shift in its ideological underpinnings (Kronenburg, 2019). Large arenas not only provide an improved experience for both audiences and artists; they also serve wider goals associated with their flagship status, such as attracting tourists and city branding (Holt & Wergin, 2013). In this case, music venues have developed from counter-cultural spaces to highly professional organisations that are used as valuable instruments by urban planning authorities to promote their city. This role of music in urban development is discussed further in the next section.

2.2. Developing urban space

The effects of live music performances reverberate beyond the venues and festivals where they take place, leaving an impact on their urban surroundings. Places where music is performed attract social and cultural activity in their vicinity, thus becoming social hubs for groups of people or central nodes in particular creative networks (Cohen, 2007; Florida & Jackson, 2010).

Music events are often used in placemaking efforts to improve the quality of a location (Richards, 2017; Wynn, 2015). According to Kronenburg (2020: 139), live popular music concerts can be a catalyst for change by transforming the familiar:

“The location takes on a different character – it becomes, temporarily, a different sort of space, a place that is activated by the shared experience of an audience engaging together with a performer. Rather than a place of transition (to move through from one place to another), it becomes a place to linger (to wait and watch).”

In post-industrial cities grappling with urban decay and a loss of social cohesion, cultural experiences, festivals and mega-events therefore became one of the tools used by urban planners to regenerate a location (Hitters, 2007; Jakob, 2013).

Many post-industrial cities redefined themselves as centres of experience, consumption, creativity and cultural activity in order to attract a population of middle-class professionals with sufficient spending power (Brown et al., 2000; Cohen, 2013; Holt & Wergin, 2013; Jakob, 2013). In this context of competition between cities, the staging of experiences has resulted in an ‘eventification’ of place. It has also had the effect that experience-based planning schemes not only include as vital assets investments in hard infrastructure, but also a full and diverse events calendar (Jakob, 2013; Marlet, 2010). Indeed, popular music events can enhance the (inter)national reputation of a city (Kearns, 2014) and provide economic advantages, particularly when
Urban regeneration is not just about physical interventions in cities; it also has important intangible dimensions such as the ways in which urban spaces are narrated and perceived. So, in order to develop derelict neighbourhoods, for example, it is vital that they are considered to be potentially attractive places in which to live, visit, or invest. Urban branding uses positive representations of a city to shape such perceptions, foregrounding the possibilities of a particular place. Bottà (2008), for instance, explains how Helsinki was portrayed in its urban branding as a ‘rock city’ with a lively underground scene. This way of narrating the city aimed to also put ‘non-tourist districts’ on the map as interesting places to visit, thus diversifying how it is understood. According to Bottà (2008: 310), this helps to overcome a division between a “culturally loaded city centre” and its “not culturally loaded” surroundings: “The city’s cultural territory is extended well beyond the usual borders, both in a symbolic and geographic dimension.” Similarly, cultural events such as festivals can be used to increase the awareness and appeal of particular urban areas for future development: for example, the European Union’s European Capital of Culture programme uses cultural events in its urban branding of cities (Cohen, 2013).

Such urban branding practices often tie in with the popular music heritage of cities (Oakes & Warnaby, 2011), which relates to the tangible and intangible elements of the music cultures with which people identify and seek to preserve and pass on to future generations (Bennett, 2009). Examples are venues with a strong legacy and particular festivals that have become annual traditions. The popular music heritage of cities can be narrated through mediums like tourist brochures, exhibitions and documentaries. This heritage fosters a sense of belonging and place attachment (Van der Hoeven & Brandellero, 2015). Indeed, the heritage value of a venue can be an argument for its preservation when it is threatened by encroaching development or gentrification (Ross, 2017).

It is vital to recognise the plurality of narratives associated with a place in relation to both music’s role in urban branding and music heritage (Brunow, 2019; Jensen, 2007). Otherwise, the dominant narratives of a city overshadow other representations and understandings of value. In Liverpool, for example, the histories associated with three popular music venues (the Cavern Club, Eric’s Club and Cream) dominate accounts of its popular music heritage:

“These venues provide landmarks that have come to represent significant moments in Liverpool’s musical heritage, linked closely to the city’s social, cultural and economic landscapes during the 1960s, 1970s and 1990s.” (Lashua et al., 2009).

The authors argue that this perspective neglects other narratives, such as those associated with minorities or emerging scenes. Similarly, Mercado-Celis (2017) contends that memories are often attached to iconic venues, meaning that the rich musical activities taking place outside the central neighbourhoods are overlooked. Acknowledging the plurality of narratives is essential, because these representations feed back into how cities are performed and developed. The urban branding and popular music heritage of cities become part of people’s musical pathways and the promotion of neighbourhoods. The stories told about cities thus ultimately shape how they are redeveloped and for whom, suggesting that the three dimensions of live music’s spatial value are interrelated and dynamic.

3. Background to the study

This study is part of a bigger project on live music, and builds on our earlier research on its social and cultural values in an urban context (Van der Hoeven & Hitters, 2019).2 That research involved an analysis of its concert locations is included in the world tours of high-profile artists (Baker, 2017; Short et al., 1996). Urban regeneration has thus provided an important rationale for investing in a thriving live music ecology, as it supports urban branding, tourism and gentrification (Bottà, 2008). Venues in landmark buildings designed by ‘starchitects’ further bolster these economic goals (Van Schaik, 2018). Along with this physical music infrastructure, festivals are increasingly used as temporary events to stimulate sociocultural, economic and spatial objectives (Nunes, 2019; Van der Hoeven & Hitters, 2019). Venues and festivals are therefore often located strategically in derelict neighbourhoods, with the aim being to make them more attractive to future investors and developers. In doing so, live music puts places on the mental maps of potential residents, tourists and property investors.

Although this implies that live music is now a solid aspect of urban policies, various researchers have actually raised awareness of the negative consequences of using music in places under development. Wynn et al., 2007). Urban regeneration has thus provided an important rationale for investing in a thriving live music ecology, as it supports urban branding, tourism and gentrification (Bottà, 2008). Venues in landmark buildings designed by ‘starchitects’ further bolster these economic goals (Van Schaik, 2018). Along with this physical music infrastructure, festivals are increasingly used as temporary events to stimulate sociocultural, economic and spatial objectives (Nunes, 2019; Van der Hoeven & Hitters, 2019). Venues and festivals are therefore often located strategically in derelict neighbourhoods, with the aim being to make them more attractive to future investors and developers. In doing so, live music puts places on the mental maps of potential residents, tourists and property investors.

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of 20 live music strategies and policy documents from different countries. The documents revealed how diverse actors (e.g., local governments, consultancy firms and music industry organisations) understand the value of live music and the ways in which it can be supported. Our analysis identified the emergence of a separate value representing the impact of live music on our experiences of urban spaces, and this has therefore been conceptualised further in the current study.

We have added four reports to our previous sample (Appendix A). We have also conducted 10 in-depth interviews with event organisers, directors of venues hosting popular music and real estate experts (Appendix B). A purposive sampling strategy was adopted to select respondents with relevant expertise on the issues arising from our research questions. In particular, we aimed to have a diverse sample to reflect the interdisciplinarity nature of the notion of spatial value itself. These interviews allowed us to achieve a more in-depth understanding of the connections between live music and the built environment. In accordance with our university’s ethical guidelines, we agreed to not disclose the respondents’ names.

The reports and interviews were subjected to a thematic analysis using the qualitative data analysis software, Atlas.ti. Our analysis was informed by the ecological approach to live music adopted in our project. This is a holistic perspective on urban live music ecologies, with the focus on the relationships between different actors, both in and outside the live music sector (Behr et al., 2016a; Van der Hoeven & Hitters, 2019). In particular, we concentrated on the different factors that enable and constrain spatial value. These were coded using an open-coding strategy in which we labelled relevant segments from the text (Boeije, 2010). In the next step of the axial coding, we grouped related codes and created categories, before going on to integrate the results. This produced several main themes, which we discuss in this paper (see Table 2). Our analysis is used to examine challenges to spatial value (i.e., the impact of and on the environment) and measures to support it (i.e., building networks, establishing strategies and creating and sustaining places for live music performances).

### 4. Challenges to achieving spatial value

The changing uses of urban space around live music stages has a significant effect on the opportunities to perform. In the process of gentrification, affluent people and businesses find their way to popular neighbourhoods. This leads to rising rents, which is particularly challenging to grassroots venues working with small budgets (Webster et al., 2018). The following quote from Rotterdam’s popular music policy illustrates how the growing popularity of this city puts pressure on cultural uses of urban space:

“This city used to have sufficient affordable spaces for artists and other creatives. However, the development of Rotterdam and its growing popularity has an impact on the real estate market.” (City Government of Rotterdam, 2019: 17)

The Mastering of a Music City report, published by the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI) and Music Canada to support musical activities in cities, argues that this development might result in fewer opportunities to perform:

“In many areas, redevelopment has led to the closure of iconic venues – even some world famous ones – that draw tourists. This has a two-fold negative impact. First, it threatens to eliminate key differentiators that help a city stand out. Second, it reduces the spaces available for performance, impacting the overall level of live music activity.” (Terrill et al., 2015: 84)

Even though culture has a positive social and cultural impact on cities, it is difficult to sustain cultural venues in an environment focused on commercial gain. Residences have a higher return on investment than cultural uses, with the consequence that the number of affordable buildings available for cultural functions falls. According to Shaw (2013: 351): “The driving neoliberal imperative for highest and best use of land is anathema to creative subcultures.” As a real estate expert explains in the following quotation, the profits from buildings are more important to private developers than their wider cultural impact:

“That’s a vital difference between commercial developers and what we do in the projects commissioned by municipalities. For a commercial developer, the value of the spin-off is in fact value for someone else, unless they can develop a lot around the plot as well.” (Interviewee 9, real estate consultant)

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All Dutch quotations have been translated by the authors.

| Main research findings. | Table 2 | Manifestations in the data |
|-------------------------|---------|---------------------------|
| Challenges to achieving spatial value | Dimensions | Impact of the environment |
|                          | Gentrification | Lack of affordable spaces |
|                          | Lack of activity around venues | Noise issues |
|                          | Unavailability of public spaces during events | Negative impact on flora and fauna |
| Supporting spatial value | Building networks | Connecting actors with different interests and identifying common ground |
|                          | Establishing strategies | Mapping live music stages |
|                          | Allocating resources and having a single point of contact at town halls | Including music in the plans for new developments |
|                          | Creating and sustaining places for live music | Addressing noise issues (e.g., the agent of change principle, informing prospective neighbours, and mediation between venues and neighbours) |
|                          | Allocating resources and having a single point of contact at town halls | Measures to mitigate the effects of gentrification (i.e., supporting socio-cultural values instead of maximising profits; imposing conditions when selling buildings) |
|                          | Using special designations (i.e., a heritage status or creating entertainment precincts) | |
In other words, unless there is a recognition that culture may actually increase the appeal of a place, there is no great commercial incentive to invest in less profitable cultural uses.

These challenges of gentrification are most likely to arise in popular areas in central districts. In contrast, venues in less popular neighbourhoods may have the opposite problem of a lack of activity around their buildings. Mixed uses in areas are thus essential for generating enough vibrancy and street level activity (Brown et al., 2000). Less accessible public transport may also be an issue in the urban periphery, where there are also fewer bars and restaurants. Indeed, it has been found that the (lack of) availability of parking spaces and public transport options at night affects decisions about whether to go to concerts (Whiting & Carter, 2016).

4.2. Impact on the environment

The popularity of inner-city living increases densification, causing tensions between residents and live music activities (Shaw, 2013). As argued in the Mastering of a Music City report (Terrill, Hogarth, Clement & Francis, 2015: 41): “Beyond the challenge of gentrification, […] the music businesses that initially made an area attractive are often perceived as unwanted neighbours.” Indeed, the issue of noise is a recurring theme in both the reports and interviews analysed for our study. Open-air concerts or performances in venues with poor sound insulation often cause a nuisance to residents. Even the loading and unloading of equipment can cause problems, as this venue owner explains:

“In every new venue, trucks can park inside to load and unload. Well, we don’t have that and you know for a fact that people, even if they haven’t been drinking, they have performed, they will have a beer or just sit with a soft drink. As soon as they pack their stuff it’s already past midnight. Well, then they’re standing outside, actually shouting because they’ve been in a noisy environment the whole night.” (Interviewee 4, director of a music venue)

Beyond noise, concerts can also cause parking problems in neighbourhoods or lead to anti-social behaviour by attendees. Indeed, regardless of whether these issues are actually relevant, venues often have a negative reputation, making residents hesitant about live music activities.

Open-air concerts in public parks and on greenfields cause a specific set of problems. In Rotterdam, for example, there are discussions about the unavailability of public parks because of the growing number of festivals, with commercial events in particular meaning that these locations are no longer accessible to residents for the duration of a festival (Venema, 2019). Furthermore, some have concerns about the negative impact of live music on flora and fauna; for example, festival sites can experience damage to plants and wildlife may be disturbed (Webster & McKay, 2016).

5. Supporting the spatial value of live music

The previous section demonstrates that spatial value cannot be taken for granted and is not self-evident. Indeed, if live music’s spatial embedding is to be enhanced, its values need to be recognised by, among others, residents and urban developers. The following sections therefore discuss how the spatial value of live music can be supported in urban planning and policymaking by building inter-disciplinary networks, establishing strategies, and sustaining places for live music.

5.1. Building networks

Providing support for spatial value requires a multifaceted approach, because the dimensions of performing, developing and narrating the urban space rely on a wide range of different actors. As well as physical facilities, cultural industries need a ‘soft infrastructure’ that connects people and organisations (Brown et al., 2000: 447). Urban live music ecologies have a networked structure, in which different actors participate to value live music (Van der Hoeven et al., 2020). This involves negotiation with people inside the music sector (e.g., bookers and managers), as well actors in other domains (e.g., regulators and policymakers) (Behr et al., 2016a). Spatial value can be linked to different departments, even within local governments. According to Rotterdam’s music strategy (2019: 8):

“Popular music (pop culture) connects not only different parties or cultural makers, but also different policy domains: culture, spatial planning, economy, city marketing, tourism, wellbeing, youth, education and integration.”

These different departments can have conflicting interests, such as supporting talent development (culture), increasing the housing stock (spatial planning) and tourism (economy and city marketing), or improving citizens’ social capital (wellbeing, youth, education and integration).

Our analysis found that supporting live music’s spatial value requires people and organisations to find common ground between the interests of actors within diverse networks, including those like policymakers, business and the cultural industries (Grodach, 2012). Although the actors in these urban networks may have different goals, they often share an attachment to a city. Various respondents stressed that a shared sense of pride in local accomplishments is a good starting point for conversations about the value of culture.

“Not everyone’s interested in [the value of culture] of course. That has to do with education as well. I mean, I’m not going into that issue, but I do try to show how it can benefit them. For me, the most important thing is what it can mean for the city. That’s the common denominator, the way of getting different parties together. Why are we doing this? Not for ourselves, but for the city.” (Interviewee 5, creative producer)

“Interviewer: In the policy plan it said you told companies about the contribution of culture to urban development. I guess that’s not an easy story to tell?”

Respondent: Well, we focused on the gut feeling, the sense of pride in the city that many companies also have. We were trying to address this gut feeling: ‘we’re located here in this legendary neighbourhood, which has reached its nadir, a no-go zone at the moment. We’re going to go pioneering work and you’re going to help. We’re going to make it better again by means of a theatre.’ That’s what we really focused on. Of course, it helped [that] they knew me and, I guess, trusted me.” (Interviewee 6, director of a theatre)

Of course, connecting the interests of different actors through a shared attachment to a place is only possible if the people involved identify with it. For this reason, some interviewees stressed the risks posed by foreign investors, who may buy buildings without feeling responsible for the direct surroundings. Similarly, event organisers based in a city away from where, for example, a festival is taking place might be less inclined to care about the concerns of local actors. It is, however, important to invest in the relationship with a neighbourhood if complaints are to be avoided and the social impact of events enhanced. Indeed, there is a need to also include residents in any multidisciplinary networks. Our respondents stressed the importance of communication about activities and, if possible, involving residents in any planning. This is a long-term process, because there is a risk of losing support without pro-active communication in the early phases of projects. One real estate expert discussed how residents may use social media to protest about new venues:

“All of a sudden there might be a neighbourhood coalition against your plans. If that’s the time you start your communication, it’s already 0–3 to them, let’s say.” (Interviewee 3, senior project manager real estate sector)
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A common strategy for representing the interests of the music sector in these networks is to establish music advisory boards and/or appoint night mayors or night czars. Such boards are advocacy organisations comprised of a range of actors from within the music sector, while night mayors or night czars are individuals who liaise between different stakeholders in the night-time economy (e.g., venues, residents and local government). The Mastering of a Music City report argues that music advisory boards have three core functions: creating a consensus within the music sector, providing advice on regulation and acting as a contact point for stakeholders:

“If there is no consensus and collaboration in the music community, it is inevitably harder for governments to understand the unique challenges faced by the sector, and governments will be far less motivated to make positive changes.” (Terrill et al., 2015: 66)

In other words, music boards can be central actors in linking the various stakeholders involved in negotiating the spatial value of live music.

5.2. Establishing strategies

In the view of our respondents, the challenges discussed in this paper require long-term strategies: without dedicated policies on the connections between music and the urban space, the availability of stages for events is often at risk, as discussed above. City strategies on popular music help to ensure that new talent has the space to experiment and be inspired by other musicians. Of course, the music advisory boards discussed in the previous section can also play a vital role in establishing such strategies.

An important starting point is to map the places that currently exist for performances (Terrill, Hogarth, Clement & Francis, 2015). This allows stock to be taken of the diversity of stages in terms of venue size, genres and location. This data can be substantiated by interviews with relevant stakeholders in order to understand the challenges present in specific live music ecologies. This provides insight into how, for example, various regulations, including those related to parking permits, opening hours and alcohol licences, can have an impact on music businesses.

A strategy can propose specific policies and financial measures based on a needs assessment. A common policy instrument is to use subsidies, tax-breaks or micro-loans to sustain specific segments of music ecologies. These are particularly useful for supporting the grassroots level of the music sector. Showcase festivals, award shows, small venues and talent development organisations are important for emerging musicians wanting to develop their skills and build-up a following. However, organisations focusing on young musicians tend to operate on small budgets, as is also the case for music organisations with a social mission that involves community work.

It is helpful to have a dedicated department or music office within a municipality when it comes to implementing any music strategy. A single point of contact makes it easier for the music community to navigate regulatory issues (Terrill, Hogarth, Clement & Francis, 2015), while such a department can also oversee a city’s music policy and liaise with the relevant board. Some cities even have a specific department focusing on events. In Rotterdam, for example, Rotterdam Festivals supports cultural organisations by conducting research on audiences, managing the festival calendar, providing subsidies and sharing relevant information. They have also created location profiles that contain conditions and instructions on how specific spaces in the city can be used for events.

Notwithstanding the importance of a music strategy, our analysis has demonstrated that there is a sense of contingency in how this is actually played out in cities. Of course, not everything can be approached from the top down. Indeed, in reality, a music strategy needs to support the bottom-up creativity of cultural entrepreneurs and organisations. Ultimately, it is the music community that is best placed to connect to audiences and their tastes, not a municipality. Furthermore, the contingency of achieving spatial value follows on from the reliance on wider political and economic conditions. Of course, investments in culture require political support from city councils. In this context, culture is in competition with other policy domains like healthcare and housing, making it more difficult to allocate money to culture at times of economic austerity. Nevertheless, to some extent, the 2007–2010 financial crisis also proved to be helpful for realising spatial value. The following quote exemplifies how there were more empty spaces available for temporary use, such as pop-up programmes on cultural events:

“The financial crisis meant that commercial property developers and investors couldn’t carry on with the transformation of buildings, because they weren’t able to acquire the necessary loan capital. This meant that all those buildings owned by investors, developers and social housing corporations were put on hold. Well, so if you had a good network [as an organisation supporting creative incubators], you could make deals with commercial developers.” (Interviewee 3, senior project manager, real estate sector)

Similarly, a director of a venue in an adapted building commissioned by the local municipality explains how construction companies worked for much lower prices during the financial crisis:

“The local government was able to get this venue at a good time. They invited the tenders almost 11 years ago. This was exactly the moment the financial crisis began, so all the construction companies were looking for work. This meant they were willing to work for lower amounts. The local government got a very nice building for relatively little money.” (Interviewee 10, director of a music venue)

During subsequent periods of economic growth, the number of vacant spaces declined again, making it more difficult to find cheap areas for the performance of culture. At the same time, the many new developments in a booming property market compound the existing pressure on the urban space. The final section of this article will therefore focus on how places for performing live music can be created and sustained.

5.3. Creating and sustaining places for performing live music

As discussed in the literature review, the spatial value dimension of performing in the urban space relies on the availability of music stages. As a result, the most important way of supporting spatial value is creating and sustaining such spaces. Of course, this vision should be part of the music strategy discussed above. This will be discussed separately in this final section, given its key role in supporting spatial value. Creating and sustaining places for live music goes beyond music and cultural policy, influenced as this is by urban planning decisions. This section will consequently focus on opportunities to secure spaces, address noise issues, limit gentrification and introduce special designations for live music spaces.

The strategies discussed in the previous section begin with the mapping of the places that already exist for the performance of live music. The results of such an inventory may highlight the need to identify new spaces where venues can be created or festivals hosted. One way of doing this is to use government-managed buildings for creative purposes (Hollands, 2019). Amsterdam, for example, facilitates cultural breeding spaces as a way to retain cultural activities in the gentrifying city (Shaw, 2013). Another approach is the mapping of underused spaces, with areas marked for future development lent to live music organisations on a temporary basis, but for enough time to ensure that investments can be recouped by cultural entrepreneurs. Music can also form part of new urban developments right from the start, but it is essential that cultural spaces are included in initial plans and negotiations, otherwise the incentive is for commercial developers to focus on more profitable residential spaces. As the literature review on developing the urban space demonstrates, live music can increase...
the appeal of new developments. This is underscored by the following respondent, who talks about a neighbourhood which, in her view, lacks cultural facilities:

"Nothing happens there, only living and working. Not even working, almost only residential buildings in fact. It's a really sleepy neighbour-
hood, which should really be avoided. Mixed neighbourhoods are im-
portant." (Interviewee 5, creative producer)

Similarly, live music can also be taken into consideration in the construction of public spaces (Auckland UNESCO City of Music, 2018; Live Music Taskforce, 2017), for example by installing a base level of infrastructure for outdoor concerts.

Noise issues are the most common problem when it comes to existing spaces for live music, as discussed in the section concerning the challenges that must be faced before achieving spatial value. It is increasingly recognised that encroaching residential developments pose a threat to the cultural life of cities. This requires measures to ensure that music spaces and residents can co-exist relatively peacefully in urban environments. Tensions can sometimes be resolved by mediation between venues and neighbours, or by ensuring that prospective purchasers of homes are told in advance about how these spaces are used.

Burke and Schmidt (2013), for example, discuss an approach that real estate agents can adopt to enable potential buyers to listen to the soundscapes in an entertainment precinct.⁴ A more structural solution is the Agent of Change principle (Ross, 2017; Shaw, 2013), which has been adopted in Australia and the United Kingdom. This urban planning measure puts the responsibility for addressing sound issues on the newcomer to an area (i.e., the agent of change), rather than on those in charge of existing cultural spaces, which should prevent the closure of long-standing venues after complaints from neighbours in new residential buildings.

Another important way of supporting existing live music spaces is to mitigate the negative consequences of gentrification. As discussed in the literature review, live music can play a vital role in place-making and increasing the appeal of an area. However, the risk is that these cultural organisations are forced out after rents rise. Using case studies in Melbourne, Shaw (2013: 349) argues that city councils must make a choice between maximising land value or supporting socio-cultural goals:

“They can pursue the usual urban renewal/economic development strategy, which creates a safer environment for capital investment and increases opportunities for residential development, in which case the indie creative subcultures that both councils celebrate will be displaced far more rapidly and effectively than they anticipate. Or they can grapple with the possibility that maximising the value of land in their municipality not be their primary objective.”

Even if local governments are selling buildings to private parties, they can include conditions on the ways in which they will be used. As an example, contracts, zoning plans or ground lease conditions could incorporate requirements that spaces need to fulfil cultural functions. Alternatively, successful cultural organisations in an area can be encouraged to remain by enabling them to buy their building, perhaps as a co-op where different organisations work together (Hollands, 2019).

Finally, live music spaces can be protected by changing the ways in which they are classified. This can be done by recognising the unique contributions made by a building or area to the social and cultural life of cities. As discussed in the literature review, the dimension of narrating the urban space underscores how urban branding and heritage activities give meaning to the built environment. Venues with a strong public impact and history could be given a similar building classification as theatres, or even a heritage designation status. However, while the latter solution protects the building itself, the continuation of music activities will still rely on the occupants or the owner of the building (Terrill et al., 2015). Furthermore, some governments have a protected status for buildings of community value, such as the Asset of Community Value process in the UK (Davyd et al., 2015). It is also possible to define entire areas as entertainment districts using zoning plans. These can have a higher sound tolerance, longer opening hours for venues and special parking permits for musicians (Terrill et al., 2015). An advantage is that many of the nuisance issues are then concentrated in a particular area, making them easier to control. Moreover, the different organisations can engage in shared promotional activities, making the area attractive to potential visitors. However, an important drawback of concentrated entertainment districts is that many parts of a city can be left with no provision for live music (Burke & Schmidt, 2013). Certainly, social and spatial links between different areas are essential to cater for diverse urban communities in a thriving urban live music ecology (Brown et al., 2000; Mercado-Celis, 2017).

6. Conclusions and discussion

The aim of this study has been to conceptualise the spatial value of live music and explore how it can be supported through cultural policies and urban planning. Taking an interdisciplinary approach, the paper contributes to the field of urban studies by drawing on literature from music and cultural research. Spatial value is defined as the relationship between live music and the built environment, which manifests itself through the dimensions of performing, (re)developing and narrating spaces. Performing the urban space concerns the ways in which a city is physically used to stage concerts and create musical pathways; redeveloping refers to the role of live music in the making and regeneration of space; and narrating focuses on live music as part of the stories told about cities. Defining the spatial value of live music is becoming an increasingly important task given the threats posed to it in cities.

Table 2 provides an overview of the main research findings. The focus is on the challenges likely to be faced when seeking to achieve spatial value and the ways in which this process can be supported. The paper has demonstrated that the spatial value of live music cannot be taken for granted, affected as it is by wider political and economic forces. Important challenges concern the impact of the environment in which live music is embedded (e.g., gentrification), as well as the nuisance music might cause (e.g., noise and anti-social behaviour). In addressing these issues, it is important to make a place for music. Doing so not only means having a physical space, but also recognising this space in urban policy and planning. In order to support live music in all its diversity (e.g., different genres, experimental sounds and artists at various stages of their career), its value needs to be acknowledged by the diverse stakeholders involved. Establishing strategies and creating and sustaining places for live music requires strong networks within the live music industries and connections to networks outside the music business. Such strategies can include financial instruments (e.g., subsidies), measures to mitigate the effects of gentrification (e.g., supporting socio-cultural values instead of maximising profits), solutions for noise issues (e.g., the agent of change principle), and using special designations for live music spaces.

Although these strategies allow for a systematic approach to achieving spatial value, we do not intend to suggest that live music can just be planned in a top-down manner. Indeed, it is essential that strategies make room for bottom-up initiatives, creativity and entrepreneurship. In the conceptualisation of spatial value, we emphasise its multiplicity, as a wide range of grassroots and official actors participate in the valuing of urban spaces. Furthermore, it should be noted that the spatial value of live music develops over time, often in unexpected ways due to social, technological and economic developments.

⁴See https://www.brisbane.qld.gov.au/planning-and-building/planning-guidelines-and-tools/other-plans-and-projects/valley-special-entertainment-precinct/valley-sound-machine (accessed 27 February 2020).
This value builds on the musical heritage of a city; it also requires diverse music spaces for experimentation by artists in order to guarantee a lively music culture for the future. Graves-Brown (2009) reminds us that music is both an event and an action. It is also dynamic and complex, like the cities in which it is performed (Cohen, 2012, 2013). Indeed, music stages are often temporary, such as festivals or pop-up venues. These temporary stages are valuable in terms of experimentation and diversifying the music provision. Understanding urban live music ecologies as dynamic provides a counterweight to narratives about the fall in the number of live music venues. Arguably, the coming and going of stages is part and parcel of urban life. Nevertheless, it is essential that successful projects can contribute to the social and cultural life of cities in a sustained manner.

Future research may shed light on what is a good balance between temporary and fixed venues. Urban planning strategies to mitigate the negative effects of gentrification also require more attention. Of course, spatial value is contextual, relying as it always does on local geographical, political and economic conditions. As a result, case studies can further enhance our understanding of supporting spatial value in specific local settings. As we have limited the scope of this study to popular music in cities, future research could be extended to cover different styles of music and non-urban and rural spaces.

Finally, further research is required to understand the spatial value of live music in a post-Covid world. Shortly after the data collection element of this paper ended, the live music sector stalled due to the Coronavirus. Of course, the cancellation of so many events will have economic repercussions for numerous actors in the live music ecology, putting even more pressure on small music venues. The spatial consequences are hard to predict, but an early study of the impact of Covid-19 on the public space suggests that it could lead to an aversion to being in large crowds, requests for improved ventilation, more outdoor spaces in venues and the inclusion of health criteria in the design process (Honey-Rosés et al., 2020). Inevitably, some spaces can satisfy such demands more easily than others. Meanwhile, new spaces could emerge as locations for concerts, changing how the urban landscape is performed, developed and narrated. As an example, the Sofar Sounds initiative books intimate concerts in people’s homes\(^5\), while illegal raves took place in urban outdoor spaces during lockdown (Marshall et al. 2020). Perhaps the crisis will lead to the repurposing of vacant buildings for music activities. Finally, the experiments with online live music that occurred during the lockdown could lead to new virtual spaces for music-making, which will require studies to adopt innovative methodologies like netnography (Maalsen & McLean, 2016). Post-Covid concerts could include hybrid forms of online and physical activities, as festivals and venues may increasingly support the streaming of concerts, the building of virtual worlds and online social interactions. Of course, these predictions are highly speculative, but nevertheless suggest that Covid-19 could change how the spatial value of live music is achieved in the future.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Arno van der Hoeven: Conceptualization, Methodology, Formal analysis, Data curation, Investigation, Writing - original draft. Erik Hitters: Conceptualization, Methodology, Formal analysis, Investigation, Funding acquisition, Writing - original draft.

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Appendix A. Reports

| #  | Title                                                                 | Year of publication | Geographical scope | Published / Commissioned by                                                                 |
|----|----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | The economic, social and cultural contribution of venue-based live music in Victoria. | 2011               | Victoria, Australia | Deloitte Access Economics (commissioned by Arts Victoria)                                  |
| 2  | Waarde van pop 2.0: De maatschappelijke betekenis van popmuziek       | 2018               | the Netherlands    | POpnl and the Dutch Association of Music Venues and Festivals (VNPF)                        |
| 3  | Report for City of Edinburgh Council: The Challenges for Live Music in the City | 2015               | Edinburgh, Scotland | Music Venue Trust                                                                         |
| 4  | London Music Strategy                                                | 2014               | London, Canada     | London’s Music Industry Development Task Force                                             |
| 5  | The mastering of a music city: key elements, effective strategies and why it's worth pursuing | 2015               | Global             | IFPI & Music Canada                                                                       |
| 6  | Streamlining Live Music Regulation                                   | 2016               | South Australia, Australia | Government of South Australia                                                            |
| 7  | understanding small music venues: A report by the music venue trust  | 2015               | United Kingdom     | The Institute of Contemporary Music Performance (commissioned by the Music Venue Trust)    |
| 8  | The economic & cultural value of live music in Australia 2014        | 2015               | Australia          | University of Tasmania, Australian Live Music Office, South Australian government, City of Sydney, City of Melbourne |
| 9  | Hamilton Music Strategy                                              | 2013               | Hamilton, Canada   | The City of Hamilton                                                                      |
| 10 | The Economic and Cultural Contributions of Live Music Venues in the City of Sydney | 2016               | Sydney, Australia  | Paul Muller and Dr Dave Carter (University of Tasmania)                                   |
| 11 | Valuing live music: The UK Live Music Censuses 2017 report           | 2018               | United Kingdom     | Emma Webster, Matt Brenna, Adam Behr and Martin Closnan with Jake Ansell                  |
| 12 | City of Melbourne Music Strategy: Supporting and growing the city's music industry 2014-17 | 2014               | Melbourne, Australia | City of Melbourne                                                                         |
| 13 | From Glyndebourne to Glastonbury: the impact of British music festivals | 2016               | United Kingdom     | Emma Webster and George McKay                                                             |

\(^5\) www.sofarsounds.com (accessed 20 August 2020).
Appendix B. Interviews

| #  | Date of the interview | Gender | Role |
|----|----------------------|--------|------|
| 1  | 22-3-2019            | Male   | Director of an events agency |
| 2  | 29-3-2019            | Male   | Organiser of a music festival |
| 3  | 20-5-2019            | Male   | Senior project manager in the real estate sector |
| 4  | 6-6-2019             | Female | Director of a music venue |
| 5  | 12-6-2019            | Female | Creative producer |
| 6  | 26-11-2019           | Male   | Director of a theatre |
| 7  | 26-11-2019           | Male   | Rapper & event organiser (including place-making) |
| 8  | 14-1-2020            | Male   | Director of talent development organisation |
| 9  | 22-1-2020            | Male   | Real estate consultant |
| 10 | 31-1-2020            | Male   | Director of a music venue |

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