

Lots of Planets Have a North: Remodeling Second-Tier Cities and their Music.

By Tara Brabazon and Stephen Mallinder

Abstract:

Our paper asks an unspoken but fascinating question: why do particular cities become associated with their music at a specific time? Seattle, Manchester, Chicago and Liverpool are urban spaces that summon a type of rhythm, a mode of movement and a way of thinking about sound. This article probes the connection between urbanity and music, with attention placed on Perth in Western Australia. Often known as the most isolated capital city in the world, it is currently undergoing a musical boom, but with little cultural or creative industries policy support. This paper therefore initiates a study of how to connect second-tier – or non global – cities like Perth, so that lessons can be learnt from these other places of urban rhythm. We commence with an exploration of soundscapes, then move into the specificities of the second-tier city, and conclude with an affirmation of the value of sonic mobility – or intercessions - between these urban environments.

Rose: Are you an alien?
The Doctor: Yes.
Rose: Is that alright?
The Doctor: Yeah.
Rose: If you are an alien, how come you sound like you're from the North?
The Doctor: Lots of planets have a North.

Doctor Who, "Rose."¹

Doctor Who is one of the great survival stories in popular cultural history. Like James Bond and *Star Trek*, it has survived the end of the Cold War, the decline of British power and ambivalence at American global domination. It is timely and appropriate that when *Doctor Who* reemerged in 2005, the ninth regeneration was not only trendier than Colin Baker, funnier than Tom Baker and stauncher than Peter Davidson but, unlike the other

¹ "Rose," written by Russell T. Davies and R. Shearman, *Doctor Who Volume 1*, (London: BBC, 2005)

Doctors, did not summon an affluent inflection from the south-east of England. With leather jacket and new accent in tow, the Doctor could reclaim credibility and popularity, confirming that ‘lots of planets have a North.’

Like the most evocative of cultural texts, *Doctor Who* not only provides an example or evidence, but a model for thinking (about) space and pop. Our goal for this *Nebula* article is to align mobility, urbanity and localism. Most significantly, we invert and shatter theories of art and challenge readers to admit embedded assumptions about urban musics. Commencing with a *Doctor Who* reference was intentional. It not only provides the title for the piece and its modality, but offers an unusual reference point to position our words in time, space and politics. Within creative industries policies, there is little time for the pretensions of ‘the arts’ as intrinsically bringing value and enrichment to the viewer or listener. The goal in the new economy is to facilitate the commodification of creativity through leveraging patents, copyrights and designs. This economy – often labeled after Charles Leadbeater’s description of *Living on thin air* – actively seeks out and markets that which is different, new, innovative and creative. The local and the regional are granted intercessionist roles to freshening the market and development of products. That is why The Doctor’s statement – ‘Lots of planets have a North’ – is deployed as a statement of difference and defiance, to acknowledge and celebrate a different way of living through urban spaces, and how these regions connect.

Much popular culture is complicit in compliance and acquiescence. Deviations from sameness and conformity are marked, labeled and judged. Tabloidization, the blurring of

news and entertainment, simplifies the demarcations of insiders and outsiders. In such an environment, specific cities and regions are spaces for the negotiation of difference. For Doctor Who, the notion of ‘the North’ signals not only separation and distinction, but a thread of connectiveness between regions. Charles Landry,² Justin O’Connor³ and Richard Florida,⁴ using distinct methods and agendas from each other, confirm the value of cities in enabling cultural diversity. Landry suggested that “there are special reasons for thinking about the problems of cities today in terms of creativity and innovation – or lack of it. Today many of the world’s cities face periods of transition largely brought about by the vigour of renewed globalization.”⁵ The corporate sameness of global cities initiates a search for marketed and marketable differences.⁶ If creativity is important,⁷ then the value of concepts, ideas, sounds and visions are more relevant than new banking outlets, corporate headquarters and innovative software platforms. The Doctor’s metaphoric North now has theoretical attention, economic power and cultural currency.

Our paper casts light on these ‘Norths,’ the often invisible or discounted places in the global economy—urbanity and mobility are aligned with the function of popular culture.

We ask why particular musics and cities are visible and popular at a specific time. Such a

² C. Landry, *The Creative City*, (London: Comedia, 2004; 2000)

³ J. O’Connor, “A special kind of city knowledge,” Paper for the Manchester Institution for Popular Culture, Manchester Metropolitan University, 2004

⁴ Richard Florida referred to “geography of creativity,” in *The rise of the Creative Class*, (London: Basic Books, 2002). He focused more closely on creativity and urbanity in *Cities and the Creative Class*, (New York: Routledge, 2004)

⁵ Landry, p. xiii

⁶ Christopher Madden, recognized the movement of arts terms into management theory in “Creativity and arts policy,” *Journal of Arts Management, Law and Society*, Vol.34, No. 2, Summer 2004.

⁷ We wish to note the ideological volatility of the term creativity. Christopher Madden stated that “creativity, long associated with the arts, is now a buzzword in other domains – most notably, in management theory and practice, in pop psychology, and in government innovation and creative industries policies,” from “Creativity and Arts Policy,” *Journal of Arts Management, Law and Society*, Vol. 34, No. 2, Summer 2004, p. 133

study is part of what Adam Brown, Justin O'Connor and Sara Cohen termed "place-based cultural policies."⁸ The case study used for our work is Perth in Western Australia. Often known as the most isolated capital city in the world, it is currently undergoing a musical boom, but with little cultural or creative industries policy support. This paper therefore initiates a study of how to connect second-tier – or non global – cities like Perth with other models for social and economic development, so that lessons can be learnt and effective policies developed. Commencing with an exploration of soundscapes, this study then moves into the specificities of the second-tier city and concludes with an affirmation of the value of sonic mobility between these urban environments. Following the Doctor, we value the metaphoric 'Norths' around the world for marking musical distinction and interceding in commodified sameness.

SuperCities

The time is right for a study of urban musics. New models are emerging that link cities spatially, politically and culturally. Will Alsop, in his vision of the North of England, constructed a 'SuperCity' straddling the M62 from Liverpool to Hull. This coast to coast zone is eighty miles long and fifteen miles wide. Alsop configured a geographically aligned super-city with motorways as the spine. He affirms that "I am local and regional. At last this duality of choice is eradicated and the life and environment outside the straight edges of this city is wild and natural."⁹ Alsop, in a model geographically limited by a motorway, does not capture the 'wild' mobility of sonic media. Theories require

⁸ A. Brown, J. O'Connor and S. Cohen, "Local music policies within a global music industry: cultural quarters in Manchester and Sheffield," *Geoforum*, Vol. 31, 2000, p. 437

⁹ W. Alsop, "Stately pleasure domes," from Will Alsop's *SuperCity*, (Manchester: Urbis, 2005), p. 12

ways to understand disorder, disconnection and movement that may not follow a gravelled path. When focusing on popular music, John Urry's realization about globalization is confirmed: it is "disordered, full of paradox and the unexpected."¹⁰ This focus on networks not structures¹¹ allows a tracking of social and economic patterning, crossings, interdependencies and creativities. A test case of these arguments from Urry and Alsop is Perth in Western Australia. Perth opens out the issues of local and global intercessions, crossings, connectiveness and competitiveness of music for international scholars.

Perth is currently undergoing musical success, but the lack of international connectivity and knowledge is the primary blockage of growth. The June 2004 cover of *Australian Vogue* proclaimed that Perth was the new Paris. *Vogue* located Perth's creative boom as a matrix of popular music, fashion, design, contemporary art, photography and architecture. Unfortunately, the Western Australian State Government was conservative rather than strategic in their policy initiatives. Neither the Contemporary Music Ministerial taskforce, which reported in September 2002,¹² nor the Premier's Fashion Industry Taskforce,¹³ which published its report in August 2003, validated this network of popular cultural industries and the relationship between cities. Perth has not managed this horizontal integration. Instead, the Department of Culture and the Arts ignored this alternative policy model in their 2004-7 Strategic Plan, to perpetuate "heritage funding"

¹⁰ J. Urry, *Global Complexity*, (Cambridge: Polity, 2003)

¹¹ This distinction is important. For Urry, structure implies "a centre, a concentration of power, vertical hierarchy and a formal or informal constitution," *ibid.*, p. 9

¹² *Making music: findings and recommendations of the Ministerial taskforce into contemporary music*, Department of Culture and the Arts, Perth, September 2002

¹³ *The Premier's fashion industry taskforce report*, Department of Premier and Cabinet, Government of Western Australia, August 2003

for the traditional Arts, and a grants-oriented approach for the rest. Three goals were put in place for the sector.

- A creative arts sector that provides scope for the creative development of individuals.
- A creative arts sector that provides opportunities for all Western Australians to experience the arts.
- A creative arts sector that is recognized as the hub of the creative industries and cultural sector.¹⁴

In this document, there was no mention of how spaces, places and sites create and frame popular music. Instead, creativity is individualized into ‘experiences’ and ‘pathways.’ In stressing the importance and specificity of Western Australia, there is a tendency to ignore the lessons and models of other cities. Cultural confidence easily spills into arrogance.

It is important to learn from other places but ArtsWA must make **decisions that are appropriate to the Western Australian community and our unique context**. For this reason it is essential that a core principle for Arts WA is consideration of the Western Australian community and the wider contexts of creative activity in Western Australia. The State has a small but diverse and relatively solid arts infrastructure base with steadily growing attendance and participation rates. We want an inclusive creative culture.¹⁵ (bold in original)

It is as if the changes to capitalism, city imaging and cultural policy have not touched Western Australia. Few international initiatives have crossed into the state. This active avoidance of alternative models for city music and funding streams is part of a desire to stress Perth’s intense specificity and differentiated local conditions. This tension can create a productive relationship between global brands and local cultures, developing

¹⁴ Championing Creativity, Department of Culture and the Arts, Government of Western Australia, http://www.dca.wa.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0014/8204/Championing_Creativity_2004-2007.pdf

¹⁵ *ibid.* p. 11

cultural heterogeneity.¹⁶ Culture and Arts policy in Western Australia had focused on insularity and protectionism, rather than initiating productive comparisons and sharing knowledge. The escape from this framework is to take the challenge of trans-city relationships seriously, with attention to building an intricate and successful sonic media community and urban soundscape. Many of the arguments encircling creative industries rely on local knowledge to develop workforces and encourage consumerism.¹⁷ Shaping city relationships is important to linking these localisms. In learning what has worked elsewhere, Perth's policy makers may be more prepared to take opportunities when presented. Before strategic plans can be developed, we must hear the sounds before we can write the policy. The intercessions of sound must be addressed before it is placed in a context.

Sounds through silence

There is no physical ability to terminate sound. We can only filter and translate. Eye lids close over eyes, but sounds continue to resonate. Sounds impress on and through the body and punctuate events without impunity. With the exception of smell, sound is the sense most closely bound to memory. Our internal translation of the soundscape that exists at any moment is reactive and unwritten, a spontaneous analysis continually adapting to the ebbs and flows of a shifting aural environment. There may be instinctual

¹⁶ This relationship was investigated by Craig Thompson and Zeyne Arsel in "The Starbucks Brandscape and consumers' (anticorporate) experience of globalization," *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 31, No. 3, December 2004, p. 631

¹⁷ Justin O'Connor stressed the importance of "local, tacit know-how – a style, a look, a sound – which is not accessible globally. Thus the cultural industries based on local know-how and skills show how cities can negotiate a new accommodation with the global market, in which cultural producers sell into much larger markets but rely on a distinctive and defensible local base," from "A special kind of city knowledge," paper for the Manchester Institute for Popular Culture, Manchester Metropolitan University, 2004, p. 2

responses to sounds of danger. An explosion summons sonic chaos. Discomfort is aroused through a cry or scream. Ambience or pastoral sounds soothe through order and symmetry. Sound enables the mapping of the immediate environment in terms of order and dysfunction. Through association, a place is sensed, and a sense is placed. When this association is moulded around and on an urban topography, a city soundscape can emerge.

There are difficulties in analyzing the sound of a city. Aural literacy lacks the sophistication of its visual counterpart. Understanding is associated with seeing and although Joachim-Ernst Berendt may argue for a “democracy of the senses,”¹⁸ the lack of universality in language, a key component in the aural experience, means that our signifiers are visual and in an increasingly mediated world, the eye retains dominance over the ear. To redress this imbalance requires exploration of soundscapes as private and public experiences, effecting personal identity and community development in an urban context. We summon a cityscape through sound.

The first step is to identify the components of an aural topography – how we hear – and then quantify and qualify this experience. There must be contextual and historical discussion of what differentiates sound from noise. If sound itself is the actual sensation of hearing, encompassing all aspects of that experience – arbitrary, capricious, and unqualified - then noise is subjective and requires interpretation and diagnosis. Noise denotes chaos - sound without sense - but also a consequential empowering through sound, an ability to disrupt or change the status quo. The traditional definition of music

¹⁸ J. Berendt, *The third ear*, (New York: Henry Holt, 1985), p. 32

confirms an expression through rhythm, harmony and melody, the systematic construction or ordering of sounds within historically-determined parameters. In a world of musique concrete, ambient Soundscapes and subsonic sound systems are a more permeable realm where the boundaries of sound, noise and music bleed, become ill-defined and non-exclusive. Music requires context. It can, through I-Pods, cell phones and walkmans, turn public into private space. In building a city image, this interface of public and personal domains translates an urban geography into a sonic representation.

If the interpretation of the visual world is restricted by physicality, then sound enables a transcendence of these corporeal boundaries. This three dimensional construction of locality through sound creates a wall of evidence for the audio realm as a sensory reinforcer. We need not see to imagine, but a visual references inevitably leads to more precise representation. Those in close proximity to an event like a car crash will see, hear and most likely smell the accident. Others some distance away may only hear the crash and use the sequential order of sounds to construct an imagined event. The visual sense infers authenticity. Aurality configures representation.

Soundscapes exist on a micro level, where the individual experience binds the aural terrain – a sonic locality, an audio snapshot which defines space through a representation of sound, some reinforcing the visual, others creating imagined landscapes. On a macro level, the physical and cultural landscape is defined through its associated sounds and we are able to map a grander, imagined aural landscape. Urban, suburban, rural – each landscape is represented through the collective senses. Although our reliance on the

optical means we marginalize the sound, smell and feel of a place, to construct an identity through sound heightens our perception of a region, a three dimensional representation often overlooked.

One method to unpick the ambiguity of soundscapes is to explore if and how cities have a sound. Sound may build a marketing and tourist profile for a region. New Orleans,¹⁹ Rio de Janeiro and London's Notting Hill have marketed themselves through parades, carnivals and sounds. From Balinese gamelan and Moroccan Jujuka, to Chicago house music and the techno of Sheffield and Detroit, locality is captured by sound. But this is a secondary association. The convergence of the social and economic are required for a soundscape to emerge. For example, Detroit and Sheffield's techno scenes emerged from the ashes of collapsing heavy industries, auto manufacturing and steel respectively. In both cases, these cities would have exhibited an earlier aural landscape, defined in part by the sound of urban industry. Similarly, the post-industrial infrastructure of Manchester was significant in the growth of cultural industries during the 1990s, which in turn strengthened the city's popular music identity. Beyond the industries, geographical determinism has an impact. A city such as Liverpool, synonymous with the beat explosion, profited from its port facilities and the vinyl palette of 1950s rock rolling onto its shores. A soundscape is also defined through time – specifically nostalgia for an earlier time – along with space. Race-based differences are significant. In New Orleans for example, the cultural clash between European, specifically French, and African

¹⁹ A fascinating but horrifying consequence of Katrina was the displacement of the city's musicians. Fats Domino was rescued from the city and others left for Memphis, Chicago and Detroit when confronted by the destruction of New Orleans. In terms of our current study, this tragedy also demonstrates the movement of city musics, creating not only mobility but hybridity between jazz, blues and electronica.

populations, produced hybridity and identifiable city sound. In Kingston Jamaica, the remnants of a colonial era offered an evocative infrastructure for the blossoming ska and reggae scene as “the Ambassador, the Palace, the Ward and the Majestic, enormous, stuccoed, wedding cakes of buildings, hangovers from the glory days of colonialism,”²⁰ became the location for ghetto parties. Thousands flocked to hear the massive sound systems on a nightly basis.

These specific factors – industrial, geographical and colonial - are instrumental in the development of aural associations with locality, but are only part of the pluralistic nature of how landscape and soundscape confers urban identity. Jamaica has developed a strongly identifiable synergy of sound and place. Patterns of migrancy and mobility, particularly in the United States and United Kingdom through the impact of postwar technology have fused in a politicized paradox of idyllic rural and impoverished urban surroundings. Manchester’s ‘sound’ owed much to a sophisticated media industry and embedded night time economy which provided an evocative context for the late 1980s ‘Madchester’ popular music boom.

It is only when we explore the gritty textures of city soundscapes do these qualities and anomalies become apparent. If cities exclude, then there are sonic consequences. If the barriers of language mean that the visual signifiers remain dominant, then soundscapes collapse. To be heard grants vindication and authenticity. The sound of a city comprises not only environmental, but also mediated constituents. To construct a representation of

²⁰ L. Bradley, *Bass Culture*, (London: Penguin, 2000) p.18

an urban landscape through sound must incorporate these variables to understand the musical potential of a city, through not only what we see, but hear.

Sounding the second tier

To label a city is to reify a city. It is more complex, but ultimately more rewarding, to open out labels to the intricate popular cultural layering of a city. Jane Jacobs stated that “designing a dream city is easy; rebuilding a living one takes imagination.”²¹ From a sports fan to tourist, from inner city resident to office worker, city imaging morphs and changes the history of the built environment. Sound attends these shifts and movements, and creative industry initiatives spatialize the economic and social changes. As Steven Tepper confirmed, “Automation in manufacturing has cut the demand for manual labor so young people are turning to the creative industries, which may offer an attractive lifestyle and above average economic rewards.”²² Such a linear narrative from primary to secondary and tertiary industries - facilitated by technology - is easy to present, but more complex to prove and track, particularly in popular cultural industries. At its most provocative and odd, the late Tony Wilson, founder of Factory Records and the Hacienda, along with his partner Yvette Livesey were hired as a creative consultant to regenerate Burnley. They published *Dreaming of Pennine Lancashire* in June 2005 with the goal of regenerating Blackburn, Darwen, Burnley, Hyndburn, Pendle and Rossendale. Like (too) many city planners, Wilson and Livesey cite Richard Florida.

²¹ J. Jacobs, cited in I. Hassan, “Cities in mind, urban world,” in M. Jaye and A. Chalmers Watts (eds.) *Literature and the urban experience*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1981), p. 97

²² S. Tepper, “Creative assets and the changing economy,” *The Journal of Arts Management, Law and Society*, Vol. 32, No. 2, Summer 2002, p. xv

Almost inevitably, the ubiquitous US guru of cultural regeneration, Richard Florida, gets a mention, though Wilson and Livesey cleverly anticipate the experts' groans. 'Please don't think the idea of name-checking Richard Florida is redundant for poor old east Lancashire,' the report chides. Florida discovered that the greatest thriving most moved-to bohemian town of the modern age is Seattle, they point out, and they are parallels with PL ... "It is only with this bohemian culture you create the living environment for the creative class – the only way forward for the old smokestack towns – and surely east Lancashire is the world repository of the smokestack town."²³

Perhaps Wilson was overstressing the attractiveness of Ramsbottom to 'young creatives.' While his plan was provocatively ambitious, it is significant to remember that Wilson was awarded an honorary degree from the Open University for his work on regeneration. He branded and marketed a musical city in Manchester, led by the iconography and impetus of Factory Records and the Hacienda.

Without the theoretical punctuation of Richard Florida, others have asked why particular cities have become associated with music. Peter Hook, signed to Factory and a one time co-owner of the Hacienda with Wilson, raised doubts about the simple relationship between music and space, rather than focusing on planning and policy.

Why the hell has Manchester got so many fantastic bands? I mean, the thing that amused me about Manchester was that they were saying there was this vanguard of bands from Manchester – the way that Manchester was going to save the world with bands like the Happy Mondays and The Charlatans, Inspiral Carpets, and I used to sit there and think, what is this crap? You look at Joy Division, New Order, The Smiths ... But as to why Manchester has so many bands, I've no idea. You could almost be vague enough to say that it must be something to do with the water, because there's no other bloody reason!²⁴

Something significant emerges musically in cities like Manchester, and it is not in the water. Peter Hook, bass player with Joy Division and New Order, expressed the problem

²³ H. Carter and T. Wilson, "Stacks of potential," *SocietyGuardian*, June 15, 2005, p. 2

²⁴ P. Hook from C.P. Lee's *Shake rattle and rain: popular music making in Manchester 1955-1995*, (Devon: Hardinge Simpole Publishing, Devon, 2002), p. 1

well. Particular places develop innovative sounds and rhythms, while others do not. Located outside the matrix of global cities (London-Paris-Madrid-Tokyo-Sydney-New York-Auckland), there are advantages in being excluded from the main musical game. Differences develop and quirky specificities thrive. The more difficult analytical exercise is to track how second cities 'talk' to each other – the urban intercession - trading differences on the monopoly board of commodified sameness. The great music cities – Seattle, Chicago, Manchester, Sheffield, Dunedin, Austin and Liverpool – are not capital cities of their respective nations. With all the creative, critical, institutional and economic attention focussed on London, Los Angeles, New York and Sydney bands, DJs and producers not resident in these centres can 'hide in the light,' developing a sound, skill base, and experience without preliminary pressure.

All cities share specific characteristics, with differences instigated through immigration, landscape and economic agendas.²⁵ Increasingly, as governmental policies aim to develop entrepreneurial rather than social welfare initiatives, cities are sites of consumption, not collectivised political struggle. Such attention to the marketing of place not only sells a city but aims to promote local economic development. These policy initiatives emerged in (post)industrial England, where it has been necessary to re-inscribe the landscape and permit new economic strategies to develop.²⁶ Sheffield, with its history locked into manufacturing and steel, moved from labour intensive older industries

²⁵ To monitor how these similarities and differences are studied, please refer to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada-funded project, 'Culture of Cities,' <http://www.yorku.ca/culture_of_cities>, May 10, 2005. Particularly, they are interested in researching the links and distinctions between Montreal, Toronto, Berlin and Dublin.

²⁶ Phil Hubbard researched this process for the city of Birmingham. Please refer to his 'Urban design and city regeneration: social representations of entrepreneurial landscapes,' *Urban Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 8, 1996, pp. 1441-1461

into digital and creative industries. Not only music production, but film making, publishing and the creative arts are part of the new Sheffield. Similarly, Manchester is a post-industrial city, matching rhetoric of the knowledge economy with a high concentration of Universities, academics and teachers,²⁷ and leisure facilities with successful sporting teams.²⁸ Germany's evocative network of cities - of Munich's sport, Hamburg's transportation, Bonn's administration, Berlin's politics, Frankfurt's finance district and Dusseldorf's music - convey the diversity and interconnectivity of urban cultures. Music has been used with great effectiveness to shift the imaging of various cities, and Perth's creative industries policy makers can learn from these examples.

Liverpool is an archetype of a beat-led recovery. Paul du Noyer's study of the city has seen the port as "more than a place where music happens. Liverpool is the reason *why* music happens."²⁹ This spatial determinant for musical success is always difficult to verify. The continual success of Liverpool's music even after the Merseybeat explosion in the 1960s demonstrates that specific social and economic relationships allow innovative music to develop. From Frankie Goes to Hollywood to Echo and the Bunnymen, from Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark to Atomic Kitten and the club Cream, the relationship between creativity and commerce has forged an environment for musical production. Ports facilitate the movement of people, goods, ideas and records.

²⁷ Moving from Salford University along the A6 corridor into central Manchester, there are three universities, the BBC and Urbis, along with The Lowry and the Imperial War Museum North.

²⁸ The sporting facilities include the City of Manchester Stadium, the National Squash Centre, the English Institute for Sports Development through to the two Old Traffords for the Lancashire County Cricket Club and the home of Manchester United.

²⁹ P. du Noyer, *Liverpool: wondrous place, music from Cavern to Cream*, Virgin Books, London, 2002, p. 1

Probably the finest book written on non global city music is Barry Shank's *Dissonant identities: the rock 'n' roll scene in Austin, Texas*.³⁰ It is comprehensive, ethnographic and sensitive to changing urban and rural relationships. Austin's music is characterised by a desire to work through the ambivalent meanings of Texas and being Texan. As Shank realised,

the rock 'n' roll scene in Austin, Texas, is characterised by the productive contestation between these two forces: the fierce desire to remake oneself through musical practice, and the equally powerful struggle to affirm the value of that practice in the complexly structured late-capitalist marketplace.³¹

What makes this study so important is that Shank adds new meanings and sites to the study of a music scene, including record stores, nightclubs, rehearsal rooms and streets. He also recognises the crucial role that student consumers play in the music industry, while confirming the absences, particularly in terms of dance music and culture.³²

Shank's study is a reminder of the scale, scope and complexity of a city's music. It is not – to repeat – Hooks' rationale that creativity is in some cities water. Instead, it is in the clubs, streets, record stores and universities.³³ In imagining and shaping the city, it is not only a question of moulding a physical environment or a policy to a soundscape, but there is a need to mobilize and market the social and economic past. James Donald notes that

³⁰ B. Shank, *Dissonant identities; the rock'n'roll scene in Austin, Texas*, Wesleyan University Press, Hanover, 1994

³¹ *ibid.*, p. x

³² Shank argued that disco and its derivatives never gained a strong presence in Austin because of the city's race-based history. The limited presence of an African-American culture constrained the success and relevance of disco and post-house musics.

³³ The role of universities must be noted here. Professor Geoffrey Crossick, upon being made the new warden of Goldsmiths College, stressed the importance of media studies, which Margaret Hodge, the former higher education minister, had described as 'Mickey Mouse courses.' Crossick stated that "what has always puzzled me about the whole thing is that the same people say that the creative industries are the most booming part of the economy." As the former chair of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport's task force on the creative industries, he confirmed that "The creative industries contribute more the UK's balance of trade than the pharmaceutical industry," *The Guardian*, June 14, 2005, p. 20

“the space we experience is the material embodiment of a history of social relations.”³⁴

In incorporating theories and models of contemporary urban landscapes, an assessment can begin in how cities best facilitate existing creativity to harness and enhance the cultural development and profile of musicians.

Hearing the spaces

Always design something to compare the design to.³⁵

Will Alsop

The key literacy of urbanity is not only understanding the limits of space, but also the ability to negotiate through that space. Interactions with the urban landscape are determined by boundaries and spatial expectations. Movements in rhythm and people raise questions of how to research city musics. Mobility always suggests compromise. Perth, like many contemporary cities, has developed around a state of auto-mobility and auto-dependency. The enormous freeway that cuts up the suburban landscape increases the awareness of classed differences. Sheller and Urry argue that this form of mobility decentres customary notions of citizenship, being “attached to the city, located in neighborhoods and associational spaces and rooted in the places of dwelling.”³⁶ Perth’s urban landscape is structured around the car, and the city’s design has adapted to this form of transport rather than the needs of pedestrians.

³⁴ J. Donald, *Imagining the modern city*, (Minneapolis: Minnesota Press, 1999), p. 13

³⁵ W. Alsop in K. Powell, *Will Alsop*, (London: Lawrence King Publishing, 2001), p. 37

³⁶ M. Sheller and J. Urry, “The city and the car,” in M. Miles and T. Hall and I. Brouden (eds.), *The City Cultures Reader*, (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 205

Perth's urban landscape can be compared to Los Angeles, whose cultural identity is tethered to the automobile and boasts half its city as being restricted to 'car only' zones. Ironically it is cities with identifiable public transport systems, such as Melbourne with trams, Chicago with the over-ground Loop and London's underground, that not only grant a cosmopolitan image but also cultural marketability. Perth has witnessed what Soja terms "urbanization of the suburbs,"³⁷ with the development of edge cities which are synonymous with the growth of the commodity capitalism they encourage. Sheller and Urry termed this "mall centred lives of consumerism that are popular hallmarks of this post-fordist, post-metropolitan outer city."³⁸

Musical networks move in and through such spaces. Jim Shorthose and Gerard Strange confirmed that "these independent artistic networks are composed of freelancers, the temporarily employed, sole traders and micro-businesses, and those who occupy a fluid position in relation to formal cultural economy, organizations and jobs."³⁹ These "portfolio careers"⁴⁰ are often part-time, flexible and based around the service sector. Creativity and mobility not only become the basis of productivity but a mask for the alienation of labour. Celebrations of the creative class are rarely caveated by the low income of many workers.

³⁷ E. Soja, "Exopolis: the restructuring of the urban form," in M. Miles, T. Hall and I. Brouden (eds.), *The City Cultures Reader*, (London Routledge, 2000), p. 454

³⁸ Soja, "Exopolis," p. 457

³⁹ J. Shorthose and G. Strange, "The new cultural economy, the artist and the social configuration of autonomy," *Capital and Class*, Vol. 84, 2004, p. 47

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p. 48

This mediated urban landscape is dominated by intersections, fly-overs, rapid response signs and billboards. This is Perth's legacy. The important variable to consider is how the city maps its creative industries and agencies to work with the existing urban structure and in tandem with the community to retain its talent and provide sustained growth for the city's future. Justin O'Connor provides a case for the development of cultural industries clusters.⁴¹ The aim of these clusters is to revitalize the urban economy and enable the city to return functions to the urban centre and transgress the industrial affiliation of work with the city and leisure with suburbia. For O'Connor, Manchester is an example of "the classic industrial district where clusters of small firms transform inputs into unique and competitive output."⁴² Such a model does not easily fit the Perth landscape which lacks the manufacturing legacy of 19th century Lancashire and the experience of rapid de-industrialization of the 1970s and 1980s Britain. His "spoke and wheel" model is based on a "satellite platform district"⁴³ made up of smaller clusters of cultural industries that develop along the lines of the city's existing infrastructure and patterns of urban mobility. The city – as a landscape, built environment and history – is a key resource. The value of clusters is to develop networks of collaboration and trust, while building on local knowledge.

The Perth music scene is perceived at this time through the international success of acts like Sleepy Jackson, Pendulum and Greg Packer to have global currency, but has actually received little support from the existing music infrastructure. There has even been a

⁴¹ J. O'Connor, "A special kind of city knowledge," Paper for the Institute for Popular Culture, Manchester Metropolitan University, 2004

⁴² *ibid.*, p. 9

⁴³ *ibid.*, O'Conner, p. 9

documentary released, titled *Something in the Water*. It is this recognition of Perth's position within the national and global economies and the ability to tap into niche markets which needs to be addressed through both local acknowledgement and a system of support to prevent a drain of creative talent. Such an issue is made more significant and indicative when comparing Perth to Pennsylvania. Patrick Jones realized that,

a major reason cited for Pennsylvania's inability to retain young workers is that its communities lack the types of lifestyle amenities to which they are attracted. Knowledge economy workers want to live in vibrant and diverse communities with lively arts scenes that are too rarely found in Pennsylvania.⁴⁴

Closeness to universities and touristic appeal has also been confirmed as a way to maintain young and creative workers, as has the importance of a vibrant music industry.⁴⁵

The promotion of creative industries requires city agents to be proactive in the development and tracking of creativity. How a city becomes 'creative' is not simply based on a formula that can be implemented at will and the results quantified. The plurality of cities, through location and history, means that the identifications of causes and origins are largely retrospective. Such tracking is made more complex when monitoring the passage of migrants.

Perth has, in the recent past, undergone not only considerable population growth, but also migration from overseas music communities, which have transformed the urban cultural makeup as a counterpoint to the city's geographical isolation. Unlike Great Britain, which experienced the shift from a largely manufacturing economy to a service economy

⁴⁴ P. Jones, "Music education and the knowledge economy," *Arts Education Policy Review*, Vol. 106, No. 4, March/April 2004, p. 5

⁴⁵ Pierre Fillion, Heidi Hoernig, Trudi Bunting and Gary Sands enacted a research project on the formulation of successful downtowns in the US and Canada. Please refer to "The successful few: healthy downtowns of small metropolitan regions," *American Planning Association*, Vol. 70, No. 3, Summer 2004.

via Thatcher's rapid deindustrialization, cities like Perth have changed more slowly, but have nonetheless seen transformations. With paid employment insecure, part-time and temporary, self employment becomes viable option. Often in the music industry, casual employment is the reality.

Attention to boundaries and movement prevents urban environments being exclusive, while simultaneously injecting an important dynamism into the local economy. In order for a city's music to work effectively, it must confront the legacies and inequalities in the past and find a way to manage and mark, label and commodify specificity. The musical city must be transparent and easily negotiable. Access should not be inhibited by the grounds of class, gender or race. The creative industry clusters around music, the arts and media sectors can network and build tacit knowledge to capitalize on niche markets and global trends. Yet there must be an openness to trans-local knowledge, not rigid national structures.

Deaf to difference

Perth has not learnt from these other musical cities, tacit knowledges and the subtleties of the soundscape. The music is mobile, but the policy makers remain locked in the local. On February 26, 2005, a panel of great and good music gurus, mostly from the other states of Australia, was summoned to Perth's Monkey Bar to offer expert testimony about independent music and the 'DIY Revolution.' All were old(er) white men. There were no immigrants included in the panel, let alone indigenous contributors. The lack of diversity in the panel – and the lack of recognition that this may be a problem – offered a

poignant insight into the sociology of rock management and the independent music sector.



Without shooting the sender, their message was narrow and damaging. Affirming a strong anti-corporate ethos, arguing – quite rightly – that major record labels have shareholders interested in profit, the motives and agenda of the Independent sector was not as clean as their confident opinions suggested. While stressing the great benefits of the independent companies to artists, their disrespect of the people who actually buy the music, attend the gigs and enjoy the performers seethed from the stage. While affirming democracy, equality and dialogue between label owners and performers, the demeaning of the audience was palpable. At one point, David Botica, CEO of AIR (the Association of Independent Record labels) referred to “the great unwashed” who buy records in supermarkets. The unquestioned elitism and disrespect of consumers, supposedly emerging from the democratizing initiative of independent music management, was ruthless and cutting. Emerging from a panel of white men, such commentary was even more offensive. Until Perth looks beyond Australia and national models of music, to grasp locality and mobility, such men will continue to be lauded and celebrated.

To develop city musics requires analytical subtlety in understanding the specificity of a sonic environment, while also deploying trans-local knowledge systems and comparisons. The great question remains how the conditions for creativity are fostered for economic growth and encourage diversity. The celebration of the new economy or the creativity industries rarely hints that the effort and attention required in the development of policy, planning curriculum development or creative pedagogy. Cities not only provide a context, but a gateway and a brand. Musical cities transform a landscape into a sonic, mobile and diverse soundscape. By hearing difference, by validating the intercessions of sound, there may be a chance to make a difference. If Doctor Who can move beyond the Home Counties, then perhaps finally record executives and policy makers can rediscover and align the metaphoric North in every nation, region and city.