

7.3. Local scenes, conditions of music making and neoliberal city management - a case study of Hamburg, Germany

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Abstract

In recent years, city governments became actively involved in reorganization of (existing) artistic milieus, including spaces of local art and music scenes. However, effects of accelerated gentrification, restructuring of 'creative' quarters and privatisation of urban space often miss the intended effects. Interventions turn out to be rather hindrances than fostering instruments for artistic practices and scene activity. In this context, the paper examines how local scenes and conditions of music making are affected by ongoing changes, and how city policies influence the development of local scenes. The case of Hamburg therefore represents strong top-down planning by municipality on one hand and struggling bottom-up movements of scenes and social/cultural initiatives on the other. Based on empirical data, research illustrates current conditions of music making and the possible changes of the relationship between the local scenes and their spatial/social environment. Findings raise questions for further investigation related to three major problems.

Keywords: music making, local scenes, urban restructuring, city politics, conditions of cultural production, urban planning

Introduction

Cities are major places of cultural production as well as the emergence and development of (local) music scenes. Therefore, urbanity offers a unique set of resources. On social and cultural level, it highlights a spatial concentration of different identities, lifestyles and genres; on economic and institutional level, city space contains dense networks of cultural/creative industries and music venues (Barber-Kersovan, 2007; Hartley, 2005; Krätke, 2002; Di Maggio, 1991; Cohen, 2007). On spatial level, there has been open space for artistic and subcultural activity especially since the 1970s (a.o. Reckwitz, 2012). All in all cities provide a particular set of cultural conditions – an environment where artistic creativity as part of cultural production can unfold (Kirchberg, 2010).

But what happens, if these resources – especially the availability of open space - get scarce?

The ongoing discourse about creativity and urban restructuring as consequences of globalization and socio-economic highlights the significance of cultural and creative practices in terms of symbolic as well as economic value (Sassen, 1996; Zukin, 1995; Pratt, 2011). Since the late 1990s, local artistic practice and scenes got more and more into the focus of urban planning and city administration (Reckwitz, 2012; Barber-Kersovan, 2007). Situated in the

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context of local music making and urban development, this paper focuses on consequences of current city development and strategic urban planning of music making and local scenes in the city of Hamburg. Since the city government and the urban planners orient themselves predominantly on Florida's concept of the Creative City and neoliberal city policy (Florida, 2002; Häußermann/Siebel, 2008), the situation there is of particular interest. The clue is that on one hand the city government discovered 'urban music' as a way to 'sell' its ideas about the Creative City through music related city marketing, structural creative industries support and erecting of spectacular flagship-projects such as the building of a monumental concert hall called Elbphilharmonie. But on the other hand this strategy led to considerable tensions: In contrast to the image-design as used by the top-down city planners, local scenes and bottom-up movements as breeding grounds of cultural production are being ignored.

In order to understand the city's inherent processes, the following questions have to be taken into account:

- What is the situation of the producers of cultural and musical artefacts like? How are their working conditions? In which way spaces of music making and local scenes are affected by urban planning?
- In which way contradictions of the Creative City like state authorized gentrification and the instrumentalisation of arts and culture (a.o. Pratt, 2011) become evident?
- And, as a consequence: Are there specific changes of the relationship between musicians/local scenes and 'their' city? How do artists and scenes react to changes of their social and spatial environment?

After a short summary of theoretical considerations, the paper presents first empirical results about effects of urban planning on musicians and music networks in Hamburg. The discussion of current findings then raises questions for ongoing further research.

Theoretical framework

The conceptual framework of the study follows three theoretical strands. The first one examines the current state and the dynamics of music making and music production of individual (musician) and collective (scene/network) cultural producers. The second one illustrates different concepts and findings related to the postindustrial city. It discusses different concepts of city space, current urban development and municipal government structures. The third strand combines issues of locally based music making with the specifics of city space in order to provide the background for empirical work.

Current states of music making

On structural level, the work of Howard Becker illustrates the collective organization of cultural production by situating the musician in the centre of cooperative networks (Becker, 1982). These networks include also supportive players and institutions in and alongside the musical field (from instrument manufacturing to music distribution). Thus, the conditions and the development of music production are not only shaped by immanent dynamics in the field: Following Peterson's 'Production of Culture' approach the conditions of music production are characterized by at least six interwoven facets: law and regulation, technology, industrial structure, organizational structure, occupational careers and markets (Peterson, 1990).

During the last 20 years, effects of technological development and digitalization caused fundamental changes in the logics of production (Smudits, 2008). They include major transformation in the system of music distribution and the weakening of the gatekeepers, the rise of creative and symbolic economies as well as changes regarding the artistic, technological, economic and professional skills on the individual level of the musicians (Gensch/Bruhn, 2008; Lange et al., 2014; David, 2010; Wikström, 2013). As a consequence, musicians are more and more considered as creative workers (facing expectations for creative output) than as artists (Raunig, 2007; Currid, 2007; Scott, 2012), though they are facing precarious living and working conditions (Abbing, 2004; Lloyd, 2006).

But despite the general trend towards rational work and cultural entrepreneurship (Scott, 2012; Hracs et al. 2011), musicians (still) stress the symbolic meaning and cultural identity as major motives of their artistic practice (Coulson, 2012; Negus, 1997; Connell/Gibson, 2003). Hence, on one hand musicians are facing increasing degrees of fluidity – between artist and entrepreneur, professional and amateur as well as between artistic practice, corporate expectations and (socio-)economic pressure. On the other, social and cultural capital persist to be the crucial factors of music making and production.

Collective forms of production like subcultures, scenes and networks represent an important resource of social capital. In these social formations, members combine similar taste patterns, values and symbolic meanings as common ground of music making and reproduction of collective identity (Bennett-Peterson 2004; Currid, 2007; Grimm 2014).

Therefore, the majority of scenes and music communities share basic production logics and social activities. Among others, this include the significance of face to face contact, spatial proximity, informal peer evaluation of each other's work, available spaces and venues for scene events, meeting points etc. (Bennett/Peterson, 2004; Negus, 1997; Krims, 2014; Pratt, 2005; Hracs et al. 2011). Hence, the partnership of certain number of people with similar thoughts and preferences, the social exchange and the availability of space can be considered as constitutional aspects of music making. As mentioned above, urbanity therefore offers best possible preconditions.

Dynamics of the postindustrial city

The second theoretical strand concerns the conceptualisation of current dynamics and developments of the city as a spatial and social entity. Since the 1970s the following factors of urban restructuring and city politics became more and more prominent: culturalisation (Reckwitz, 2012; Häußermann/Siebel, 2008), effects of global competition between cities (Sassen, 1996) and the concept of the postindustrial city as a Creative City (Florida, 2002; Landry, 2000; Pratt, 2011) or Neoliberal City (a.o. Mattissek, 2008).

Within this framework, the multipresent internal processes of urban development have to be further illustrated. First, this include specific locational characteristics, city politics and urban planning (Häußermann/Siebel, 2008). Second, different forms of urban governance as well as alternative ways of negotiating the direction of urban development have to be discussed. In general, Reckwitz identifies three modes of urban government: The hierarchic (top-down) planning without any references to existing structures, the indirect steering, e.g. interventions into existing structures, and the self-governance, which proceeds without any administrative interventions in cultural processes (Reckwitz, 2012). Thus, in combination there are many conceivable configurations of urban development processes, from strategic top-down interventions, aiming for the 'building' of a Creative City with focus on economic development

to self-development, carried out by civil social actors. Since social activity and urban planning are intertwined and connected to specific physical and social spaces, following Löw (2008) it could be argued that cultural resources as well as the cultural players can be affected by urban development processes.

Therefore, space is a decisive element in urban discourses. City space cannot be considered just as a container but as a dynamic field, where social actors permanently bargain social and cultural exchange and define spatial constellations of social groups and institutions (Löw, 2008). Space is an “organisational form of co-existence” (ibid.) – hence, the production and handling of space is – like music making – a social process. Regarding space more profoundly, we have to differentiate between physical space (firstspace), imaginative space (associations, image of specific city space, secondspace), and the interpretation and evaluation of specific urban developments and conflicts (thirdspace) first (Soja, 2000). According to this model, space appears as a material and at the same time also immaterial resource of cities – as well as field of conflict and negotiation. In a similar way Lefèbvre (Löw et al., 2007) differentiates between the spatial practice as every day experience, the representation of space as a conceptualized form of planning, and the representational space as symbolic value and expression. Following Lefèbvre, city space appears in pragmatic, rational and expressional ways. Concluding, city space contains complex social processes and offers multiple potentials of identification as well as rational treatment. Space is an important factor of urban development and at the same time strongly affected by urban planning and policy interventions. As a material and immaterial resource, it is also important for urban music making.

Cities and the local context of music making

The relationship of music making and the city is based on spatial aspects of cultural production. As mentioned above, one can presume that cities are centers of music making and music production (as well as consumption). But cities are not just a spatial frame, where musical processes take place. There are multiple exchanges between the city as spatial and social entity and music (Kirchberg et al., 2014). Musicians use spatial resources, e.g. potentials for (collective) identity, local knowledge and particular stories about the ‘local’, and multiple forms of cultural and social experience (Bennett, 2004). Specific constellations, e.g. a certain number of people sharing similar values and tastes or availability of open space, represent production contexts, where local scenes can emerge and develop (Bennett/Peterson, 2004; Grimm, 2005; 2014). Within this process, scenes unite cultural symbols and space. They produce locality by physical and symbolic markings (Löw, 2001). In this context, a spatial concentration of scene members, venues and institutions represent physical markings. Mental representations of music like Mersey Beat, Hamburg School and Detroit Techno form a rather virtual connection of specific images and symbolic values between music and space.

Regarding current processes of city development, aspects like images and symbolic values are becoming more and more important (Zukin, 1995; Reckwitz, 2012). Urban planning tends to concentrate on cities’ economic growth and the recruiting of tourists and high educated labour force (Reckwitz, 2012). In this context, cities apply strategic top-down planning, focusing on creative industries and exploiting musical images as factors of attractiveness (Barber-Kersovan, 2007). In many cases, these trends are accompanied by processes of privatisation, eventisation, and festivalisation (Häußermann/Siebel, 2008).

As a consequence, strategies of urban planning affect social and spatial formations of the city and also local contexts of music production. The following analysis assumes, that processes of urban music making are influenced on three levels – individual (musicians), collective (scenes, networks, spaces) and institutional – and will try to clarify in which way the relationship between scenes and musicians and the city is changing in the case of Hamburg.

The case of Hamburg: empirical results

The city of Hamburg

Hamburg is the second largest city in Germany (1.8 mio. inhabitants), situated in the North of the country. Historically, it has a long tradition as a trading town and as an important seaport. It is also renowned for the Reeperbahn, today an inner-city (mass) entertainment quarter that used to be a rather degenerated red light district next to the harbour where cultural scenes and subcultures flourished during the 1970s and 80s. Until the mid 1990s, Hamburg represented the German centre of music production and music industry. Since then, this role has been more and more taken over by Berlin and the city's significance for the music industry in general and the local music in particular shrank (Grimm, 2014; Krätke, 2002; Wirtschaftsbehörde Hamburg, 2000).

Facing this deficiency, the fostering of creativity and the creative industries became important issues for the local government and its cultural policy. During the 2000s, the town administration induced strategic efforts to implement the significance and the image of Hamburg as a 'Creative (Music) City' (Kuchar, 2014). Therefore, the majority of interventions focuses on the structural creative industries support and landmark projects like the Elbphilharmonie, a consulting agency (Kreativgesellschaft) devoted to entrepreneurs in the creative sector and - as the last joint in value chain of musical production - a special building called Karostar, accommodating start-up firms and small corporations.² Next to these interventions strongly geared to recent concepts of creativity and the 'Creative City' (Florida, 2002; Landry, 2000), impacts of postmodern city policy (Häußermann/Siebel, 2008; Reckwitz, 2012) are increasingly evident: The local government aims for economic growth and focuses on the production and exploitation of symbolic values and images. Examples like the eventisation of the Reeperbahn area (Schlagermove, Harley-Days, Cruise-Days) and other parts of the city (International Building Exhibition, International Horticultural Show at Wilhelmsburg) clearly depict culture orientated strategies of urban planning. In addition, intensive privatisation of city space has led into strong economic revalorization and gentrification of 'subcultural' districts like St. Pauli, Eimsbüttel, Altona and beyond. The dominance of top-down planning processes with little regard to local scenes and networks is obvious.

Empirical analysis

In order to clarify the current conditions of music making and the affects of urban planning on musicians and local scenes an empirical study was carried out. The following summary of the results is based on a secondary analysis of an online-questionnaire interviewing musicians,

² See www.karostar.de; www.kreativgesellschaft.org; <http://marketing.hamburg.de/Musikmetropole-Hamburg.155.0.html>; www.elbphilharmonie.de/epaper/Imagebroschuere/epaper/pdf (18.06.2014).

and a number of guided interviews with different players of the local scene.³ Other resources for research, especially about local cultural policy, are taken from official publication, existing studies and expertise, newspaper articles and own observations of the perceived changes of the town.⁴ The intention of this analysis is to identify major problems and important interrelations between different local actors, their spatial and social environment and local governance/ urban planning.

A number of empiric findings coincide with the results of other European, Anglo-American and Australian studies (Coulson, 2012; Hracz et al. 2011; Lloyd, 2006; Scott, 2012; Currid, 2007). In Hamburg, musicians and members of different scenes highlight social and cultural capital as important local resources of music making. These mostly derive from local communities and networks. On individual as on collective level, spatial aspects of scene activity are significant: Like in other cities, e.g. Greenwich Village in New York (Currid, 2007) or Wickers Park in Chicago (Lloyd, 2006), there are specific areas, where the density of musicians is high above average. In Hamburg, the western inner city – especially the districts Altona, (Southern-)Eimsbüttel and St. Pauli show a high concentration of musicians living and working there. These specific quarters used to offer a multicultural social environment and an affordable space to live. Some places, such as the still existing alternative cultural center Rote Flora were captured by squatting in the 1980s and 90s. In this environment, local music scenes like the Hamburg HipHop and the so called 'Hamburg School', clubs and meeting points could emerge and develop (Grimm, 2005, 2014; Birnkraut, 2006; Creative Quartiere, 2011).

Like in other cities, urban development in Hamburg – as a result of urban planning and city policy – affects musicians and local scenes on several levels. At first, considerable spatial restriction induced by structural revalorization and effects of gentrification represents hindrances for scene activity (see also Currid, 2007; Hracz et al., 2011; Lloyd, 2006; Holm, 2010; Empire St. Pauli, 2009). For example, almost half of the individuals questioned mentioned the absence of available rehearsal possibilities as a major deficit, especially in the districts St. Pauli, Altona and parts of Eimsbüttel. Available rehearsal space gets more and more scarce and expensive (about 7-8€ per m² per month)⁵. The increase in prices for lodging is even more striking: In 2010 rents for flats in St. Pauli were 50% more expensive than during the mid 1990s (Andre, 2009) For musicians, housing – not to speak of settling – has become hardly affordable. Additional, due to the ongoing changes in the field of music production and distribution there are inherent problems like the shrinking of performances and hard competition for recognition and distribution support. On an individual level, musicians are under economic pressure.

On collective and institutional level, the commodification of space affects small clubs, arts centres and other scene venues (Twickel, 2010; Creative Quartiere, 2010). Many venues, among them Tanzhalle, Schilleroper, Molotow or Hasenschaukel are threatened or already

³ The online questionnaire was part of the study 'Wer macht in Hamburg Musik?' (Creative Quartiere 2009) which was conducted in 2009. Sample size of musicians surveyed by online questionnaire contents 362 cases across different musical styles and genres. Interviews with players of the local music scene (2009-2013) feature information from 20 different experts: musicians, music associations, labels, music schools, the university of music and theatre, and insiders of different music scenes.

⁴ Among others, these are expertises on Hamburg as location for music (Birnkraut 2006), creative milieus (Overmeyer 2010), music clubs (Creative Quartiere 2010) and official papers of city government (Hamburger Bürgerschaft 2008).

⁵ In comparison to a former study of musicians in Hamburg by Schneider (2001) this represents an increase of 30% within 10 years.

had to close down. Moving and re-opening a club in another location often fails due to unaffordable prices. Buildings are more and more owned by private investors. Spaces offered by the city are subjected to economic regulations as well – properties have to be profitable and rents have to be paid - experiments and ‘purposeless’ of artistic work and the social interaction as basic preconditions of artistic creativity are getting more and more limited. Hence, spatial practices of local scenes are getting restricted – and as consequence social processes of cultural production as well. Due to ongoing changes, density and spatial proximity of the local scenes in Hamburg is increasingly vanishing – the break up and displacement of scene structures, as Elizabeth Currid (2007) identified in New York becomes more and more likely.

But despite of these similarities, one of the key finding stands in harsh contrast to the outcomes of other studies (like e.g. Hracs et al., 2011; Lloyd, 2006). In Hamburg, there seems to be a strong (emotional) bond between musicians and the city in which they live and work. Empiric results speak for a very high degree of local identification and emotional relation between the artists as well as the local scenes and ‘their’ spatial environment. Many statements of musicians and artists are related to Sharon Zukin’s (2010) statements about “authentic places”. This is remarkable, because an overall evaluation of musical life in in Hamburg appears as negative – by individual musicians as well as by other actors of local scenes. Thus, the relationship between local cultural producers and ‘their’ city seems to be stable despite of decreasing resources and disadvantageous preconditions for artistic activity caused by strategic urban development. In Hamburg, musicians and local scenes even struggle against eventisation, gentrification and instrumentalisation of arts and culture (Kirchberg/Kagan, 2013). Due to this fact, results dismiss the assumption about rather rational, cost-orientated relations between the musicians and space – as Hracs (et al., 2011) certifies in the case of Toronto.

Hence, the relationships between scenes/musicians and the city space have to be regarded more differentiated. Important aspects are resources of locality (Bennett, 2004; Conell/Gibson, 2003), feelings of authenticity (Zukin, 2010), the availability of social capital and network structures as well as social, economic and spatial dynamics of local urban development. The different levels of relationships represent varying constellations between scenes and other municipal actors who negotiate constitutional factors and resources of cultural production, e.g. between the ‘growth machine’(Kirchberg, 1998), local politics and scenes, between scenes and space as well as modes of governance and the possibilities of participation. Thus as implications for my ongoing research, three major constellations and fields of negotiation will be discussed below.

Discussion: negotiating relationships between scenes and city space

The short summary of empirical analysis shows, that on one hand there are existing tensions between the city’s urban planning and the sector of cultural production. On the other, there is a strong bond between individual musicians, scenes and ‘their’ city. In order to open a more detailed view on underlying reasons, social action of local actors and interrelations between them, the discussion of three major fields of problems completes the paper.

Local scenes and the 'urban growth machine': differing poles of 'creativity'

Tensions between local scenes and city policies widely base on different concepts of cultural production and creativity. In this context, the discourse about cities and 'creativity' often lack suitable definitions of the term discussed - in many cases 'creativity' remains a black-box concept (Kirchberg, 2010). From a theoretical point of view, there are at least two different poles of creativity: on one side there is artistic creativity (purposeless, individual, playing), on the other there is creativity as innovation – a rational, on output and economic exploitation orientated understanding (Bröckling, 2007; Amabile, 1996; Kirchberg, 2010). Within the continuum between these poles, where artistic and economic aspects intermingle, the degree of economic rationality constitutes a crucial factor of definition. While artists highlight social resources and constellations as preconditions of creativity (Frith, 2014), local authorities focus on creative output as symbols for local amenity (Kirchberg, 2010).

Urban planners in Hamburg – and obviously also local authorities – define creativity as an important economic resource (Hamburger Bürgerschaft, 2008; Freie und Hansestadt Hamburg, 2006). Policy interventions aim for creating or exploiting images of the city, attract potential, high educated new habitants as well as tourists in order to ensure the city's economic growth. Therefore, they also utilise physical and symbolic markings of scenes, but neglect spatial and social environments fostering artistic inspiration and scene activity. „Art and culture operate in a social milieu, and thus one of the most important policy directions should be to cultivate and support the environment in which they thrive“ (Currid 2007: 462). In this sense, the case of Hamburg so far illustrates the contradictions of the creative city, exploiting symbolic meaning and decreasing resources of cultural production at once (Pratt, 2011). So, further research aims for a more detailed analysis of conceptional misunderstanding among different local actors. In which way there are gaps in local authorities' knowledge of creativity as a result of social constellations and as a totality of specific local resources?

Local scenes and city space: spatial differentiation, mobility and limitations of space

As mentioned above, each city represents a unique set of social and spatial constellations. Regarding cities, movements of musicians and scenes within or between cities caused by spatial restrictions or displacement are obvious (Heinen, 2013; Hracz et al., 2011; Currid, 2007). In this sense, scene activity often moves away from places of (mass)consumption (Grazian, 2004). Thus, there is a kind of spatial segmentation of urban musical life. Regarding Nashville, Lloyd (2014) differentiates spaces of music consumption (inner city entertainment), music industry and production (scene) as functional areas according to categories legacy (consumption), market (industry) and scene activity (production).

In Hamburg, there is no spatial differentiation of musical life at all. In contrast, especially spaces of consumption (Reeperbahn as entertainment district) and scene strongly overlap. Further, a central precondition of scene mobility within the city – the availability of open space – is hardly given. Hence, scene activity seems to be captured in a more and more commodified spatial environment. In some other case, the lack of affordable space is a main reason for musicians to leave a city (Hracz et al. 2011). In Hamburg, most of musicians/ scene players stay in town and a considerable number of them even struggle against effects of local urban development. Thus, further investigation of the relationship between musicians/scenes and the specific spatial context in Hamburg is required. What are the reasons for the strong bond

towards the city? What are the most important local resources? And, due to the ongoing developments: In which way local actors describe the relation between first-, second and thirdspace?

Local scenes and city politics: top-down planning versus participation

In Hamburg, self-governed establishment and self-determined production of space by local scenes has changed into strategic top-down planning during the 2000s (Grimm, 2005; 2014). Since then, municipal interventions thrive mistrust and resistance against city government and urban planning among local scenes and inhabitants (Empire St. Pauli, 2009). Though, strong local involvement of musicians/scene members offers potentials for assistance in urban planning processes. Artists as well as multiple players of local scenes form considerable parts of (bottom-up) network 'Right to the City', which consists of 60 artistic, political and social urban initiatives (Kirchberg/Kagan, 2013). The network demands more open space and political participation. Members protest against decreasing of cultural resources, privatisation of space and accelerated gentrification (Empire St. Pauli, 2009; Kirchberg/Kagan, 2013). To a certain extent, the network successfully creates an awareness of the important role of local cultural production and scene activity. Examples like the Gängeviertel – a block of historic buildings squatted by artists and then rebought by the city from a private investor and now is a self-governed art collective⁶ – show, that even parts of city government seem to understand the needs of local scenes and artists.

Though, it is questionable if such municipal commitment bases on true conviction. In this case, city government was under pressure not only by local initiatives but also by prominent national media. Specific problems of the cities' art scene abruptly got into broad public attention and the city had to react in a way to not damage its image as a tolerant and cultural innovative city.

But in which way city policy handles smaller, rather invisible problems? In this sense, visibility of scenes (in contrast to mainstream-events) seems a considerable factor of perception and awareness among local politics (Straw, 2014). In this context, further research has to explore the status of culture and local scenes among the local authorities. What does local government actually know about scenes and scene activity? Is there a chance to integrate cultural producers in urban planning processes?

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⁶ <http://das-gaengeviertel.info> (14.05.2014)

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