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Music: Leeds - Supporting a Regionalised Music Sector and Scene

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ABSTRACT

The following chapter discusses a range of strategies and initiatives that have been employed across the city of Leeds (UK) with a critical introduction of the ways in which models from other European cities, feedback and opinion from music professionals, consultation from government officials in Leeds and guidance documents from professional bodies and global consultancy agencies have been implemented in the development of the city's dedicated and independent organization Music:Leeds. The chapter discusses some of the strategies that have been implemented so far to stimulate music activity around Music:Leeds' three core areas of activity: Creative Development & Business Growth; Placemaking & Tourism; Access to Music and concludes with an assessment of these strategic developments to date.

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the last two decades, local authority and city governance have: 'expressed a growing interest in placing culture at the core of urban development strategies' (UN, 2015). Culture is used as part of urban regeneration strategies to: 'create a new cosmopolitan image. In an atmosphere of growing interurban competition, increasing mobility of capital and the waning importance of physical location factors, cities now profile themselves by investing in the cultural and creative sectors' (Van der Hoeven & Hitters 2019: 263). Popular music, and the activity that surrounds it, has become a significant part of these culture-led regeneration strategies (Ross, 2017) where music events for example are used to help cultivate inclusivity, promote social cohesion or to reinvigorate urban spaces (Cohen, 2013; Holt and Wergin, 2013). As an extension of one-off or a series of curated events, a 'Music City' is a term that describes an urban environment that has the ideal conditions to take advantage of the cultural and musical fabric to support and nurture its musical economy (Baker, 2017; Terrill, Hogarth, Clement, and Francis, 2015). A 'Music City' emphasises elements of creative development & business growth, placemaking & tourism, access to music-making and music events as well as supporting the existing music scene.

Since the formation of Berlin's Club Commission in 2001, and following the dissolution of Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) in 2012, UK local government's remit has expanded to include the stimulation and support of regionalised music sectors and scenes. These support opportunities have taken different forms such as sector-led initiatives and government imposed leadership structures in order to improve aspects of the music economy such as protecting a city's night time economy and developing access to music education and a link to the wider skills agenda. Some UK cities have formulated City Region Music Boards (i.e London, Greater Manchester, Liverpool and Sheffield) to help provide a more formal and unified strategy to influence music policy and provide consultancy on a local level and implement a regional music strategy. The city of Leeds however, which is situated in the North of England, originally developed a dedicated culture strategy alongside the region's proposed bid to become European Capital of Culture in 2023. In light of the UK's imminent exit from the European Union, and subsequently the disqualification of Leeds from the bidding process, Leeds City Council declared 2023 as a year of culture with a determined approach to improve its arts and culture offering. In addressing music as part of this offering, Leeds City Council consulted with the newly formulated independent organisation 'Music:Leeds', which has now undertaken a strategic partnership with Leeds City Council in establishing programs with funding from national bodies including Arts Council England and PRS Foundation, as well as wider support from other major music industry bodies such as UK Music and Association of Independent Music.

The following chapter discusses a range of strategies and initiatives that have been implemented across the city of Leeds (UK) with a critical evaluation of the ways in which models from other European cities, feedback and opinion from music professionals, consultation from government officials in Leeds and guidance documents from professional bodies and global consultancy agencies (i.e. Sound Diplomacy and the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry) have been implemented in the development of the city's strategy to stimulate music activity around Music:Leeds' three core areas of activity: Creative Development & Business Growth; Placemaking & Tourism; Access to Music.

2. CONTEXT

A city's Creative and Cultural Economy (CCE) has been defined as: 'any human activity that embodies symbolic meaning or is shaped by cultural factors that can be construed as contributing to the cultural vitality of the city' (Hutton 2004, p. 91). Musical activity is therefore part of a broader creative sector that includes the Arts, design, fashion and bespoke manufacturing (Baird & Scott, 2018) but forms a fundamental part of the global CCE agenda. Live music in particular is a central focus for development within numerous city and local authority CCE strategies because it is a significant contributor to the urban cultural economy. For example, the economic value of live music in the UK accounts for almost 25% of the music industry's £4.5 billion contribution to the UK economy (UKMusic, 2018: 8). City and local authorities on the whole have come to recognise that music activity and specifically live music is a crucial indication of a city's cultural and economic vitality, a city's attractiveness as a place to live, and an important stream of employment for modern musicians and occupations that

support music-making in a digital era (Holt, 2010).

Strategies around emphasising the creative sectors of a city have taken many forms over the lifespan of their implementation but have typically centred upon urban live music policy (Behr, Brennan, & Cloonan, 2016; Evans, 2009; Gibson & Stevenson, 2004; Hudson, 2006). Some policies around music activity in cities have been shown to be part of a broader cultural strategy (Hutton, 2009; O'Connor & Shaw, 2014) or formed part of an approach to address noise, gentrification or zoning of the night-time economy within a local authority's urban planning policy (e.g. Gibson & Homan, 2004; Homan, 2008; Homan, 2010; Homan, 2014; Strong, Cannizzo, & Rogers, 2017). There are CCE policies that are often arguably 'neo-liberal economic policies rather than cultural policies' (Atkinson & Easthope, 2009, p. 69). For example, strategies that sideline creators and artists, emphasise short-lived rather than sustainable cultural activities, or creating further precariousness in an already precarious labour market, are indicators of a neo-liberal economic approach that overlook the interconnected cultural factors beyond the purely economic (Koefoed, 2013; Pratt, 2008; Scott, 2006; Vivant, 2013; Zukin, 1987). Consequently, there are differing approaches to designing and implementing CCE strategies and this is often because different actors such as policy makers, consultancy firms and music industry support organisations have differing views and interests when emphasising the importance of live music within these CCE strategies.

Despite these differences, a number of common approaches, methods and policies have been implemented across the world to create 'Music Cities' in which 'hard' and 'soft' institutional policies are introduced to support live music activity. For example, as part of a $45million grant, the national music funding body of Canada (Music Canada) developed a series of short-term, medium-term and long-term strategies in which music was integrated with the connected areas of tourism, heritage, city development and urban planning for the city of Toronto (City of Toronto Strategic Plan, 2016; Hracs, 2009). Live music activity is supported through 'hard' institutional policy which relates to issues of noise for live music venues/zones within new or existing urban developments and 'soft' institutional implementation in which a dedicated live music office was set up as a central point of contact for musicians, venue owners and promoters to access information relating to: 'noise attenuation, liquor licensing, and building code issues. Here government departments, music businesses and non-profit music related entities share space, ideas and strategies at one location' (Baird & Scott, 2018: 3).

The city of Brisbane in Australia is a unique within its country because it has ring-fenced the Fortitude Valley area of the city as a dedicated entertainment precinct (Burke & Schmidt, 2013), which has been described as: 'a bohemian enclave of creative arts, music and culture' (Baird & Scott, 2018: 3). In order to preserve the area's character, Brisbane City Council designed the 'Valley Music Harmony Plan' (Valley Sound Machine, 2004) that allowed the council to monitor noise levels, implement specific plans for infrastructure and deploy more effective approaches for policing. Hard institutional policy included notifying potential residents to the area to expect above average noise levels and implementing compulsory soundproofing and additional noise attenuation measures for new residential builds (Baird & Scott, 2018).

Finally, Nashville in the United States has already established itself as a Music City and the 'Home of Country Music' but in the face of the economic effects of gentrification and culture-led urban renewal, The Mayor's office of Nashville has taken a hard and soft institutional approach. Firstly, it has created a merchant advisory group that comprises of representatives from government, business, non-profit organisations and the heritage and tourism sectors. The advisory grouped labelled 'The District' focuses on areas and/or buildings of particular cultural significance to the city of Nashville and strives to extend heritage status to them (The District, 2015). Secondly, Nashville's music city council, the Country Music Association (CMA) and the Nashville entrepreneur centre have joined together under Nashville's 'Project Music' (Nashville Music Council, 2016) to distribute start-up grants to small emerging businesses (Nashville Next City Plan, 2015).

In their survey of global music cities Baird and Scott noted that an ideal Music City should include strategies involving the re-regulation of space, Imagineering, governance, and supply. On this last point they argue that an ideal music city requires: 'Deep engagement with musicians and related creative sector professionals. Such supply-side policies aim to refine the human capital of industry actors through education, training and up-skilling (Scott, 2013)' (2018: 5). They further explain that 'hard' institutional forms may include: 'the development of contestable grants to incentivise music production, videos and touring; or to underwrite festivals and events, industry conferences and professional development' (ibid). The 'soft' institutional forms, Baird and Scott argue, work to encourage musicians and associated professionals to think in a more entrepreneurial way. They suggest soft forms might include: 'organizing professional development, industry awareness, networking and performance events, such information sharing' (ibid). This 'upskilling' approach they argue can be implemented in conjunction with other arts strategies through community and youth engagement programs (Scott & Craig, 2012)' (ibid).

3. MAPPING THE MUSICAL ECONOMY OF LEEDS

Prior to the formulation of Music:Leeds, a mapping exercise throughout 2017 was undertaken by the initial members of the team. This involved first surveying the number of music businesses, organisations or people currently operating in Leeds and the surrounding area. Existing phone or business directories, Internet searches, recommendations from managers, promoters, venue owners and musicians alongside a publicized open call to individuals and organisations, were all used to compile a dedicated directory of music activity in the region. The businesses, organisations or people that support and work with artists and musicians in Leeds were then categorised using the areas set out by Complete Music Update (CMU, 2018):

- Music Creation
- Live Performance
- Music Marketing & Fanbase Building
- Artist Business Services
- Music Heritage and Tourism

- Music Education and Participation

This data was compiled into a database to create a holistic view of the musical economy of Leeds. The mapping exercise uncovered some notable aspects of the Leeds music economy in particular the area of 'Live Performance', which showed it was a vibrant part of the sector with 215 music venues in operation under a Leeds postcode. The type and function of these live music venues ranged from large venues operated by multinational corporations, full-time independent music venues to suburban pubs with singular weekly live music events.

In the area of 'Artist Business Services' the mapping exercise identified a number of record labels based in the city ranging from large independent labels with a national profile to smaller micro-independent labels. Although a true number of smaller micro-independent labels was difficult to fully determine it was estimated that there were fewer than 10 Leeds-based record labels that were recognised as formal businesses or companies supporting less than 10 FTE jobs. The mapping exercise identified a large number of self-distributing artists not attached to a record label, which indicated a large number of music creators in the city who were potentially retaining the rights to their work by not contracting it to third parties. Connected to this point it was found that although there are a handful of successful companies managing associated publishing rights in the field of film and television, the commercial popular music sector has no bespoke publisher in the city. The lack of business representation in this area could limit the potential for local music creators to fully exploit there works and gain wider exposure; particularly within the lucrative field of music synchronisation, which is not served by PRO's, who at least collect performance and mechanical copyrights for music creators. Finally, the mapping exercise highlighted the lack of legal services for musicians and music operations in the city with no music lawyers or representatives. This may indicate that there is not enough work to support a music lawyer in the city and that the primary elements of the music economy are more independent or DIY-centric than commercial.

4. ESTABLISHING MUSIC:LEEDS

Data from the mapping exercise was critical in highlighting the wealth of musical activity in the city of Leeds and that despite a lack of formal structure and sporadic local authority economic support, the music sector and scene is prospering. Despite this however, there are three principal considerations. Firstly, the consideration of sustainability and the ways in which this bourgeoning scene be supported long-term. Secondly, the consideration of representation and the methods by which the interests and issues of music businesses, organisations and people can be represented to local authorities. Finally, cooperation and the means by which a collective approach can be organized and managed to help meet some of the challenges involved in supporting a regional music sector and scene.

There are a number of existing models for establishing a mechanism for supporting the music sector within a city; for example, some UK cities have formulated City Region Music Boards (i.e London, Greater Manchester, Liverpool and Sheffield) to help provide a more formal and unified strategy to influence music policy and provide consultancy on a local level and

implement a regional music strategy. Some cities and regions have created roles within local government such as dedicated music officers or to establish a dedicated music office (i.e Brighton) that supports music activity in all areas of the economy. Alongside the region's proposed bid to become European Capital of Culture in 2023, the city of Leeds originally developed a broader culture strategy of which music was only a part. In light of the UK's potential exit from the European Union, and subsequently the disqualification of Leeds from the bidding process, Leeds City Council declared 2023 as a year of culture with a determined approach to improve the offer of arts and culture across the city. The findings from the mapping exercise were presented to Leeds City Council and used to advocate for developing a more holistic and strategic approach to support music activity in the city. In a bid to be visible, non-partisan and representative of all areas of the musical economy, Music:Leeds was initiated as an independent organisation to act as a conduit for consultation between local music businesses, individuals and services, and Leeds City Council to begin to create a framework for support to the music sector of Leeds.

The first of many consultation events managed and run by Music:Leeds was held at Leeds Town Hall in the Autumn of 2017 in which key individuals, business and services from the local music sector highlighted in the mapping exercise were invited to attend. In an attempt to actively engage as much of the music community as possible, representatives from each of the six areas (Music Creation, Live Performance, Music Marketing & Fanbase Building, Artist Business Services, Music Heritage and Tourism, Music Education and Participation) were invited to "listen, think, shout and contribute to a day that will help develop a mandate to connect and support music in the city at all levels" (Music:Leeds, 2017). The event included addresses and provocations from Tom Riordan (Chief Executive, Leeds City Council), Cllr Blake (Leader, Leeds City Council), Michael Dugher (CEO, UK Music) alongside sector development experts Sound Diplomacy and individuals working to create models to sustain and promote the music sectors of other cities and regions including Amsterdam, Aarhus, Liverpool and Brighton. The large-scale consultation forum further helped to establish Music:Leeds as an independent organisation "to act as a centralised point to support, develop, grow and promote music in the city across all levels, genres and cultures" (ibid).

5. ENGAGING THE MUSIC ECONOMY OF LEEDS

Following the 2017 event, Music:Leeds created online networks, including social media channels, an email list and online forums to create a framework for communicating future events, opportunities and news from the sector. Throughout 2018, Music:Leeds were able to host a series of events that addressed the issue of gender equality in the music industries, music industry insights and a series of skills workshops for musicians. These events featured a networking element that also provided an opportunity for diverse parties from the local music community to meet and discuss potential collaborations. Further consultation with representatives from the music economy of Leeds was undertaken at the 2019 City Music Forum which served as an opportunity for Music:Leeds to present its initial activity and encourage representatives from the sector to present their own topics for discussion within

smaller breakout focus groups. In total, 12 distinct topics were put forward for discussion, that were then published in a round-up document, which were as follows:

- Funding, education and accessibility.
- Stickability: How can Leeds develop more music businesses? How can we keep talent in Leeds?
- Supporting Promoters.
- Why is music in Leeds so white?
- Combatting groping, sexual harassment and violence at live music events
- Leeds music history
- Music Tourism and Leeds
- How to start a collective - from competition to collaboration
- Access to live music for children and young people.
- The relationship between health and music
- Apprenticeships/training routes in music/music related and creative skills.
- How to avoid plans for music in Leeds from becoming a self-congratulatory exercise and genuinely encouraging external contributions and development?

These events arranged by Music:Leeds served to engage the: 'musicians and related creative sector professionals' (Scott, 2013) more deeply from across the musical economy of Leeds. The issues, needs and opportunities discussed at events were then further grouped into three specific areas that Music:Leeds could help to address:

- Creative Development & Business Growth in Leeds
- Placemaking & Tourism in Leeds
- Access to Music in Leeds

The first of these, 'Creative Development & Business Growth' was underpinned by findings from the database, which identified clear areas of strengths and areas for development in both volume and scale for music organisations in the city. In particular, the mapping exercise highlighted a lack of music businesses that could support pathways for emerging music industry entrepreneurs and professionals to establish themselves and/or new businesses in the city relating to the music economy. Some participants on the day of the forum argued that an absence of established pathways often leads to a talent drain to other cities; specifically to London and the South East of England.

The second area identified through engagement with the music economy of Leeds was 'Tourism and placemaking', which relates to the benefits a successful music sector can have in both attracting visitors to the city and retaining talent within the music sector and across the broader workforce. Engagement with the musical economy of Leeds showed that although Leeds is highly regarded for having strong longstanding relationships to events and brands (e.g. within the House music scene and the Back to Basics club night, the Pop Punk scene and the Slam Dunk festival, the DIY and Punk Rock music scene with Cops & Robbers), it doesn't currently have a clear and cohesive reputation for it's music offering. Representatives from

Leeds' music scene underlined that there is a need to create a defining narrative that can raise the national profile of the music sector of Leeds, which is not defined by a 'sound' but by a sense of independence, and diversity as a tangible asset.

Music economy engagement identified a final area 'Access to Music' in which representatives across the city region highlighted 3 particular aspects of accessibility that should be addressed in Leeds's current provision:

1. Access to music-making and music events. It is typically community, charity or non-profit organisations that lead the way in access to music-making and musical development but there are still a range of musical, geographical, socio-economic barriers and physical barriers for all ages in the city; specifically disabled and impaired music makers and audience members.
2. Access and representation. Issues of diversity and representation within the musical economy; specifically at leadership level, is vital to help meet the needs of the diverse cultural communities of Leeds and the global workforce more broadly
3. Access to opportunities. Improving the local musical economy will also increase access to opportunities of development, employment and engagement with the musical economy. This may also include the ability to help recognise opportunities in order to be able to access them.

6. INFLUENCING THE MUSIC ECONOMY OF LEEDS

Strategic engagement with representatives across the musical economy of Leeds allowed Music:Leeds to address particular aspects of the musical economy of 'Creative Development & Business Growth', 'Placemaking and Tourism' and 'Access to Music'.

'Creative Development & Business Growth' is the area in which Music:Leeds has had the most visible influence on the musical economy of Leeds. This is through the early career artist development program called 'Launchpad', which groups together 20-30 local and national music organisations, businesses and live events to support emerging artists. Funding for Launchpad was generated to support this activity from the National Lottery through Arts Council England and PRS Foundation as a Talent Development Partner. This has crucially helped to create a tangible network of support organisations for anyone involved in music in the region. The secondary impact of developing partnerships with such a wide range of local music festival and organisations is that a tangible network of local organisations has become visible to any artists accessing the Launchpad initiative. By artists engaging with these direct and overtly desirable opportunities (eg. a sought after festival slot), Music:Leeds have been able to signpost and disseminate a wider range of opportunities, both from organisations within Leeds, as well as national bodies to include major arts / music funders to emerging artists in the region.

Music:Leeds has also contributed to the area of 'Placemaking and Tourism' through strategic engagement with Leeds Enterprise Partnership (LEP), Leeds City Council & Leeds 2023. The Leeds City Region European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) Strategy published in 2014

only mentions music once – however, through its developing relationship with local government, Music:Leeds has contributed to the music industry section of the city-wide strategy for 2020 onwards. Unlike Liverpool that has focused on the Beatles, or Nashville with Country Music, Leeds lacks a unifying and tangible focus for its music heritage. However over the last 10 years, momentum has been growing with numerous exhibitions including 'Leeds Music History' and 'One Foot In The Rave', with support from Leeds City Council to Leeds Business Improvement District (BID). Music:Leeds's contribution to the city-wide strategy draws upon the key areas of these exhibitions to develop a strategy to create a notable identity for music in Leeds, celebrating its past and present to help profile the city of Leeds as a musical destination for future tourists, audiences, music-makers and those that support the music economy.

Through the building of networks and strategic partnerships to amplify opportunities, Music:Leeds has also contributed to the area of 'Access to Music'. For example, The Launchpad Project was designed solely to have a direct impact on artists in the region, but engagement with the initiative plays a role in building a noticeable network of music industry individuals and organisations in the city, which has contributed to making music opportunities more accessible, whilst establishing role models and developing the sector and artists. Music:Leeds Launchpad also provides opportunities for artists (musicians & music creators) of any genre and style to access support through a combination live performance, studio recording, one-to-one mentoring, conference, talks and workshop aimed at increasing knowledge and skills of those who attend. Artists are invited to apply via an open call, which was distributed as widely as possible. Strategic partnerships were made with local festivals to provide live opportunities and this encouraged a diverse range of artists to apply and amplify the opportunities that were on offer to a diverse audience.

Music:Leeds has also engaged with specific activity to address wide-spread issues around diversity and inclusivity and following collaborative events with Brighter Sound, a Gender Rebalance Equality Action & Advisory Team (GREAAT) has been convened to increase and promote opportunities for women and people of marginalised gender in the city. This has led to showcase and social events throughout the year, and enabled collaboration across different organisations working within the sector. Additionally, through analysis of its database of music businesses, Music:Leeds has helped to engage venues across the city in addressing sexual harassment at live music events (in collaboration with Dr Rosemary Hill's Healthy Music Audiences project) and improve venues' online information for disabled and deaf audience members in line with Attitude Is Everything's Access Starts Online guidance. - Examples include working with Brighter Sound on Both Sides Now to create more opportunities for female music creators, running consultation supported by Attitude is Everything to improve the access information for live music venues in the city and collaborating with Dr Rosemary Hill on work to address sexual harassment at live music events.

Importantly, the formation of Music:Leeds has provided an opportunity for wide spread organisational cooperation in raising the profile of music activity both within the city, and on a national level. This has allowed more sophisticated projects to take place with more awareness for our audiences and practitioners.

7. CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER WORK

A 'Music City' describes an urban environment that has the ideal conditions to take advantage of the cultural and musical fabric to support and nurture its musical economy (Baker, 2017; Terrill, Hogarth, Clement, and Francis, 2015). A 'Music City' emphasises elements of creative development & business growth, placemaking & tourism, access to music-making and music events as well as supporting the existing music scene. Supporting the regionalised music sector and scene of Leeds began with a mapping exercise to identify the individuals, groups, organisations and businesses working within the music economy of the city.

Data from the mapping exercise was crucial in highlighting the diversity of musical activity in the city of Leeds and that despite a lack of formal structure and sporadic local authority economic support, the music sector and scene is prospering. However, three principal challenges and issues were highlighted; that of sustainability, representation and cooperation. After a consultation event in 2017, the orgnaisation Music:Leeds was formed and developed a series of regular events to engage the music industries of Leeds and the UK more broadly. Further consultation was undertaken at 2019 City Music Forum, which reinforced a number of issues highlighted three specific areas of development that Music:Leeds can help to address:

- Creative Development & Business Growth in Leeds
- Placemaking & Tourism in Leeds
- Access to Music in Leeds

Music:Leeds has had the most visible influence on the musical economy of Leeds. This is through the early career artist development program called 'Launchpad' local and national music organisations, businesses and live events to support emerging artists. Through its developing relationship with local government, Music:Leeds has developed the music industry section of the City-Wide Strategy for 2020 onwards to influence the area of 'Placemaking and Tourism' and, importantly, Music:Leeds has helped to increase awareness of issues of access and inclusivity within the musical economy of Leeds through the curation of a diverse range of events across the region. Music:Leeds were able to facilitate this work and maximise the impact of these projects because of the critical engagement with representatives from across the musical economy of Leeds and building relationships with them through consultations in the City Music Forum.

The activity of Music:Leeds activity to date has been informed by mapping data, consultative events and action research through delivery of it's program tied to its funding. Further work on evaluating these aspects is needed to fully assess the impact of these activities and how they can inform a structure and pathway through to 2023 and beyond. These include the need to effectively support and sustain a fit for purpose music eco-system that facilitates emerging artists and music industry professionals, a diverse workforce and increasing music activity opportunities. There is also a need to define a narrative for what music in Leeds represents, to

create an inclusive identity that all those engaged with music in the city can respond to, and equally project, and that equally harnesses the power of the cities music heritage.

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