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Mapping the Underground: An Ethnographic Cartography of the Leeds Extreme Metal Scene

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Abstract

This article centralises changes within Leeds' popular 'musicscape', i.e., the relations between popular music and urban landscape. Focussing on Leeds' extreme heavy metal musicscape, we map sites of the Leeds metal scene (past and present) in order to understand the shifting social relationships, effects of city centre regeneration, and the ways in which heavy metal music scenes have the ability to adapt and respond to continual modifications within the urban city. To address these concerns, we draw upon scholarship from popular music and place, heavy metal and human geography. Heavy metal scenes are a significant, yet often invisible and under-acknowledged, part of the urban cultural landscape. Mapping the metal musicscape, then, becomes an important way to understand broader physical, social, political, and cultural changes that occur to, and within, the postmodern city.

Mapping the Underground: An Ethnographic Cartography of the Leeds Extreme Metal Scene

Introduction

As we leave the 'Stick or Twist' pub, Blake, Dylan and I begin discussing the number of changes that have occurred within the metal scene. The wind picks up as we walk towards the city centre; groups of students weave past us as they make their way to the cluster of pubs that are located along Woodhouse Lane, one of the busiest streets in the Headingley area. It's past 7pm and most of the shops in the Merrion Centre are closed. 'That's where Subculture used to be' Dylan says suddenly as he points towards the south side of the building. 'Yeah it was a great venue, it had two extreme metal club nights (Arise and Devastator) and for some gigs it used to be just crammed,' laughed Blake. 'And right beside it there used to be a metal record store which was convenient,' Dylan replied. We then turned left down Merrion Street and walked past the ghostly, almost completely desolate Grand Arcade. Vacant real estate with barred windows and scattered cardboard are remnants of where another venue, Leeds Rio's, was located. 'Initially this was a good venue - saw Suffocation there and went to Rock of Ages club night- but it quickly went to shit, Bradford Rio's was better' retorted Blake... (Riches' field notes, 21 September 2012).

This article draws upon Riches's larger ethnographic doctoral research project on extreme metal, of which part focuses on spatial and historical constructs of the Leeds metal music scene. Although by some counts Leeds is the third largest city in the UK,[1] its live music scenes have not produced household-name superstars, unlike its neighbouring cities in the north, such as Sheffield (Long, forthcoming 2014; Brown, O'Connor and Cohen, 2000), Manchester (Haslam, 1999), and Liverpool (Cohen, 2007). However, Leeds does have a thriving, if less visible, music scene. Like its starry neighbour cities, Leeds' urban core is characteristic of the changing 'postmodern' cities in the UK that have been redeveloped and re-imaged following the shift from industrial to service economies (Bramham and Wagg, 2009; Lashua, 2013). In recent decades Leeds city centre in particular has witnessed dramatic 'regeneration' plans and initiatives that transformed its urban landscape into a centre for finance, retail, and legal services. A site of two major universities, Leeds' population swells with nearly 60,000 students during the academic year. Widely considered the economic engine of England's northern economy,[2] the postmodern changes that have reshaped Leeds in recent years have also reshaped its popular music scenes, particularly its heavy metal music scenes.

In Riches' research the rise and fall of metal venues was seen as an avenue to further explore female metal fans involvement in embodied subcultural practices. This article centralises these changes within Leeds' pop music landscape, or what Cohen (2012a) called the popular 'musicscape', i.e., the relations between popular music and urban landscape. Focussing on Leeds' extreme heavy metal musicscape, we map sites of Leeds' metal scenes (past and present) in order to understand the shifting social relationships, effects of city centre regeneration, and the

ways in which heavy metal scenes have the ability to adapt and respond to continual modifications within the postmodern city. To address these concerns, we draw upon scholarship from popular music and place, heavy metal and human geography. Heavy metal scenes are a significant, yet often invisible and under-acknowledged, part of the urban cultural landscape (Kahn-Harris, 2007; Riches, 2011; Weinstein, 2000). Mapping the metal musicscape, then, becomes an important way to understand broader physical and cultural changes that occur to, and within, the city.

In what follows, we draw from Riches' interdisciplinary and ethnographic research on Leeds' extreme heavy metal music scenes. We begin with a literature review of scholarship on music scenes and places, along with methodological consideration of 'cultural mapping.' Through specific examples from Riches' fieldwork, we then explore the ways in which Leeds' metal scenes have been affected by changes to the city through neo-liberal regeneration agendas. To illustrate these changes, we offer a digital mapping that illustrates a recent spatial shift of heavy metal venues away from the city centre. Finally, we focus more closely on a micro-topography of place, mapping an underground music venue in Leeds to illustrate the interplay between metal music and embodiment. Across these sections, the paper emphasises how the interplay between 'underground' music scenes and mapping can be usefully brought together in order to understand extreme heavy metal and urban change.

Hellraisers to Posh Shoppers: Commercial Domination in the Postmodern City of Leeds

The postmodern city is characterised by diversity, individualised entertainment, hedonistic experiences, consumption, and commercialisation (Bramham and Spink, 2009). In his discussion on conducting visual research within the city, Spencer (2011) observes that urban landscapes are spaces of constant transformation in which dialectical processes of material change, shifting social divisions of class, gender, sexuality and ethnicity produce residential and sometimes ghettoised borders. Yet, he argues, there are the more subtle discursive and subjective signs which are elusive and that typically go ignored within the postmodern city. Differences of power, resistance, marginalisation, production and consumption, then, become manifest in the realities of lived experience (Spencer, 2011: 84) and this is evident when examining Leeds' metal music scene. Leeds, a post-industrial city in the North of England, has a vibrant heavy metal scene despite being a victim to the 'postmodern project' (Bramham and Spink 2009) in which metal venues once located in the city centre have been pushed to marginal, residential areas in favour of more commercialised, mainstream leisure pursuits. During the 1980s and onwards Leeds established its reputation as a 24-hour-city, 'a city that never sleeps' by reinventing itself through extensive refurbishment, pedestrianisation and construction of central shopping facilities (Bramham and Spink 2009: 22). Yet these economic strategies to make Leeds more inviting resulted in a sanitisation of the city centre and 'core' areas of the city. These processes of sanitisation and security have impacted not only the metal scene, but the larger alternative scene of Leeds. For instance, according to Spracklen, Ricther and Spracklen (2013) during the 1980s and 1990s the Leeds Goth and punk scenes were centralised through

shops and venues such as the Phono, and particular bands such as Sisters of Mercy who often played in The Fenton, an existing music venue which is close to Leeds University. Additionally, as they spoke with members of the punk community it was evident that the privatisation and homogenisation of Millennium Square and city centre spaces resulted in no-go zones for punks and Goths, whose interests in music and politics were restricted to marginal, 'out of sight' areas in Leeds such as squats and abandoned houses (Spracklen et al., 2013). These political and cultural shifts within the postmodern city have also directly impacted the spatial visibility and arrangement of the Leeds metal scene. But unlike the Goth and Punk scenes, which have both suffered and declined from lack of venues and use of free public spaces, the extreme metal scene in Leeds remains active and vivacious, and appears adaptable to the ever-changing urban landscape in which it operates.

During the late 1990s-mid 2000s, the metal scene was a visible entity as metal fans weaved through and gathered within mainstream spaces such as the Corn Exchange or Merrion Centre, and through their subcultural style they stood in contrast, offering an embodied spatial resistance, to the prevailing initiatives that were altering Leeds into a postmodern city. According to Kahn-Harris (2007: 98) extreme metal scenes tend to be stronger in locations that are slightly 'off centre,' yet scenes are weakened in locations that are marginal to global flows of capital. At the same time, the Leeds' scene is not at its most productive in market terms in places central to global flows of capital and power, such as London or New York. For example, exclusive heavy metal shops such as Hellraiser Records – once a central site for metal fans to consume, exchange and gain access to metal music – has moved online and its former, physical premises were replaced by more mainstream shops. Comparatively, the Duchess of York, which was a hallmark alternative music venue in Leeds, was transformed into higher end retail opportunities like Hugo Boss. These initial examples raise questions regarding the 'place' of the metal music scene in the city centre and the ways in which gentrification projects have impacted the scene in Leeds.

Setting the 'scene': Extreme Heavy Metal music, place, and mapping
There is a growing interest in metal music studies (Berger, 1999; Brown, 2011; Kahn-Harris, 2011; Spracklen, 2009; Weinstein, 2000; Walser, 1993) and most discussions around heavy metal scenes are spatially contextualised. Some scholars (e.g., Kahn-Harris, 2000; LeVine, 2008; Wallach, Berger, and Greene, 2011) have explored metal's global geographies while others have revealed the ways in which heavy metal music reflects and is part of national landscapes, especially Britain (Moore, 2009; Nilsson, 2009; Weinstein, 2009). Research on more localised, spatially distinct extreme metal music scenes such as the Scandinavian black metal scene (Moynihan and Søderlind, 2003), the "Bluff City" extreme metal scene in the mid-South United States (Hutcherson and Haenfler, 2010), extreme metal in Turkey (Hecker, 2012), Melbourne's grindcore scene (Overell, 2010); the death metal scene in Akron, Ohio (Berger, 1999) and Brazil's thrash metal scene (Kahn-Harris, 2000) have been useful in making connections between local and global metal topographies. And recently metal scholars have

framed their research within specific musical venues in order to illuminate and remain attentive to gender power dynamics (Donze, 2010), gendered performances and practices (Krenske and McKay, 2000, and processes of subcultural boundary construction (Snell and Hodgetts, 2007). However, there has been little attention paid to how urban change and regeneration affects the spatial arrangement of local metal music scenes, and how that ultimately impacts social relations and subcultural visibility. By attending to these spatial gaps within heavy metal scholarship, our focus in the paper explores the relations between heavy metal scenes and changing cities.

In this paper we are using the term 'scene' because it is understood as a more fluid, dynamic and holistic concept compared to community. Such fluidity is important because heavy metal music scenes not only operate within and across spaces but they *are* spaces; spaces for interaction, practices, performances, and identity construction (Bennett and Peterson, 2004). In his discussion on the Montreal music scene, Stahl (2004: 53) observed that the socio-spatial connotations of scene, its undertones of flux and flow, movement and variability, suggest that "the significance of musical life might be better seen as occurring at the juncture of spatial relations and social praxis." For Kahn-Harris (2007) scenes can never be stable because they are always in motion; this motion plays out through a scene's shifting characteristics in terms of scene members, active bands, and functional music spaces. Despite the fluidity and heterogeneity of the concept, there has been a lack of attention to the ways in which people interact within particular musical spaces, how spatial repositionings affect scenes and scene members, and how subcultural spaces are part of and vulnerable to broader social, economic, political and cultural processes. In Kong's (1995) discussion on the trends within geographical research on popular music, she argues that broader social and political contexts that influence particular musical styles and activities within places have been largely neglected. Lashua (2011) contends that stories of music venues and sites are "bound up in social and physical fabric of the changing city; thus movements through, and memories of, musical landscapes are co-constituent of the urban environment" (p. 138). Spatial transitions are also important in geographical and popular music analyses. For example, in their research about changes to venues in Belgrade, Todorović and Bakir (2005: 420) argue that the term 'underground' relates not only to rules of membership but to unconventional approaches to musical style that do not adhere to established social norms, relative autonomy of modes of production, distribution and consumption, and subcultural, subversive practices in society. Extreme metal music scenes, characterized by transgression, a Do-It-Yourself ethos, musical radicalism, and unconventional practices and performances, represent underground and potentially subversive scenes (Kahn-Harris, 2007). Because music scenes often come and go over time, scenes offer useful frames through which to view and interrogate the 'place' of extreme metal within processes of urban change.

Like the literature on music scenes, there has been a wealth of scholarship on popular music and place (Cohen, 1991; Connell and Gibson, 2003; Finnegan, 1989; Leyshon, Matless and Revill 1998; Swiss, Sloop & Herman, 1998), often with further links to questions of cultural identity (Bennett, 2000; Shank, 1994; Whitely, Bennett, and Hawkins, 2004). For example, Whitely, Bennett and Hawkins noted "the search for social and cultural meanings in popular

music texts inevitably involves an examination of the urban and rural spaces in which music is experienced on a day-to-day basis" (2004: 2). According to Leyshon, Matless and Revill (1998: 424–425) argued that attending to the interplay between music and geography offers:

> ... a richer sense of geography highlights the spatiality of music and the mutually generative relations of music and place. Space produces as space is produced. To consider the place of music is not to reduce music to its location, to ground it down into some geographical baseline, but to allow a purchase on the rich aesthetic, cultural, economic and political geographies of musical language.

Other music geographers, such as Connell & Gibson (2003), also have critiqued the geographic baseline inherent in 'cartographies of music' that had attempted to isolate certain styles in specific musical regions (e.g., a 'Liverpool Sound', see Cohen, 1994; a 'Canterbury sound', see Bennett, 2000) and those studies that had drawn attention only to a few important sites or iconic figures. Such scholarship has argued against determinism and preoccupation with authenticity (i.e., they refute there is something 'natural' about a city that makes its bands' sound as they do) and have offered, instead, a focus on how "concepts of territoriality, boundaries and relatedness are constructed through interactions between people" as Cohen (1994: 131) put it. Rather than seek to isolate and locate any 'authentic' Leeds extreme heavy metal 'sound', this paper, following Cohen (1994, 2012b) and Leyshon, Matless and Revill (1998), maps out the territoriality and social interactions that shape, and in turn are shaped by, the scene and the city.

Methods

Cultural maps and mappings (see Lynch, 1960) have become increasingly popular approaches to understanding the sites, scenes and routines of popular music (Cohen, 2012b; Cohen and Lashua, 2010; Lashua, 2011; Roberts, Cohen, Leonard and Knifton, 2013). For Shobe and Banis (2010: 87), cultural maps of popular music practices can help to understand "how cultural narratives are created and sustained" by exploring how music "often serves as a surrogate for cultural understandings of place as well as regional stereotypes." That is, in some ways music and place become interchangeable, and may stand in for each other in certain cultural configurations. Mappings can highlight the significant but often neglected intersections between consumption, cultural production, embodiment, and practices in lived, corporeal and sometimes chaotic spaces (Herman et al., 1998). The use of maps and mappings in accounts of musical scenes can help to illustrate what spaces matter to musicians and fans, how scene members infuse certain places with meaning, and how such places reflect and in turn, critique, larger political and cultural process such as urban change. In this latter regard, where music cuts across the politics of identity, socio-cultural change, and urban regeneration, Lee (2002) argued that geography matters because "it is disruptive of disciplinary ways of thinking" (p. 334). Cultural mapping can alert researchers to the possibilities 'thinking spatially' (Massey 2005) where space is a product of interrelations and constituted through temporary interactions; spaces, like cultural maps, are snapshots, fleeting captions of 'stories-so-far' (Massey, 2005: 9).

Approaches to cultural mapping (see Roberts, 2012) have included Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mappings, such as ones Cohen (2012b) piloted in research on

Liverpool musicscapes. This method was useful to show hidden, marginalised or forgotten sites of music making and performance that had come and gone in the city. Brennan-Horley and Gibson (2009) used qualitative GIS mapping to address the question "where is the creativity in the city?" in and around Darwin (Australia). Their analysis focused on creative epicentres and patterns of sites of creative activity, including music-making and performance. Both projects highlighted the specific affordances of incorporating qualitative data into cultural mapping via GIS to trace the nodes, clusters or 'bubbles' (Cohen 2012b), borders and territories to provide more-finely grained maps of 'lived' creative landscapes. Cultural mapping has also been increasingly used in studies of popular music heritage (Cohen, 2013; Lashua, Cohen, and Schofield, 2010; Long and Collins, 2012; Roberts and Cohen, 2013) as a means of showing the relations between music, place and historical change.

All this is to say that mappings are useful lines for inquiry. For Wood (1993: 56) this is a matter of "[N]ot what does the map show or how does it show it, but 'what does the map do? what does the map accomplish?'" Similarly, for Brown and Laurier (2005: 28), a map is an invitation for inquiry:

When we get the map out, each and every time it is an occasioned inquiry, where the map has what Garfinkel (p206, 2002) calls 'curious properties'. To paraphrase Garfinkel again, the map is intractably problematic whilst simultaneously it offers itself 'for the projects of clarification, of elucidation, of elaboration of all the great enterprises that inquiry promises to be done' (p206) with it.

Maps offer lines of inquiry and also a means of 'making sense' of places that can unlock critical insights into local social relations. Along similar lines, Moretti (2005: 35) also asked: "what is it that maps do? What do they do that cannot be done with words? That is; because, if it can be done with words, then maps are superfluous." In this regard some 'mappings' actually employ no maps as conventionally understood. For example, the Department for Media, Culture & Sport (DCMS) *UK Creative Industries Mapping Document* (1998; and a 2001 re-iteration), wherein 'Music' was one of 13 creative industries segments, does not contain a single cartographic map. Rather its statistical analyses centred on "the employment characteristics of the creative economy" (DCMS, 1998: 26) including annual earnings as well as the number of people employed. Such a 'mapping' is therefore able to tell us that music-making is an important contributor to the UK creative industries. Other maps are also non-cartographic, but show relations, such as Brown's (2011) genealogy that "maps" the field of heavy metal music studies. However, it is important to keep in mind that in any mappings, while some processes are rendered visible, other processes are left unmapped and untold.

Therefore, in addition to asking what 'maps do' we also need to address how we 'do' maps; that is, to acknowledge that maps, like photographs, are representations of social and physical spaces. Researchers have employed a variety of ethnographic mapping approaches. Following Lynch (1960), Cohen and Lashua (2010) invited Liverpool musicians to create hand-drawn mappings of their everyday musical routes and routines, and then engaged in qualitative interviews with these musicans-as-cartographers to ask questions about which sites were mapped

and why they were important. This 'participatory mapping' approach has gained prominence across the social sciences (see Emmel, 2008), and highlights that the process of mapping is as constructed and contingent as any other form of social research. Additional ethnographic mapping techniques have included 'go along' walking tours (Kusenbach, 2003), and other 'mobile' methods (see Urry, 2007; Fincham, McGuinness and Murray, 2010). These approaches share attentiveness to the processes of map construction, and the relations between people and place. In this regard, we turn to Riches' ethnographic mapping approach in order to engage with members of the Leeds extreme metal music scene, and gain a sense Leeds' gathering points and peripheries.

Visualising the Scene: Putting the Leeds Metal Scene 'On the Map'

Referring to the vignette which opened this article, there has been a notable movement of venues within the Leeds metal scene. In order to produce a better sense of this spatial shift, we created an online Google map. Figure 1 illustrates metal spaces in Leeds from 1990 to present day.
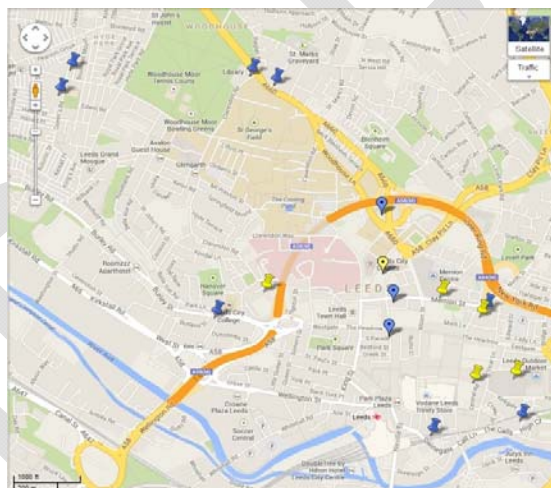
[Please insert Figure 1 here: A Google map of metal venues in Leeds (past and present)]

The 5 pushpins on the map that are located within the city centre of Leeds indicate the venues that were active from about 1990-2012 (Duchess of York, Hellraiser Records, Subculture, Leeds Rios, The Well) while the 8 blue pushpins represent active metal venues (Royal Park Cellars, Brudenell Social Club, Fox & Newt, The Cockpit, The Library, The Packhorse, and Wharf Chambers). The Google map lacks ethnographic detail but does illustrate the shift in the alternative/metal scene. Riches' interviews with extreme metal fans in Leeds add ethnographic texture of place. For example, The Subculture, which was in the basement of the Merrion Centre located in the city centre, symbolically and physically reflected extreme metal's rawness and grittiness: "The Subculture was an absolute dump but that was part of its charm. And for some reason they painted the walls pink as well. It was a cool place to play and put on club nights. The

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sound system was rickety but it always made it through in the end" (Carl).[3] These smaller, stripped down venues were typically the most vulnerable in urban gentrification projects.

Such metal gathering spaces are significant to metal fans. In Leeds, the spatial transformation within the scene has substantially deterred some members from being actively involved in scene life. One fan, Shannon stated: "I don't go to gigs anymore simply because the venues aren't there anymore. In the 80s there used to be this venue called The Duchess of York in Leeds and they hosted metal bands like Sabat and Nuclear Assault, especially when thrash was really big." However for some members of the scene like Collin, the pattern of venue closures is a transparent reflection of wider political shifts within the city:

> I think politics has always ravaged music like punk and metal, it's like Rios in Leeds. 'We're closing it.' Why? Why have they closed it, nobody can tell you why. It's not like they weren't making money, the venue had gigs on and it would be packed and people would be buying beer so why did it close? They give you some concocted excuse like they're decorating it or renovating it and it never reopens. Duchess of York, fantastic place, a lot of bands used to play there and you sort of think to yourself, is this going to be it in a couple of years? Will this be it?

The abandoned sites of former metal venues, the commercialised retail facades that were once home to metal gatherings, and the unpredictable nature of the metal scene has imprinted a sense of apprehension and spatial nihilism in the minds of fans like Collin. Speaking with metal scene members in Leeds, it became clear that metal spaces are susceptible to larger social shifts in the city in terms of individualised entertainment and revitalisation. Shannon, who manages the online heavy metal retail shop, Hellraiser Records, admitted that her store had to physically close down due to shifts in consumption patterns: "...a major factor of Hellraiser closing and moving online was because so many people download, how can you compete with that? You can't. You can't make them buy a product if they're just going to download it." Phil, a long-time devotee of the Leeds metal scene accounted for some of the venue closures within Leeds and how political and cultural initiatives such as transforming 'unmarketable' venues into high class consumer opportunities, has affected the sustainability of the scene:

> In the 80s there used to be venues all over the place. But now, because the pubs aren't making the money, and because of the companies, right,…you got the Well at the moment, the company that owns the building they want to turn the venue into a high class restaurant- people will come out and spend stupid money to go to a high class restaurant, like Jamie Oliver's but they won't come out to see a band.

This visible shift from a centralised metal scene to a peripheral, and widely dispersed scene also impacts the types of spaces where metal music is practiced and performed. Presently, the majority of the metal venues are pubs where the performance stage is tucked away, either upstairs or hidden in the basement. The Cockpit remains the only centralised alternative music venue in Leeds; it is located directly beneath the rail station. Although limited in the amount and quality of detail it is able offer (our Google map's pinpoints also feature a brief amount of text and images of the venues) this kind of mapping is of some value because of its abilities to render

the invisible visible. The map coveys the dramatic shift away of metal music venues from the city centre in recent years.

Around Leeds, particularly in its inner suburban areas, signage and the vast array of gig posters and billboards indicate an overwhelming presence of a student-based club culture, with little visual recognition of an existing metal scene. Yet these visual cues are not representative of all that is happening in the underground scene. By mapping underground metal spaces, social relations and spatial practices, and their complex intersections, a different ethnographic and cartographic story emerges. In his discussion on a punk scene in a Midwestern US college town, Glass (2012: 702) illustrates how the punk scene, which operated within the loud and bohemian student neighbourhood, was marginal. The scene and its alternative venues were considered 'out of place' in the (already marginalised) student ghetto – a ghetto within a ghetto – constantly in danger of going out of business. Referring again to our Google map (Figure 1), the four push pins in the left hand quadrant of the map illustrate a shift similar to the change Glass observed. Our map shows metal venues have relocated to densely student populated areas such as Headingley and Hyde Park. However, this kind of mapping does not capture or evoke the lived experiences of being in places in the Leeds metal scene; it does not show how socio-spatial fragmentations impact the everyday lives of metal fans.

The de-centralisation of the Leeds metal scene has had a lasting impact on feelings of belonging and community. Despite the fluid nature of scene activity and organisation, some metal scene members claimed that with the increased use of pub venues in Leeds for metal music there has been a lack of subcultural unification and visibility. This is echoed in Carl's comment as he explained the current state of the scene:

> It's [the Leeds metal scene] is in a weird place right now, it's kind of up and down all the time. The Leeds metal scene used to feel like everyone knew everyone, it was like a community. It feels less like an actual scene as such- there's a gig here and a gig there and stuff happening independently whereas before it used to feel like it came together all at once. It's definitely more fragmented."

Yet what is remarkable is that the spatial re-arrangement of the Leeds metal scene is demarcated not only by genre but along class lines as well. This is articulated by Blaire, an active promoter and musician:

> I kind of see Leeds as being two metal scenes. There's like what I would say is the Royal Park/The Well metal scene which is more like the dirty, death metal kind of stuff and then there's the more sort of… a bit older, slightly higher income, proper jobs kind of Brudenell/Santiagos scene. That's kind of the more refined, riffy, sludgy metal but rarely do the two scenes come together."

Both Carl and Blaire's account of the malleability of the metal scene corresponds with Massey's (2005) discussion on space which is "forever incomplete and in production", and that spaces, particularly metal music spaces, can be defined as an "open-ended interweaving of a multiplicity of trajectories, the concomitant fractures, ruptures and structural divides" (p. 100) that make the Leeds metal scene heterogeneous, fluid, idiosyncratic, and important to map, ethnographically.

And although there are technically more venues available for metal bands to perform now than in the recent past, the venue capacities are substantially smaller than previously established venues. From a hall with a 375 person capacity to pub suitable for only 50 people greatly limits the range of bands willing to play in Leeds. International metal bands on tour, for instance, are unlikely to play small venues in Leeds. The size of venues also inflects the size of the scene (how many people can attend a gig to claim membership within the underground metal scene?) The issue of venue size is further highlighted in the next section when we focus on one particular well-known but recently closed alternative venue in Leeds, Josephs Well.

'I Miss the Stage More than Anything': An Ethnographic Mapping of The Well

Thumping kick drums, dissonant feedback roaring from the monitors, obscured screams exerted into the microphone...even before I reached the entrance I knew the band was about to kick off. The entrance to The Well was blocked by a group of heavy metal fans standing in a semi-circle, their heads lowered as they took drags from their cigarettes while holding onto their plastic pints of lager. Making my way to the bar my senses were overwhelmed...the floors sticky, aromas of perspiration, beer, and unwashed upholstery, wafts of soap, perfume and urine coming from the toilets. The vibrations from the band were increasing as I passed the 'moshpit' mural on the left hand side. Reminding me of what happens and should happen in spaces like these. The walls throughout were covered in band and gig posters. The bar, which served reasonably priced drinks, was situated in the right hand corner of the room, nearby the entrance to the music area and the pool tables. Across from the bar there was a small merchandise table set up consisting of an assortment of shirts, CDs, stickers and vinyls. I ordered a cheap pint of beer and after handing my ticket to the young door man I walked down a small flight of portable stairs into the darkness, with only a faint outline of bodies defining the space. The room was hot and sticky, full of moshing bodies and anonymous devil horns piercing the air. The small stage, emphasised by flashing coloured stage lights, was concealed by an array of musical equipment, performing bodies, and metal fans who were quickly jumping up and chucking themselves into the moving crowd. The floors cement, small wooden ledges along the walls to place beer glasses, ear piercing sound...this was the perfect place to be (Riches's field notes, 3 October 2012).

During Riches's fieldwork, conducted between February 2012 and August 2013, two significant extreme metal venues closed down: The Well (in December 2012) located on Chorley Lane, nearby to the Leeds Town Hall and The Cellars (in August 2013) which was located in the basement of the Royal Park Pub which is in the suburban area of Hyde Park. In Snell and Hodgett's (2007) research on an extreme metal venue in New Zealand, they found that underground, marginal metal venues are crucial spaces where metal fans can engage in subcultural practices such as moshing, headbanging, and listening to extreme metal music without high levels of surveillance or outside control. For many members in the Leeds' scene, The Well (formally known as Joseph's Well) was *the* metal venue. When it closed in December 2012, members expressed concerns about the effects that its absence would have on the scene:

"The closing of the Well will hugely impact the scene because it has always had the biggest underground metal bands. I don't think that place is ever going to be replaceable" (Carl). Peter, who is a prominent metal promoter, musician, and creator of the online forum, *Raw Nerve*, remarked on the relationship between scenic and spatial fluidity within the Leeds metal scene:

> Venue changes have had a massive impact, but there always seems to be a few places willing to clear some space in a back room to let people come and make their noise inside it, which is reassuring. It was a shame when The Well closed down, especially after the number of times it had stopped and started in the past, it was at its best at that time [1996] I think. It was the best space for the next level bands to come play, not too expensive, great sound in a perfect area.

Finally, Blake, a well-known singer and extreme metal promoter in the scene, commented on the existing trend of venue closures in Leeds and argued that these spatial shifts are not particular to Leeds but are part of national political and cultural strategies:

> Certainly every time a big venue that puts on underground music closes it's just crippling to the entire scene. I mean…like Josephs Well just recently shut and that's like the last decent sized venue in town that's gonna put on decent sized touring extreme metal bands. I heard that Liverpool is losing its venues as well. It's the recession that is causing a lot of these venues to close down."

The way in which Blake related Leeds to Liverpool corresponds with Kahn-Harris's (2007) argument about how local metal scenes do not operate in isolation, they are part of and hence reproduced by other national and global metal scenes. Thus, the changing topography of metal venues in Leeds, as in other cities, reflects the dominant political economy of postmodern cities.

Larger venues, like The Well, once played a significant role in creating an appropriate underground atmosphere which made Leeds an attractive heavy metal destination for international extreme metal bands. According to Carole, who has played in several bands in Leeds, larger venues are better equipped to create a more genuine and collective metal experience:

> The better experiences happen at bigger venues, because a lot of pub gigs, especially these days, there are a lot of restrictions. A big part of that is that kick in the guts that you get from the bass drum, with better amplification it's easier to put the music across to more people and that atmosphere across to more people.

In relation the sonic and embodied advantageous of larger venues, Carole went on to argue that venues specifically catering to live music are better able to control, supervise, and nurture unconventional subcultural practices such as moshing, stage diving and crowd surfing which are important aspects to scene activity. Since the closing of the Well, metal fans have had to travel to nearby cities such as Sheffield and Manchester to see better-known extreme metal bands. However, despite the continual disappearance of better venues, and emergence of less suitable ones, Leeds metal fans have maintained its scene by finding new spaces to perform and practice their music which suggests that " there are negotiations and reactions and resistance to every attempt to sanitise, gentrify and privatise urban leisure space" (Spracklen et al., 2013: 168).

Conclusion

Utilising an ethnographic mapping approach to analyse Leeds' metal music scene speaks to larger concerns within cultural geography such as how people make places, how places shape cultural identities, and how places change over time (Massey, 1994). Mapping has allowed us to explore these concerns by examining, through a spatial lens, how Leeds' extreme metal music scene operates and attempts to sustain itself in a postmodern city. According to Spencer (2011), cities can be understood as a mosaic of many lived and embodied narratives. By engaging with the urban city and digitally and ethnographically mapping the spatial structures of the metal scene that exist within it, an image of dynamic contrasts, tensions, contradictions and resistance emerges.

Like other geographic studies of popular music (Cohen, 2013, 2012a, 2012b; Lashua, 2011), we have stressed the usefulness of maps to understand some of the forces act to territorialise the Leeds metal scene. Maps and mappings can operate as metaphors for relationships to the world and with other people. Maps and mapping help researchers to better understand experiences of place, memories of place, and complex power relations that are often unremarked. As such, our mappings of Leeds' metal music venues help to render visible the spatial and social relationships between an underground scene and the changing city. Producing various digital and ethnographic maps of the metal scene provided a different narrative of the impact of transformations in the city. These changes have shaped the decentralised the scene's boundaries, territories, and cohesiveness. Just like the city, the metal scene is always in a flux, it's neither here nor there because it's understood and lived in spaces of the 'now' (Morton, 2005). However, as these spaces of the 'now' are fleeting, maps also help to capture, if only for a moment, a local music scene. Putting a local area or scene 'on the map' thus helps to make visible the local impacts and processes of urban gentrification (Roberts, 2012: 7). Cultural mapping is a valuable tool in studies of heavy metal music in understanding how heavy metal is always, already part of the urban landscape, how changes within the landscape affect the spatial arrangements and vitality of metal scenes.

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[1] Only when the larger metropolitan area is considered (http://www.meetinleeds.co.uk/leeds.php).

[2] http://m.ippr.org/articles/56/8364/cities-will-be-engine-room-of-recovery-and-the-north-must-not-be-left-behind-

[3] In order to protect the identity of research participants, all formal names have been changed.