Somehow The Vital Connection is Made
The Sociocultural Role of Music in Music Cities

by
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Abstract

Within the last decade, the music city concept has been gaining traction worldwide. While acknowledging that the music city has primarily been valued as a vehicle for urban economic development, this project aims to present a more balanced approach to music cities using a sociocultural lens. Through the use of literature and popular media reviews, semi-structured interviews, ethnographic observation, and discourse analysis, several under-explored sociocultural ideas critical to successful music city development are presented. Furthermore, by focusing on the social dimensions of space and place while using systems-focused design, this paper highlights the prominent impacts of music on communities and its role in building and enhancing social infrastructure. This leads to a design intervention aimed at creating more vibrant and enjoyable cities that improve the social health and social infrastructure of communities, specifically via free music in public spaces and the need for music to exist more freely.

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Q: What is it about this type of art, music, that makes it so special?

A: I think that it's like the most direct path to your guts. You know what I mean?

Excerpt from Interview

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"What Am I Doing Here?" - Project Purpose

"Music City" - this is perhaps one of the hottest buzz terms being tossed around in urban development circles over the past decade, and even more so within the last five years. However, little is known or agreed upon regarding what it takes to be a "music city" and what a flourishing music city looks and sounds like. Who defines a music city? Who designates a music city? What are the most critical aspects of a music city? Is my idea of a music city the same as your idea of a music city? Can any city be a music city? At this point in time, with the continued exploration and (re)imagining of the ideas about what music can provide, the questions surrounding music cities are endless. With these questions and uncertainties in mind, it is easy to see that music cities are a complicated and diverse system of systems, with a variety of problems, challenges, and opportunities visible at every level. Therefore, by all accounts, music cities can be considered a "social mess" (Ackoff 1974; Horn 2007). So, where do we even start?

Over the past decade, the momentum behind the music city movement has been building, with most cities looking to it as a vehicle for urban economic development. As the momentum builds, the "music city" concept continues to evolve, and important shifts are becoming more evident. Primarily seen as an urban economic development concept rooted in the music industry, tourism, festivalization, and the creative cities movement, we are beginning to see a shift in thinking surrounding the potential of music and what it can offer a city beyond the promises of economic growth. More recently, there has been an emergence of research examining the important role of music in prominent disciplines such as public health and community development. However, given the relative newness of these additions to the music city discourse, there are seemingly endless avenues to explore in uncovering the different benefits music can offer cities.

As a geographer and a designer, I am particularly interested in the social dimensions of space/place, and how systems-focused design can highlight the prominent impacts of music on social cohesion, social capital, and social infrastructure. By situating the value of music in these contexts, this paper will contribute to the growing body of work focused on presenting a more balanced and sustainable approach to music city development. By using a range of research including literature and popular media reviews, semi-structured interviews, ethnographic observation, and discourse analysis I have revealed several under-explored sociocultural avenues

when considering music city development. Informed by the above qualitative approaches, I endeavour to address the question:

> *How might we use music to create more vibrant and enjoyable cities that enhance the social health and social infrastructure of communities?*

Although this question is informed through the research and work of experts, the direction of the paper has largely been inspired by the actions, reactions, and emotional responses people have towards music, including their conversations about music and music cities. The key theme that has emerged repeatedly throughout my research is the idea and importance of "community". Therefore, this paper will champion a community-centric approach to the continued evolution of music cities. In doing so, I aim to contribute to the amplification of music cities as a subdiscipline and offer a more critical approach to the idea by broadening the scope beyond economic development. This paper will advocate for a more balanced assessment of music's value and help to inform future policy that takes into greater consideration the connections between music and social well-being.

With the insights gathered from the various stages of research, this project reimagines what it means to be a thriving music city. Cities where music exists more freely, where communities are built around public pianos, balcony performances help us look out for one another, and street performers can help break language and cultural barriers. If done intentionally, and equitably, music can help create more connected communities, and support critical social infrastructure that strengthens social capital and social cohesion. Furthermore, by illustrating the value of music as it relates to language, emotions, social infrastructure, and belonging, we can gain a better understanding of what it means to co-create a music city with stakeholders beyond just City employees and those in the music industry.

The first part of this paper will introduce the concept of music cities, explore the more recent iterations, and position them as a social mess. Next, I will outline some of the more popular definitions of music cities and how music city status is determined. To build a deeper understanding of music city discourse, this paper will then explore the current state of music city research, where this research is situated, and offer a critical perspective. The paper's final section will use the information gleaned from the previous sections to focus on some of the under-explored

areas of music city research, culminating in a proposed design solution to encourage the development of more balanced music cities.

"Introduce Yerself" - A Music Cities Primer

"Oh, so like Nashville?" - This is perhaps the most common response I receive when explaining that I am researching "music cities." And if it's not Nashville, it's another city steeped in important musical history and tradition. A city where a genre was invented, or an influential musician was born. A city where major popular music events take place, or a city with popular music-related tourist destinations. A city where the "industry" is, or a city where you can find live music on every corner. In short, for most people, the mind jumps to a specific city with an important and obvious connection to music. Cities such as Nashville, Tennessee ("music city") and Austin, Texas ("The Live Music Capital of the World") have worked hard to cultivate a brand directly tied to music. In the case of these two cities, I would argue that it has even surpassed branding and marketing; it has become a complete identity. When you think of music, you think of these cities, and when you think of these cities, you think of music. They are iconic and known globally for their strong ties to music, and people from all over flock to them to experience a "music city." As a result, based on the parameters listed above, there are many popular ideas about what it means to be a music city and what cities can receive such a title. However, due to the varying motivations and priorities for becoming a "music city," a single agreed-upon definition of the term does not exist. As the idea of music cities has gained more traction, we can see a shift in the various components of a music city and how music is used in cities to spark economic and community development.

Although music cities are not a new concept, the way they are being conceptualized and their overall potential is evolving. To date, music cities have been considered in a variety of ways and situated within various contexts depending on how a "designation" occurs. In most cases, a music city designation is informal and often self-appointed, with the criteria for designation being based on how a specific city has defined what "music city" means, often with a press release outlining a vision (Bennett, 2020; Behr et al, 2019; Sound Diplomacy, 2019). However, some cities have used the following parameters to informally self-designate music city status, such as:

- The number of music live venues within the city - Defining a music city based on the ability for live music to occur. Examples: Austin (USA) and Melbourne (Australia)
- The prominence of the music industry - Defining a music city based on the prominence of the music industry such as music labels, publicists, etc. Examples: New York City (USA), London (England), Los Angeles (USA), Toronto (Canada)

- <u>Music History and Heritage</u> - Defining a music city based on significant historical contributions to music, such as inventing a style/genre or being the birthplace of a prominent musician or band. This also includes cities steeped in musical tradition. Examples: New Orleans (USA), Liverpool (England), Detroit (USA)

In addition, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has its own formal designation for Cities of Music, which is part of the larger UNESCO Creative Cities Network. These are cities that have to "demonstrate six variables, the most obvious being music heritage, along with an excellent background in music-making, education, community involvement, regular high-profile local music events, and international music events" (Baker, 2019). Created in 2004, the UNESCO Cities of Music pre-date contemporary music city discourse and designations, but they are often discussed within the music cities sphere. As of the writing of this paper, the UNESCO Creative Cities of Music website (citiesofmusic.net) lists 39 Cities of Music worldwide.

The music cities concept is also embedded within the discourse of various movements and concepts. The most notable and closely connected to music cities is the Creative Cities concept/movement. Although coined by Charles Landry (2000), this concept is largely attributed to Richard Florida due to his expansion of the research and continued championing of the idea. The Creative Cities movement focuses on the importance of having a thriving creative economy, which includes arts and culture. Florida (2002; 2004) considers music a critical aspect of the creative economy, especially when attracting talent in other industries to a city, primarily high-tech, which is often a boon to a city's economy. Given the volume of references throughout much of the popular music cities discourse and research, Florida's creative class and creative cities work (and the subsequent movement) can be seen as a precursor to the current music cities movement.

In recent years, particularly over the past decade, the term "music city" has become colloquial within urban economic development discourse worldwide. Witnessing the success of a strong music economy in places like Austin, Texas, Nashville, Tennessee, New York City, New York, and London, England, many cities are now turning to the concept to enhance their economies through tourism, events, entertainment, etc. This popularity also resulted in an increase in efforts to develop and formalize strategies to help cities grow their economies using a music cities approach.

In 2015, the International Federation of Phonographic Industries (IFPI) and Music Canada partnered to create one of the earliest reports entitled *The Mastering of a music city: Key Elements, Effective Strategies and Why it's Worth Pursuing*. Arguably the first of its kind, the authors of this report (Terrill, Hogarth, Clement, & Francis, 2015) refer to the document as a roadmap for developing music cities that can be implemented by any city, worldwide. To date, this is one of the most influential reports in the music city sphere, and it ushered in a new sense of possibility for music city development that had not been seen before. Cities began working hard to find ways to create an abundance of musical experiences to enhance the economy through job creation, drive tourism, and support local business through spending, among other objectives. As a result, they note that "alliances are being formed among cities that see value in partnering to enhance their music success, music city accreditations are being discussed and defined, and music city panels are popping up at conferences around the globe" (Terrill, Hogarth, Clement, & Francis, 2015).

With the attraction of the economic importance of music cities for neoliberal capitalism, the critical sociocultural aspects are often glossed over or used to support the economic reasons for music city development. Perhaps this is not surprising given the influence of the *Mastering of a music city* report, where the authors state that "cities can deliver significant economic and employment benefits beyond the long-acknowledged cultural and social benefits" (Terrill, Hogarth, Clement, & Francis, 2015). In stating this, they, perhaps unintentionally, divorce the social and cultural benefits from the economic ones instead of considering a more balanced system that places value on all aspects of music's benefits. As a result, this so-called "roadmap" provides a snapshot of the priorities and motivations for cities exploring the idea of becoming a "music city." It illustrates where value is situated when understanding the complexity of the role of music in the urban context and less of a balanced approach to incorporating music into the urban context.

As the idea evolved and more people began to take note, music city consultancies such as Sound Diplomacy have emerged to assist cities in developing their music strategies. The idea here is that consultancies can help build robust music strategies and policies to embed within a greater urban development context by identifying a city's assets, gaps, and areas for improvement. While the conversations about music cities still ultimately fall into the economic domain, those in the consultancy sphere often base their strategies around the idea of a "music ecosystem." Although a relatively new concept in the music city conversation, the "music ecosystem" approach encourages

an important shift by attempting a systems-thinking methodology toward the creation of music city strategies. Recognizing the importance of this approach, the founder of Sound Diplomacy, Shain Shapiro, recently created The Center for Music Ecosystems, which has the ability to strongly advocate for a more balanced approach to music city development. According to their Core Mandate, The Center for Music Ecosystems "is a global research and development organization whose objective is to understand, advance, and enrich music ecosystems and increase their role and impact on the economic and social development of communities" (The Center for Music Ecosystems, NDP). This approach is inching closer to the forefront of music city development because of the way it prioritizes engaging stakeholders (some obvious, some less so) from across the city and beyond in the conversation. Not only that but employing a systems-thinking approach to the development process can create more opportunities to continually uncover the values of music, its power, and how it helps support the essential social and cultural fabrics of the city. However, even with this approach, we still see the strongest focus of music cities placed on their economic values. As a result, a growing number of scholars and practitioners are pointing to other benefits that cities should consider alongside these economic priorities.

"This Chaos"- Music Cities as a "Social Mess"

As we continue to explore the concept and allow it to evolve, it is abundantly clear that music cities are a "social mess." To date, I have yet to see this concept applied to music cities or explicitly acknowledged by any authors, advocates, or other music city actors. However, as outlined below, I contend that it is useful to apply this concept to music cities. But first, what is a "social mess"?

The idea of a "mess" or a "social mess" is ultimately rooted in systems thinking, which, as I have argued, plays a critical role in truly understanding music cities. In 1974, Russel Ackoff coined the term "mess" while offering this explanation:

> *"We have also come to realize that no problem ever exists in complete isolation. Every problem interacts with other problems and is therefore part of a set of interrelated problems, a system of problems…Furthermore, solutions to most problems produce other problems; for example, buying a car may solve a transportation problem but it may also create a need for a garage, a financial problem, a maintenance problem, and conflict among family members for its use. English does not contain a suitable word for "system of problems." Therefore, I have had to coin one. I choose to call such a system a mess." (Ackoff, 1974)*

In short, as Ackoff (1974) notes, a "mess" is a "system of problems," which, based on my research, accurately describes music cities. However, Robert E. Horn's (2007) evolution of Ackoff's concept clearly articulates why music cities are "social messes." Through his work, Horn (2007) developed the following criteria for determining "social messes". By my estimation, music cites score a perfect 14/14 on Horn's criteria for a social mess diagnosis as shown in the Table 1 below.

Social Mess Criteria	Music Cities
There is no unique "correct" view of the problem	Music cities are definite and theorized in many ways, by different people, and for different reasons.
There are radically different views of the problem and contradictory solutions	There are many actors representing different roles within the music city system(s), each with unique needs, goals, objectives, and philosophies.
Most problems are connected to other problems	The music city is a system of systems. Therefore, all changes impact the whole system to some degree.

Social Mess Criteria	Music Cities
Data are often uncertain or missing	Measuring the qualitative aspects of music cities is influenced by the positionalities of those collecting the data, and those providing it.
There are multiple value conflicts	There is a significant value conflict between independent music city actors and the City, particularly as it relates to economic priorities, gentrification, venues, and challenging bylaws.
There are ideological and cultural constraints	Not all people within the system(s) value music in the same way, nor do all people feel safe in all aspects of the system.
There are political constraints	Local politicians must balance the needs of many, while progressing their agendas. Therefore, time and capacity can be limited, especially when managing many stakeholders. Also, the political will to engage with an idea can change with election cycles.
There are economic constraints	There are several competing priorities between actors in the system, with each wanting to directly benefit from the economic gains.
There often a-logical or illogical or multi-valued thinking	Since music cities are defined and theorized in several ways, and have many actors with competing priorities and philosophies, there are multiple existing truths to navigate.
There are numerous possible intervention points	The music city system(s) is incredible dynamic and diverse, especially regarding the competing needs of the various actors. Therefore, interventions are possible on all levels.
The consequences are difficult to imagine	Predicting consequences to changes within the music city system(s) is very challenging given the unknown and ever-changing external political and economic priorities.
There is considerable uncertainty and ambiguity	Simply put, there is no agreed upon idea or definition for what a music city is, what it must include, of how to appropriately support the system(s).
There is great resistance to change	Given the diverse array of actors within the system, there will resistance to any changes that result in priorities shifting, or expectations not being met.
The problem solver(s) are out of contact with the problems and potential solutions	Currently, problem solver(s) in the music cities sphere are often local politicians and City employees. These people are often out of contact with the problems, and in some cases, can be the source of the problem.

Table 1: Social Mess Criteria and corresponding Music City information

Why does this matter for music cities/music city development?

Recognizing social messes is essential to how we understand systems (or systems of systems) like music cities. Some examples of why contextualizing music cities in this way can be helpful are because it:

- Helps to organize around the concept, better identify gaps, understand feedback/causal loops, and avoid or address "systems traps" (Meadows, 2008)
- Encourages people to be critical of single-solution plans for music city development and problem-solving
- Highlights the fact that a single-value approach is inherently inadequate due to a lack of rigour and deeper understanding of the system/problem (ex/ an economic-first approach)
- Helps to distinguish the difference between a music city, and a city with a music economy
- Opens the door to include other work that happens in parallel to music cities research but is not a part of regular music city discourse (ex/ social infrastructure)

Of course, these are just a few of the many benefits to considering music cities through a systems approach and understanding them as social messes. This is because the "primary tenet of systems thinking is that behaviour in any context cannot be understood by examining components in isolation; rather, the system as a whole should represent the unit of analysis" (McLean et al., 2019; Ottino, 2003).

Why does this matter for this research project?

Framing music cities as "social messes" means that research on music cities will also be messy, complex, and sometimes divergent or conflicting. With this in mind, it is necessary to acknowledge the limitations of my work uncovered by the "social mess" framing. First, this paper cannot cover everything written about music cities due to space and time restrictions. Also, it is simply not possible to fully capture/contain the mess as it is ongoing and continually being made. So instead, I aim to capture this mess broadly and perhaps more critically.

A related challenge is that there are many different ways to study music in urban contexts. Adding to the messiness, most of the literature does not explicitly use the term "music city/cities," and past

approaches are often peripheral to research on music cities. In other words, there is a lot of work on music in/and cities that is not explicitly *about* music cities. This requires more critical research that makes space for all of those approaches and brings them into conversation with each other. Not only for music cities specifically but also for other indirectly related topics such as music *in* cities, music *and* cities, and the impacts of music in everyday urban life, etc. This reach project hopes to encourage this work, believing it is possible to do without claiming to speak for all communities or establishing a singular, authoritative definition of something that simply cannot be one thing.

In acknowledging the above complexities, this paper does not claim to be a roadmap or guide on how a city can become a music city. Instead, this paper illustrates the critical under-explored sociocultural components of the system while asserting the importance of understanding music cities as complex systems and social messes. All cities are unique, and therefore, it is up to the city to understand the complexity of its own systems and use the information gleaned from this project appropriately.

"Peep The Technique" – Methodology

Due to the complex nature of music cities, I chose to employ the British Design Council's "Double Diamond" process as a framework to help guide the research project through its various phases[1]. The Double Diamond is an effective tool because it embraces the critical importance of divergent and convergent thinking and implements them within the context of problem finding, problem framing, solution and intervention development, and the delivery of an appropriate solution that addresses the identified problem. Furthermore, this process is useful due to its flexibility and ability to modify and adapt to my project. I found this especially helpful given the messiness of music cities.

Using the Double Diamond model, I broke the project into four distinct phases; Discover, Define, Develop, and Deliver. Each phase allowed me to dig deeper to understand the problem better and eventually focus on an under-explored avenue worth pursuing. However, while these phases are distinct, following the Double Diamond is not necessarily a linear process as it makes space for, and encourages, iteration throughout the process.
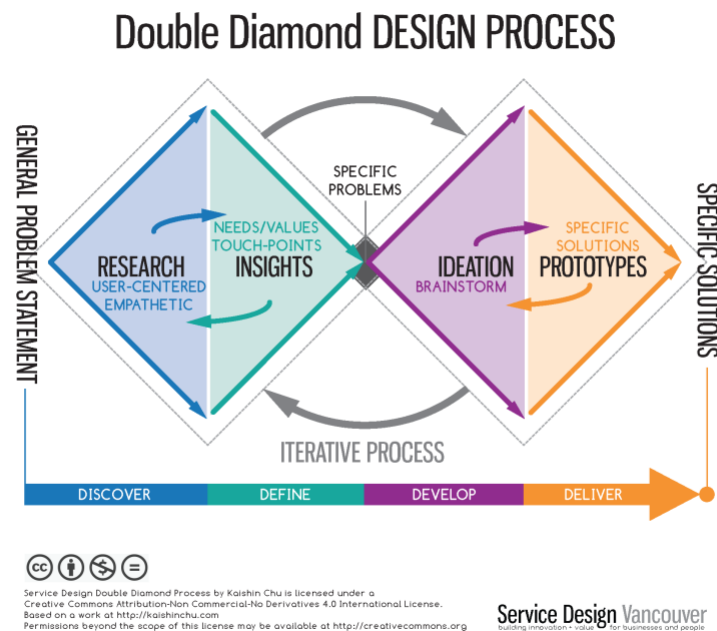

Figure 1: Double Diamond Design Process Framework

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[1] Note that the Double Diamond was only employed as a framework for the design process. A specific framework was not applied to the research methods used to gather, sort, and interpret data to allow for a more inductive approach.

"Book Club" - Literature and Popular Media Review

An extensive multi-disciplinary literature review was conducted to gain a balanced understanding of music cities and situate the concept in various contexts. Since music cities have been considered and theorized across an array of disciplines including, but not limited to, urban and cultural policy, economic development, urban theory, the creative economy, community development, urban development, human geography, sociology, and anthropology, it was critical to gain a broad understanding of the landscape from both theoretical and practical perspectives. Therefore, a wide variety of sources were considered[2], including academic journals, white papers, popular media articles in newspapers and blog posts, podcasts, industry reports, and various music city reports and strategies. Additionally, there is a practical component to the music cities movement with the development of consultancy companies such as Sound Diplomacy to assist cities with music strategy, ecosystem assessment, and policy development. Thus, it was essential to review reports generated by these companies and explore their websites to understand their methodologies and priorities.

As stated, conversations about music cities exist in many different spaces, and therefore, a robust literature review allowed for a strong understanding of the landscape from many points of view. Throughout this process, I paid particular attention to the frequency of the topics covered to understand where priority is focused in the system. This allowed me to highlight under-explored research areas, including adjacent and complimentary topics, resulting in a narrowing of this project's scope. In addition, while all aspects of music cities are essential parts of the same system(s), the literature review allowed me to underscore important areas for intervention that would enable a more robust utilization of music.

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[2] Examples: Academic Journals and Books (Baker, 2019; Ballico, 2020; Cohen, 2013; Doughty & Lagerqvist, 2016; Force, 2009; Homan, 2014; etc.), White papers (Bennett and McKay, 2019), Popular Media (Now Magazine, 2016, 2018; Pacific Standard, 2019; Shain Shapiro via Medium, 2018; etc.) , Podcasts (*The Working Songwriter*, 2019), Industry Reports, Music City Reports, Strategies (Centre for Music Ecosystems Core Mandate, NDP; The Mastering of A Music City, 2015; Sound Diplomacy: The Music Cities Manual, 2019; etc.)

"Making Sense" - Ethnographic Observation and Discourse Analysis

To gain better insight into how people interact with and feel about music cities, I engaged in ethnographic observation by attending the 2019 Music Cities Summit held in Toronto on May 11, 2019. As part of the Canadian Music Week conference in Toronto, the Music Cities Summit engaged musicians, music industry professionals, city officials, and others in a variety of conversations, panels, and seminars to discuss music cities and music city development. By attending the summit, I observed how a broad range of people interact with and feel about the topic of music cities and how they are conceived. I elected to attend sessions I assumed would be most closely related to the under-explored areas discovered through the literature review as a way to investigate potential areas for intervention. However, in the instances this was not possible, I attended sessions based on personal interest (such as the Music Cities Research Masterclass).

Throughout the sessions, I attempted to pay close attention to the way people were conducting themselves, how they spoke about specific topics and their overall participation. However, my particular interest was what people said and their emotions, assumptions, and language used within this social context. Engaging in this form of discourse analysis and observation enabled me to recognize patterns, particularly in the way people talk about the value of music as an art form (ex/ personal, emotional, experience and community-focused, etc.) in comparison to the discourse around music cities (ex/ money, economy, policy, politics, venues/space, etc.). For example, many people used "music scene" and "music city" interchangeably in some contexts while using them as distinct concepts in other contexts. Along with paying close attention to the things people were saying, I also made sure to note the things people were not saying directly or at all. This discourse analysis led me to reflect on the conversations and compare notes on what the main priorities of a music city seem to be versus what is truly connecting everything to identify inconsistencies, gaps, and areas for intervention.

Understanding that the discourse analysis from the Music Cities Summit was limited by its specific context, I opted to expand this research to forms of popular media, mainly documentaries, and podcasts. In an effort to diversify the discourse and uncover opportunities for exploration adjacent to music cities, not all documentaries and podcasts were specifically about music cities. Instead, I explored popular media such as Joe Pug's podcast, *The Working Songwriter,* where musicians are interviewed about their careers, influences, and lives. In doing so, I analyzed the way musicians

such as Amanda Palmer and Craig Finn articulated the importance of the cities that were formative to their careers. By collecting this information and comparing it to the Music Cities Summit's discourse analysis, I was able to see how music, cities, and music cities are valued in different contexts. Not only was this critical to the development of the research problem, but it also informed the way I approached the semi-structured interviews and the design of the questions asked.

"Let Me Explain" - Semi-Structured Interviews

In continuing with qualitative research methods for this project, I used semi-structured interviews to gain better insight into the thoughts and feelings about the complex issues associated with music city development from a practitioner perspective. To do this, I employed the following criteria for participation recruitment while also endeavouring to have a diverse roster of participants:

- Participants must be adults (aged 18 and up)
- Participants must have experience in the music industry as musicians, promoters, small venue owners, event planners, and other important actors within the music city ecosystem (or any combination of these positions)
- Participants should have experience in non-industry hub cities

Throughout all forms of research, I determined that musicians, promoters, small venue owners, event planners, etc., are often underrepresented voices, even though music cities' success often relies on the success of the people in these groups. Therefore, I believe that interviewing people in these categories is critical to further understanding the complexity of music city development and what under-explored areas would benefit the most from design intervention.

I recruited participants through purposeful sampling that drew on my personal and academic networks, including my embeddedness within music scenes. I also engaged in targeted sampling of musicians I follow on social media that have made posts about music and/in urban settings. Additionally, an attempt was made to ensure diverse representation from different demographics and positionalities (BIPOC, Gender, LGBTQ2SA+). However, participants were not asked to disclose any information about how they identify themselves within those realms. In total, I conducted seven one-hour-long interviews with people representing groups such as musicians,

promoters, talent buyers, publicists, festival and event organizers, small venue owners, independent label owners, community advocates, and entrepreneurs, among others. Given the precarious nature of this work, particularly as musicians, most participants represented multiple music industry areas.

Interview participants self-identified their role(s) within the music industry and the roles they deemed important to music (i.e. community advocate). This was helpful as it allowed participants to answer questions from multiple perspectives. Seven was deemed to be a sufficient number of interviews due to the size of the project while recognizing that all knowledge is partial, personal, and subjective, and therefore each interview is meaningful. Also, as mentioned, many of these individuals occupy many roles and therefore offer a more expansive reach on the topic than people might initially expect.

The insights gleaned from the observation, and discourse analysis heavily informed the questions I asked during the interview (See Appendix A for Interview Guide). Participants were asked questions regarding music city terminology, identifying gaps in current music city development, their experiences in other cities, and what makes music special as an art form. The interview guide was structured to balance responses based on knowledge and experience of music cities with responses based on thoughts and feelings. I ultimately selected the semi-structured interview method for its flexibility and relatively informal process. I attempted to be as consistent as possible with each interview. However, participants were encouraged to speak freely, ask questions, elaborate on topics important to them, and spend as much time as they desired to answer each question. This helped create a relaxed atmosphere that facilitated authentic and emotional responses to the questions asked. As a result, I gathered greater insight into their thoughts and feelings about music city development, especially from participants with multiple music industry experiences.

"Feedback in the Field" - Critique of Popular Music City Discourse and Research

Contemporary discussions about music cities have seen the topic theorized and conceptualized in several different ways. While the field continues to evolve, as I have previously stated, most music city discourse remains rooted in the various economic possibilities music presents to cities. Having said that, recently, we can see the undertaking of more efforts to enhance the value of music in cities by using a sociocultural lens, either through new research or by incorporating existing research on the value of music that has not typically been part of the discourse. This section will explore the music city concept through popular music city discourse and various forms of research on the topic. Additionally, this section will offer a critique of the current state of music cities by addressing gaps and shortcomings, particularly around the sociocultural value of music. This includes the Creative Cities concept, the current iteration of music ecosystem discourse, the focus on venues and scenes, and the idea of music as a saviour. These insights will inform subsequent sections and, ultimately, the design intervention.

However, before diving into the literature, it is important to acknowledge that the "music city" is largely a Western concept and, at its core, is traditionally a neoliberal pursuit. This acknowledgment is important because this approach to music cities is based on Western and neoliberal ideas, understandings of music cities, evaluations of music, urban development priorities, and measures of success. While an increasing number of non-Western countries and cities are interested in the movement and have been invited to the conversation, the foundation of the concepts and theories are still rooted in the West and might not consider music in other contexts. As a result, the examples and cities championed throughout much of the music cities literature focus on cities such as London, New York, Melbourne, Austin, Liverpool, and Nashville (among others). This acknowledgment is not to discredit the work that these, and many other cities, have done to achieve their successes. Rather, I mention this for two reasons:

1. To acknowledge that this paper's research, critiques, and ideas are limited and also based on this Western concept. My goal is to assist in the continued evolution of music cities in the Western context and illustrate how they can be more than neoliberal concepts.

2. To acknowledge that music is complex, dynamic, and global. The way music is used and valued around the world is not the same, and therefore, the critiques and interventions suggested in this paper might not have a universal application.

Finally, this additional context helps frame the rest of this section and explains why the literature is not representative and should be read critically and carefully. However, parts of these findings still might be useful elsewhere.

"State of All Things" - Music Cities Research and Expert Discourse

Perhaps the most challenging question posed in the development and study of music cities is: *What is a music city?* Current music city discourse does not offer a singular definition for what a music city is or what it includes, nor should this be expected[3]. Instead, music city definitions are informed by different contexts, theories, disciplines, priorities, geographies, histories, and their various permutations. As Toby Bennett (2020) notes, there is no original music city and thus no blueprint for creation. While the term "music city" is becoming increasingly popular, especially within urban economic development discourse, its interpretations vary widely and are influenced by social and political contexts. Bennett (2020) states, "despite energetic attempts to do so, no templates, indices or prescriptive formulae can capture all eventualities: as many 'music cities' exist as there are possibilities of encountering, interpreting, nurturing and remaking music itself." Over time, several academics and industry experts have conceptualized and defined music cities differently. Many of these definitions have overlapping aspects, while others offer new and reimagined ideas that help expand the concept. However, by considering the music city as a social mess, we can argue that many music city definitions are incomplete and do not consider a balanced value of music and what makes it special as an art form. It also calls into question whether or not a definition is necessary, valuable, or even possible.

Since this paper has framed the concept of the music city as a social mess, it would be nearly impossible to review all types of research related to them. The system is massive and contains many systems within the systems, all of which are important and require their own focus and study. This paper aims to uncover and highlight the under-explored aspects that are located within the

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[3] This is partly because definitions and categorizations of music itself are contested.

sociocultural dimension of this social mess. In reviewing music city literature and documents from the consultancy sphere, several common sociocultural themes have emerged that are worth exploring further. However, to do that, it is essential to understand two critical aspects of current music city development:

1. The attraction of becoming a music city
2. Creative Cities: The precursor to music cities

So, what *is* driving the attraction to become a music city? In short, the evidence suggests that it is all about money. The economic impact of music on the Canadian economy is significant. To help understand this and contextualize some of the research findings, the following examples illustrate music's economic impact in Canada:

- Live music alone contributes a total annual economic impact of $1.2 billion in Ontario (Music Canada, 2015)
- Live music venues in Toronto generate a total economic impact of $850 million annually while providing the equivalent of 10,500 full-time jobs. (City of Toronto, 2020)
- A 2020 West Anthem music ecosystem report for both Calgary and Edmonton, Alberta, conducted by Sound Diplomacy indicates the music ecosystems of the two cities contribute $2.9 billion to the Alberta economy: Edmonton - $1.3 billion, Calgary - $1.6 billion (West Anthem, 2020).
- In 2017, the number of jobs generated and supported by the music sector in Alberta reached a total of 21,261 (West Anthem, 2020)
- There are 7,945 direct music jobs in Vancouver, including artists, and the music ecosystem supports a total of 14,540 jobs (Sound Diplomacy, 2018)
- Indigenous music contributed a total of almost $78 million to Canada's economy (GDP) in 2018 (APTN, 2021)
- The total economic impact of the PEI music industry was the creation of 244 FTE jobs (in addition to employing 805 artists), $10.4 million in labour income, and $23.9 million in GDP (Nordicity, 2015)

Even with such a small snapshot, there is no denying the prominent economic benefits associated with music city development. Additionally, since money is a straightforward success metric to understand and market (i.e., more money is good, less money is bad), it is easy to see why governments and policymakers would be keen to explore and endorse the idea. It is also the easiest way to justify decision-making to constituents. This is especially true given the sense of urgency and fear of missing out created via the creative cities movement, the precursor to the music city.[4]

As mentioned, the most current iteration of the music city idea can be traced back to the Creative Cities movement that gained traction in the early 2000s, particularly through the work of Richard Florida (2002; 2004). While fully exploring and offering rigorous critiques of the Creative Cities, Creative Economy, and Creative Class theses is beyond the scope of this paper, it is necessary to establish a general understanding of these ideas. These concepts are hugely influential to music cities as they are known today and are a significant part of the foundation for the current music city discourse.

Based largely on his Creative Class thesis (2002; 2004), Florida asserts that cities should lend their focus to the idea of "creativity" to drive economic growth and innovation, and attract young, mobile, highly educated, and creative people to a city. In addition, he advises cities to "focus on producing an attractive 'quality of place' by redeveloping historic mixed-use neighbourhoods, investing in vibrant arts scenes and outdoor activities and promoting their cultural diversity to appeal to the consumption preferences of the creative class" (Grodach, 2013). Cities worldwide, particularly in the global North and West, have found value in Florida's work, and many have adopted his ideas attempting to enhance their economies. However, given the neoliberal context and its swift and unchecked uptake by cities in policymaking before it was possible to measure impact, the Creative Cities concept has received significant criticism for its impacts on many communities.

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[4] It should be noted that, while the terms are often used interchangeably outside of the formal discourse, the music cities concept differs from the concept of the 'music scene.' This idea will be discussed later, but scenes are less tied to economic success and more to local pride and cultural contribution (Connell and Gibson, 2003). A music city is a broader conceptualization that can embrace a diversity of scenes because of the definitional distinctions noted in this paper.

The Good

Florida's creative cities work gained significant popularity in the early 2000s, and there are several strengths to his research and the conversations he created. Therefore, Florida should receive credit for "putting cultural and artistic activities in the forefront of debates on innovation and the development of cities" (Tremblay and Pilati, 2013). Additionally, the creative cities concept recognizes arts and culture, especially music, as an essential vehicle for vibrant city life and, in a perfect world, should benefit all citizens. Furthermore, by championing the investment in arts and culture, Florida calls attention to the power of arts and culture in attracting and connecting people and the role in strengthening communities. One can argue that the conversation around the value of arts, culture, and creativity would not be as prominent today without Florida's work, resulting in his significant influence over urban policy and development.

Critiques and Challenges

Just as Florida's work is celebrated, it also receives significant criticism, particularly for its neoliberal agenda, exacerbating social and economic inequalities (Grodach, 2013). Although these criticisms come from many perspectives, this section will focus on those most relevant to this project: lack of recognition for existing communities, gentrification and displacement, and uneven playing field between cities. I will then explain why this matters to music city research.

Lack of Recognition for Existing Communities

The overarching problem with Florida's work is its neoliberal take on urban development and growth. A significant gap in his work is the lack of enthusiasm for supporting a city's existing communities through arts and culture. This is shown by the little-to-no advocacy for thoughtful implementation strategies for creative city policies that would allow for all people to benefit. Instead, the focus is on attracting new, more "desirable" people to the city in an effort to grow the economy, leaving the issues of exclusion, displacement, and disenfranchisement of others up to the City to figure out. As Van Holm (2015) notes, "the displacement of vulnerable populations is uncompensated by economic gains for the public." Following Van Holm, it would seem irresponsible to create a sense of urgency around interurban competition by exploiting arts and culture for economic gain while not providing well-thought-out strategies to avoid/reduce the inevitable inequity.

Gentrification and Displacement

The most common critique of the creative cities concept is how it acts as a driver of gentrification endorsed by the local government. Romão (2017) notes, "the process of commodification of culture and creativity often leads to processes of gentrification in urban areas, as a result of the concentration of creative activities, the creation or reinforcement of a unique and distinctive image of the place, the consequent competition for location and the related inflationary processes." As a result, neighbourhoods begin to change, the cost-of-living increases and people and businesses are forced out. While there are several well-documented problems associated with gentrification from many disciplines, some overlooked issues specific to this context include:

- From an arts perspective, it drives out many of the people, such as musicians, who created a desirable neighbourhood in the first place (van der Hoeven and Hitters, 2019; Cohen, 2013).

- It results in a change in attitude regarding existing communities and amenities in a neighbourhood. For example, an area once known for live music might face pressure from new citizens who lack appreciation for these activities and see them as undesirable. As a result, music venues and other establishments are likely to be forced out, not by increased rent but by policies and noise by-laws.

- It undermines the creative city's value and need for tolerance, which Florida says comes from diversity (Florida, 2002). Gentrification favours more affluent people, who are typically white, which diminishes economic, cultural, and racial diversity, and creates an enhanced presence of whiteness (Lewis et al., 2020; Moore-Cherry, 2015).

- It reinforces the narrative around the instrumental/intrinsic debate along class lines regarding the use and value of culture: aesthetic values for the middle classes (i.e. leisure and fun), instrumental outcomes for the poor and disadvantaged (i.e. culture as a saviour) (Holden, 2004).

- It calls into question the idea of the "success" of cultural policies that support the Creative City. Since gentrification results in out-migration/displacement, there is no way of measuring

who is not there and what did not happen (Holden, 2004). The success of events, engagement numbers, and other forms of qualitative and quantitative data are then based mainly on who can be there in the first place. In other words, success is based on those who are "successful" enough to participate and does not factor in who was excluded to get there.

- As is shown, the rapid uptake of the Creative Cities concept has resulted devastating consequences for members of the music community. By driving people out of their neighbourhoods, communities, and even cities, the Creative City can be shown to only value creativity (particularly music) for as a commodity for consumption of a certain class.

Uneven Playing Field for Cities

Although the idea for Florida's creative cities model is for all cities, the way creative capital is theorized, quantified, and applied tends to marginalize smaller cities (Lewis and Donald, 2010). Lewis and Donald (2010) argue that although the idea is presented for all cities, smaller cities remain at a disadvantage due to a perceived (and real) lack of opportunities, amenities, resources, diverse tech sectors, and an overall lack of infrastructure. As a result, smaller cities are at a "significant disadvantage in the analyses and league ranking tables in creative city comparison studies," which contributes to a 'loser' status, perception of failure, and decline and marginalization in these cities (Lewis and Donald, 2010).

Additionally, the idea that cities are more creative reinforces the narrative that creative people are attracted to cities where other creative people are, thus enhancing creativity. Furthermore, the creative cities idea uses diversity as a proxy for tolerance and reinforces a narrative that smaller cities are less tolerant based on reduced diversity (Lewis and Donald, 2010). Unfortunately, this makes it very challenging for smaller cities to break into the creative city conversation. Since the music city idea is closely tied to the creative cities conversation, the current ideas of a music city are likely to produce the same types of challenges.

Why does this matter to music cities?

The creative cities concept, including the successes and flaws, has hugely influenced the idea of the music city. Florida's ideas have permeated much of the contemporary music city discourse, making it easy to see the connection to the neoliberalism influence. This results in the creation of influential documents based on a highly contested foundation. In fact, many authors draw upon Florida's work and Creative City rhetoric while discussing and promoting the idea of the music city (Terrill et al., 2015; Baker, 2019; Whiting, 2019; Shapiro, 2020; Baird and Scott, 2018; Homan, 2014, etc.). While much of this work includes sociocultural benefits in the conversation, it is clear that the music city, much like the creative city, is mainly valued for the potential positive economic impacts. For example, as mentioned before, *The Mastering of a Music City,* one of the most influential documents of the current music city era, asserts that "Music Cities can deliver significant economic and employment benefits beyond the long-acknowledged cultural and social benefits" (Terrill et al., 2015). This begs the question: If the sociocultural benefits were long acknowledged, why weren't they considered important until there was a clear economic benefit?

Furthermore, one must look no further than the opening paragraphs of *The Mastering of a music city* to see the influence of Florida's work on the music city concept on display:

> *A music city, by its simplest definition, is a place with a vibrant music economy. There is growing recognition among governments and other stakeholders that Music Cities can deliver significant economic, employment, cultural and social benefits...Are you looking to draw tourists to your city? Attract tech firms and the bright, young people they employ? Build your city's brand? Think music!* (Terrill et al., 2015)

The authors use Florida's rhetoric to justify the music city concept by highlighting the role of music in giving cities a competitive edge in attracting business and well-educated young talent. However, I argue that this ultimately produces an unstable foundation for music cities.

Of course, other documents contain this type of discourse as well. For example, Baird and Scott's *Towards an Ideal Typical Live music city* (2018) situates the importance of live music within a city's creative and cultural economy (CCE). As a result, they compare a variety of "Anglo cities" and

highlight the core shared features they argue that lead to an "ideal" live music city (Baird and Scott, 2018). While this work has value and highlights essential aspects policymakers should consider to support live music, it does not address how citizens or communities can benefit from music on a sociocultural level (Baird and Scott, 2018). To their credit, the authors note that the framework developed is "explicitly neoliberal" and discuss the challenges associated with neoliberal economic policies. However, I would argue that their use of the term "ideal" diminishes the important sociocultural values of music in cities.

Other examples of influential works (among several) that discuss and promote creative cities discourse throughout music city discussions include Andrea Baker's *The Great Music City: Exploring Music, Space and Identity (Pop Music, Culture and Identity)* (2019) and various reports and guides developed in the consultancy sphere by Sound Diplomacy. Both do so while promoting a more comprehensive array of music city benefits, where they also champion several sociocultural aspects. The role of music consultancies and their attempt at a more balanced approach to music cities via a music ecosystem approach has been discussed earlier in this paper. However, it should be mentioned that Sound Diplomacy does draw upon Florida's work to help sell the music city idea.

On the other hand, Baker attempts to combine several aspects from various academic and industry resources to better understand music cities (Baker, 2019). She uses what she calls "algorithms" to assess the value of music activity in urban sociality (Baker, 2019). The four algorithms focus on Economics, Richard Florida's 4 Ts creative index, Heritage, and Music Cities Definition. Paying particular attention to the "Music Cities Definition" algorithm, Baker states that it "offers a much-needed, holistic assessment of music activity because, which [sic] while building on the popular political economy discourse, also includes the social importance of space and cultural practices" (Baker, 2019). While she includes Florida's highly criticized ideas, Baker does push the needle in the direction of considering a more well-rounded view of music cities that places considerable value on their sociocultural dimensions.

Tracing contemporary music city discourse back to Florida's creative city idea provides a deeper understanding of why much of the conversations are rooted in neoliberal ideas. However, more recently, we are seeing a shift towards the sociocultural values of music cities, which I will discuss in the following section.

"Come Walk With Me" - Music As A Social Good

It is no secret that music is important, powerful, and meaningful. It provides a soundtrack to all of the moments of our lives, from driving to work, to getting married. We celebrate through music, and we remember through music. Music is powerful enough to extend the body's reach, transporting people through time and space just by hearing a certain song. Collective memories are formed through musical experiences while simultaneously creating feelings and memories unique to an individual. Music also has the power to connect people and (re)build communities and plays a critical sociocultural role in the lives of individuals, communities, and cities.

Given that this paper aims to advocate for the critical role of music in enhancing a city's social infrastructure, I want to call particular attention to the ways music is articulated as a social good throughout popular music city discourse. From here, I will show how this part of the conversation can be expanded to create a balanced understanding of the role of music in cities. This section will focus on where much of the sociocultural values are situated in the music city discourse and present several connections to other equally important related research happening outside of the discourse.

Music Ecosystems

While music ecosystems have already been discussed, their importance for the sociocultural aspects of the system should be explicitly stated. In theory, the attempt at a systemic approach to music city development offered by music ecosystems is an important way for the sociocultural values of music to appear in popular music city discourse. As a result, this approach creates space for conversations about the sociocultural values of music and how they can be encouraged in an urban context. This is especially important in the consultancy sphere and instances of convening such as music city events and summits, where music city strategies, best practices, and new ideas are shared and likely to be reproduced. Therefore, creating space to inject and uplift new discourse is critical.

Furthermore, if done correctly, taking a proper systems approach will show the vast array of actors within the system and how they impact and interact with one another. Doing so shows the importance of a balanced system that does not rely on a singular factor for success, and therefore, what impacts one area can impact all areas. This is a good reminder for all music city researchers

advocating to prioritize specific aspects of the system. Additionally, this approach offers opportunities for cities to reflect on their goals and strategies to determine if they are truly a music city or a city with a music economy. However, based on the image below (Figure 2), to be truly effective the ecosystem must be illustrated in a way that shows connections and causal loops between all actors within the system. As it stands, the current "Music Ecosystem" from Sound Diplomacy (2019) acts more as a diagram and leaves the important connections out.
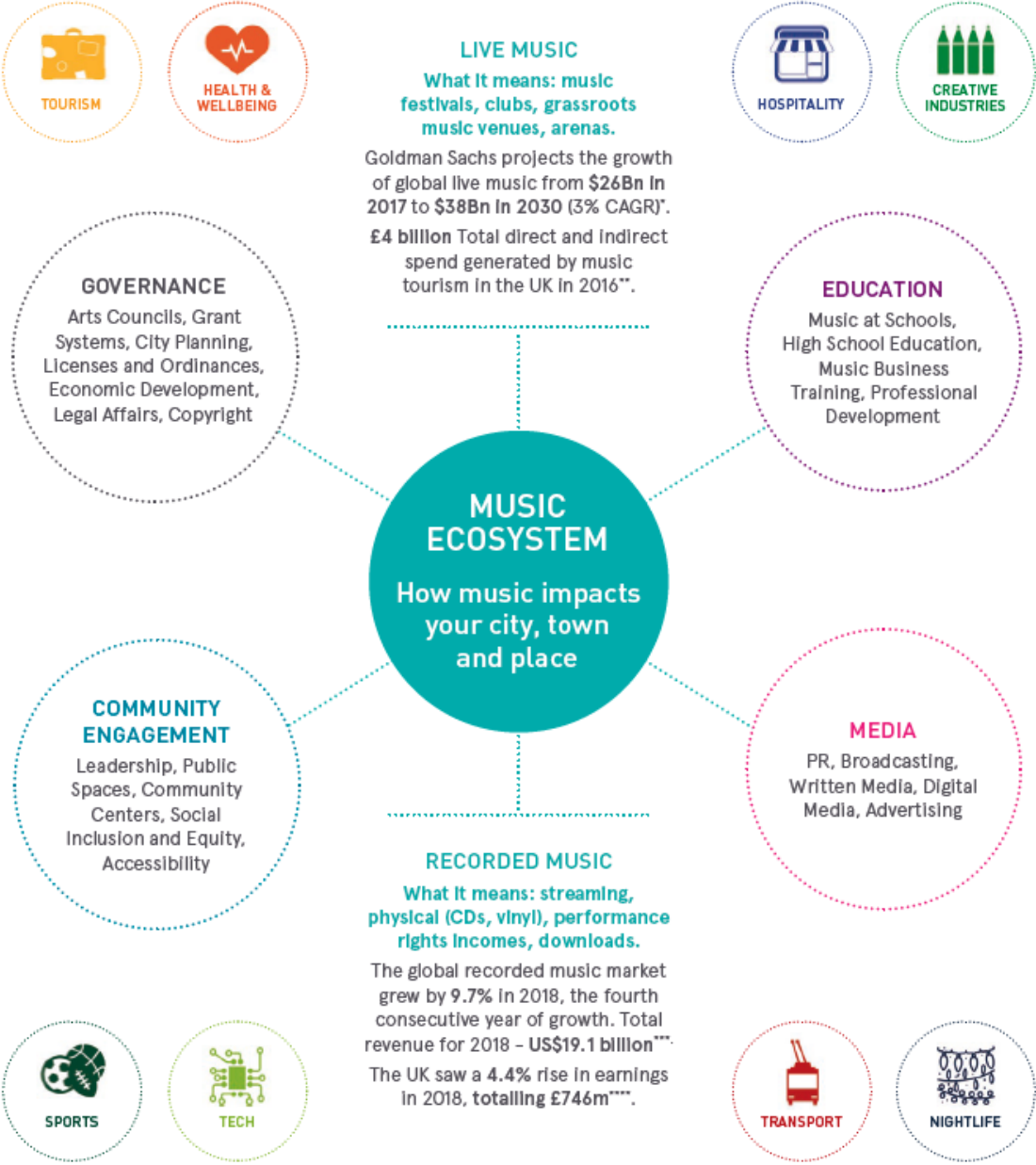

Figure 2: Music Ecosystem Diagram from Sound Diplomacy (2019)

Live Music Ecology: Venues and Scenes

The live music ecology is an area within the music city discourse that has received significant attention focused on sociocultural value. The live music ecology includes the "institutions, organizations, events, and venue spaces that form the materiality of local music scenes" (Whiting, 2019). However, this paper is specifically interested in the work related to scenes and small music venues and how it is embedded in music city discourse. While scenes and venues are vital aspects of music cities for different reasons, they also have shared values that influence one another. Additionally, the academic study in this area has influenced the direction of this project and the way I considered the information gathered from the research, mainly the semi-structured interviews, observation and discourse analysis. By understanding how scenes and venues are socioculturally contextualized within the current music city discourse, we can reflect on how to use successful tactics for a different type of impact. Additionally, we can gain insight into how to expand the music city conversation best and strengthen the overall system.

Scenes

Music scenes have been theorized in several, albeit connected ways. In reviewing the definitions of music scenes presented in *Sonic City: The Evolving Economic Geography of the Music Industry* (Florida and Jackson, 2010), I believe the following provide a thorough understanding of the concept:

- Bennett and Peterson (2004) - "the context in which clusters of producers, musicians, and fans collectively share their common musical tastes and collectively distinguish themselves from others."
- Silver, Clark, and Rothfield (2005) - "modes of organizing cultural production and consumption" that "foster certain shared values and tastes, certain ways of relating to one another and legitimating what one is doing or not doing."
- Currid (2007) - Scenes are communities and subcultures "that focus on particular niches— such as folk, rock, R&B, funk, hip-hop, indie, and so on—clustered around similarly interested producers, specialized gatekeepers, tastemakers, and audiences" (Florida and Jackson, 2020).

Additionally, the idea of a scene is often considered in a local context, with local actors, codes, and sounds. However, based on my experience as a member of several music scenes, I would argue that local scenes often exist within a broader global network (or system) of scenes that often share many of the same sociocultural practices. Therefore, I will include the idea of the passive bonding that can happen through music which enables it to "help construct social identities even among massive "imagined communities" whose members may never physically interact with one another" (Savage et al., 2020; Anderson 1991). To illustrate this point, I draw upon a personal anecdote based on my membership in the punk and hardcore music scenes:

> *In the summer of 2015, I visited a friend in Sao Paulo, Brazil, on vacation. On my first night in the city, we were invited to a hardcore festival to see a friend's band play. Although I was excited to attend, I was worried that my little-to-no knowledge of Portuguese, and my lack of experience with Brazilian culture, would lead to some challenges and discomfort. However, upon arriving at the show, I quickly realized that the cultural conventions I was used to in Canada and the USA were the same in Sao Paulo. I immediately knew how to act and move through the space and did not feel like an outsider.*

Because of this experience, I knew I was part of a larger scene and community beyond the city where I lived - I had a sense of membership and felt a sense of belonging with people I did not know and who did not speak the same spoken language. However, we understood each other on a different level and communicated through various shared understandings. This personal experience speaks to music's role in creating connection and community, even if it is not explicit.

Venues

The benefits of music venues, particularly small music venues, are often celebrated for their many positive impacts on cities. Some cities are even defined as music cities based on the number of live music venues (Baker, 2019). However, from a sociocultural perspective, small venues are spaces where the scenes are developed, and their identities, cultures, and codes are enacted, produced, and reproduced. Furthermore, when discussing their importance, "ideas of place, memory, and belonging must be considered" (Whiting, 2019). The local live music venue is a "central place in life histories, a place of emotional investment, transition, and transient community, of coming of age" (Gallan and Gibson, 2013). While music is the driver, scenes ultimately develop

through people gathering to participate in music and catapult it from an act of listening to a form of community and cultural development- this starts in venues. Not only that but "Small music clubs are not just incubators for bands, they play a vital role in a healthy urban ecosystem" (Baker, 2019; Pollock, 2015). As a result, it is easy to see why venues play a vital role in the sociocultural impact of music in cities. However, a critical lens should be used before scaling up these ideas and applying them to a larger, more public sphere.

Both music scenes and venues help facilitate many positive sociocultural aspects of music cities, especially regarding a sense of membership and belonging. However, while this is true in many circumstances, cities should be cautious and critical before celebrating this as an objective win. First, music venues have been historically unsafe spaces for many communities. So, there are problems with using the number of venues (and their history) to measure a "music city." For example, if a city has 50 venues, and only ten support traditionally Black Music, is that something worth celebrating? Hip hop and rap are notoriously excluded from venues, and in many cases, if a venue does allow these genres, it is policed at a higher rate, not just by police but also by imposed dress codes[5] (Lokting, 2019). Additionally, there is no shortage of reports from women experiencing unwanted touching, groping, and other forms of assault at music venues (Lewis, 2018). So, while many are quick to celebrate the small venue and the innovative and historical things that happen in them, along with the community building, it is essential to be critical of what these spaces and their accessibility represents to others.

Furthermore, music scenes can be exceptionally high-context because of their various cultural conventions and practices, leading to exclusion for those who do not know or follow the appropriate codes. While scenes are inherently exclusionary, which is not necessarily a problem (i.e., you cannot be part of the local metal scene if you do not like metal music), they arguably employ problematic practices that actively exclude participation based on a lack of fluency in a scene's coded language and hierarchies (Force, 2011). For example, I began attending local punk and hardcore shows in my mid-teens. On one particular occasion, a friend noticed that I was wearing the shirt of the band headlining the show we were going to and suggested I change it

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[5] It should also be noted that hip-hop and rap lyrics are often policed and used against artists in legal proceedings. This does not happen at the same rate in other genres, and therefore this art and its creators are unable to exist freely in public and private spaces in cities. As a result, hip-hop and rap artists are not provided equitable access to city spaces, impacting BIPOC groups at a higher rate. While slightly outside of the boundaries of this project, I believe this is important to mention, and I encourage readers to explore this further.

before leaving. Unbeknownst to me at the time (based on my newness to the scene), wearing a shirt of the band you will see is a punk and hardcore scene faux pas. By not performing these codes correctly, consistently, and "authentically," I would have signalled to others that I had not earned my position as a member of the community (Force, 2011). Furthermore, since scenes are performed in venues, these spaces can become exclusionary. Therefore, being a fan of a band playing at a specific venue might not be enough to participate in their show comfortably.

Music as a Saviour Narrative

There is no shortage of stories where people and communities have been helped or "saved" by music, and this narrative presents itself in various contexts throughout music city discourse. This idea is mainly embedded within community development contexts, where music, in some way, is the vehicle for keeping people safe, productive and connected (for example, through community programming). However, there is a clear contrast between how this is discussed in the academic environment and how it is presented in more "practical" contexts such as the consultancy spheres. Academic discussions tend to offer a more critical look at music in these contexts, and they are not often specifically about music cities. On the other hand, music city reports, manuals, and guidebooks are part of the popular discourse and enthusiastically present the idea that music and music programming can be used to support the common good.

The strength of music city reports, manuals, and guidebooks is that, unlike academic resources, they present information in a relatively accessible way that is easy to understand and envision. Using a persuasive narrative that is easy to connect with, these documents do a good job of outlining the power of music in helping people and communities. *The Mastering of a music city* speaks to several examples of music programming used to help support communities, such as the SAMRO Foundation in Johannesburg, South Africa using music to "bring people together under a unified cultural banner: rich and poor, Black and white, and across linguistic, regional and national divides" (Terrill et al., 2015). Similarly, a consistent narrative throughout Sound Diplomacy's reports and documents is music's role in building stronger communities using programming such as music education to "teach children the process and importance of working in a group with a central goal" (Sound Diplomacy, 2019). However, while it is essential to highlight and champion the sociocultural role of music to expand the idea of the music city, these compelling narratives should be considered with caution.

Due to the lack of critical analysis found in the music city reports, manuals, and guidebooks, music "appears rather naively as a cultural palliative, curing social ills or unifying communities" (Bennett, 2020). Although there is evidence to suggest music can do these things in certain contexts, these documents fail to articulate how this happens and the overall impacts. Furthermore, these reports trade a critical lens for a more emotionally compelling narrative, which should be met with caution for the following reasons:

They often make statements in the name of the social importance of music while failing to recognize nuance and the social and cultural conditions that lead to certain situations. For example, Sound Diplomacy's *Music Cities Manual* asserts the notion that "when one is learning music, one is not joining a gang, or experimenting with illicit substances" (Sound Diplomacy, 2019). Similarly, *The Mastering of a music city* mentions music as a vehicle for supporting youth and providing alternatives to "guns and crime" (Terrill et al., 2015). Although compelling, these statements do not provide further context, nor do they recognize any conditions that lead to these "social ills" (which is also a values judgement). Additionally, as Holden (2013) notes, "systems of data collection have no way of measuring things that don't happen." For example, there is no way of knowing if someone did not consume "illicit substances" because they joined a choir (not to mention the countless stories of musicians who use drugs and engage in nefarious behaviours).

The social issues "fixed" by music are always situated in the context of perceived poor social and economic conditions, which has its own set of implications, especially related to reinforcing racial and cultural stereotypes. In these documents, music is never presented as a saviour that keeps people from committing white-collar crimes; it is just for those who might join a street gang. I would argue that this is another, perhaps unintentional, expression of neoliberalism in the music city context.

They can create unrealistic expectations about the role of music in cities, suggesting it is more significant than it needs to be. If one of the social roles of music is to cure social ills and unify communities, then this part of the operation is doomed to fail. It would be impossible to assess music in such a context, and it is likely to never live up to expectations. Perhaps the idea that something like live music can create a social condition where people feel comfortable speaking to each other based on a shared experience is enough.

It is important not to overuse narratives that can damage certain communities. For example, if the narrative around the poor and disadvantaged is always coupled with instrumental values of music that present it as a saviour (ex/ keeping youths out of gangs), it can further marginalize these communities. All people should be able to enjoy music for its many intrinsic and extrinsic values and not have them prescribed based on social or economic position (Holden, 2013).

The problem with music programs geared towards "saving" people is that funding and political will can disappear at any moment, for any reason. So what happens after that? While this is not an answer, it does challenge the notion of using highly structured/resourced programming to "save people."

They make statements presented without evidence and not framed with other theoretical underpinnings. Many of these reports do not refer to sociocultural research related to music cities, and in some cases, one would be hard-pressed to find evidence to support a claim. For example, *The Music Cities Manual* from Sound Diplomacy (2019) states, "Music is not political and it supports everyone, if deployed properly." Not only is this statement untrue, but it can undermine the goals of such initiatives in the first place. The arguments made in these documents should be strengthened by providing evidence from academic research.

The information discussed above is essential and plays a critical role in the music city system(s). However, the critiques further justify the need to understand the positive sociocultural impacts of music in cities and why they should be included within the music city discourse. Additionally, the inclusion of academic research connected to these sociocultural values would help to strengthen arguments and provide evidence for a more balanced approach to music cities. Based on my research, I believe it is important to prioritize research around Social Infrastructure (Klinenberg, 2019; Latham and Layton, 2019, 2021), Social, Mental, and Emotional Health and Wellbeing (Sandstrom and Dunn, 2014; Weinberg and Joseph, 2017; Andrews, 2014; Wood and Moss, 2014), Public Space and Conviviality (Doughty and Lagerqvist, 2016; Bennett and McKay, 2019), and others that I will discuss in subsequent sections

"My Definition, My Definition Is This" - (Re)Defining A music city

As a result of the research conducted so far and the critiques I have offered, I believe it is helpful to discuss how I have framed the music city for the context of this project. Through careful reflection on music cities literature, the work in the consultancy sphere, and my framing of music cities as a "social mess," it is clear that the music city is a complicated concept. However, it is also clear that music is powerful and helps support the important economic, social, and cultural fabrics of the city. While I have previously questioned the need (and even ability) to define a music city, I believe it is helpful to apply some broad framing to the concept. My inspiration to understand and conceptualize music cities using a more balanced lens comes from:

- Andrea Baker's choice to situate the idea of music cities within the concept of urban sociability, which she argues is "the social, cultural and emotional configurations that made music cities possible" (Baker, 2019). Ballico and Watson (2020) noted that Baker's emphasis on urban sociability is an "important alternative dimension to the dominant urbanist discourses framed around the political economy."

- The various types of research conducted that illustrate the disconnect between music's specialness as an art form versus how cities benefit from music. When considering how cities benefit from music, the research primarily focuses on music in a very traditional way, connecting music to the economy. However, when considering what makes music special as an art form, greater importance is placed on community development, connections between people, music as a "common language," and the attachments to memories, feelings, and emotions. The contrast between these findings reveals that a more balanced approach is necessary to ensure that cities use music thoughtfully and seriously.

- Shain Shapiro's (2018) definition of a music city as "a city that takes its music seriously and treats it, across policy, regulatory affairs, licensing and environmental health, like it would anything else."

For this paper and the development of my research, I have elected to frame a music city simply as "a city that takes music seriously." Intentionally broad, I argue this encourages a reframing of the conversation, moving it to a more balanced foundation that creates space for the many ways

people, communities, and cities can benefit from music. Additionally, it does not ignore or discredit the work that articulates the economic benefits of music city development, as they are critical to the success of music city policy and development. Instead, this definition broadens the scope of music cities and offers those interested in the concept an opportunity to reflect on how they include music in the life of cities.

Finally, to me, becoming a music city is a commitment. It does not have an endpoint, and the idea is ever-evolving. Some ideas, interventions, and solutions will be temporary, and cities will evolve out of them. Others will be essential foundations for further evolution. This is why framing a music city as a "city that takes music seriously" is so critical to the success of the idea. To me, "taking music seriously" means understanding it through a systemic lens and learning the value of music in different contexts. This includes understanding the needs, wants, and motivations of all actors within the system and how they benefit from music in their cities. Additionally, definition makes room to care about the people who care about music (the "audience"), which is often an overlooked part of the conversation. Understanding music cities in this way also helped me to contextualized my research findings, and inform the subsequent design intervention.

"Tell Me What You See" - Findings and Analysis

"Flip The Rules" - Re-Thinking Music Cities

Based on the resulting research, it is abundantly clear that the idea of a music city can mean many things to many people. However, it is also easy to see that many essential considerations leading to more balanced music cities are often under-explored, relegated to a secondary role, or entirely overlooked. Throughout the research conducted for this project, it has become apparent that the primary focus of music cities research and discourse are the economic impacts music can have on a city in one way or another. More often than not, even the social and cultural benefits are framed to promote their positive economic impacts above their social and cultural value. A frequently cited example of this throughout various sources is the use of music to activate public spaces. Using music to promote socialization in public spaces is consistently noted as a positive benefit, with many reports and other sources citing the primary benefits being related to positive economic impact (i.e., people spending money at adjacent businesses). However, equal weight and exploration are not applied to the benefits of socialization and human interaction.

However, a thorough analysis of the research suggests that stronger and more resilient music cities can be developed by critically analyzing our assumptions and the current discourse in this field. The findings from the research process furthered my overall understanding of the current state of music cities and how various industry actors feel about them. Focused mainly on the semi-structured interviews, the subsequent section explores significant themes that emerged throughout the research process and the insights that led to the suggested interventions to create more balanced music cities. I focused on the interviews because of the responses' richness, depth, and nuance. Additionally, I believe that we cannot have this discussion without speaking to the people most affected by it, and therefore, the interviews should be centred. The findings from the other methods are used to support or contrast interview findings as appropriate.

Semi-Structured Interviews

As previously stated, I conducted seven semi-structured interviews with people who have a variety of experiences working within the music industry. Interviewees were asked to self-identify their role(s) within the music industry, allowing them to draw on any experiences they deemed to be

important. Although only seven people were interviewed, the participants represented multiple areas of the music industry, such as:

- Musicians (including singers and rappers)
- Songwriters
- Concert Promoters
- Talent Buyers and Bookers
- Venue Programming
- Authors, Writers, and Journalists (Blogs, Newspapers, Books)
- Public Relations
- Media Programming (Radio and TV)
- Stage Managers

- Festival and Event Organizers
- Artist Collectives
- Independent Record Labels (owners and employees)
- Film Scoring
- Producers
- DJs
- Community Organizers
- City-based Music Projects
- Music Business Owners
- Music Fans
- Not-For-Profits/Fundraising

Many of the interviewees hold multiple positions at any given time, highlighting the precarity of working in the music industry, especially for musicians. Throughout their careers, the participants hold/held an average of over six different music-related roles. While some people can sustain themselves with one job, several others rely on multiple sources of income to make a living. Because of this, the various employment situations, combined with the social locations, and economic positions among the participants, uncovered a variety of rich and diverse perspectives on various themes throughout the interviews.

However, while the finer details of the interviews were unique elements to each individual, there were several overarching sentiments and themes across all interviews. In the rare instance where conflicting responses occurred, the conflicting information was based on personal preferences. After reviewing and coding the interviews, several themes were uncovered. The following themes were selected for further exploration:

The Music City and The Economy - Practitioner perspectives on the impact of music on a city's economy, and the problems with employing an economy-first approach to music city development.

The Impact of Music on Emotions - The emotional elements to music city development, from the personal impacts of music to the emotions connected to a broader understanding of music and a city's music spaces, scenes, and other offerings.

The Social Value of Music - The role music can play in enhancing a city's social cohesion, social infrastructure, and social capital.

I identified these as the key themes from the interviews due to their consistent presence across responses. Through my analysis, I also identified a natural flow that occurred, connecting each theme in the presented order. Following these connections ultimately provides a strong rationale for the suggested design considerations in the next section.

"Money City Maniacs" – The Economy Matters

Aligning with the argument for this project, several important non-monetary benefits related to the sociocultural values of music presented themselves throughout the interviews. However, while it might appear contradictory to my aim of advocating for a more balanced approach to music city discourse, I would be remiss to overlook the importance of the economic impact of music cities. The economic impact of music in cities was highlighted multiple times in every interview. However, depending on the interviewee's perspective, it was either framed positively or as a significant challenge. By highlighting the interviewees' thoughts, feelings, and ideas regarding the economic benefits, I can better understand the challenges associated with a traditional economic-first approach to music cities. Not only that, but it also creates the opportunity to draw connections between the other emergent themes identified.

First, the positive economic impact music has on cities was repeatedly highlighted throughout all stages of the research process. However, along with expressing the economic benefits, interview participants also shared skepticism and concern for this approach. Let's explore the results…

Interviewees are acutely aware of how music economically benefits a city

When asked how cities benefit from music, all seven interviewees included economic benefits in their answers. Congruent with the reviewed research, particularly music consultancy reports, the main areas noted for economic benefit by participants are job creation, festivals, tourism, and attracting talent in other industries. The interview participants also showed an understanding of the

economic benefits from an ecosystem perspective by highlighting several externalities associated with live music in cities. As one person noted:

> *"Economic benefit can't be denied…we have people driving into the city, paying for parking…paying for the ticket that hires the local labour that keeps the lights on in the venue, that pays bands. People are staying overnight…they're eating at a restaurant. The impact of presenting live music benefits the city on the bottom line."*

The interviews also highlighted the fact that the participants understand that the positive economic impacts, both direct and externalities, ultimately help to bolster the live music scenes within the city.

Music and Cities: It's A Two-Way Street

Participants understand the importance of cities supporting music so that music can support cities. They appreciate the idea of implementing mechanisms that help to support the night-time economy, such as night czars to advocate for live music. They note flexible and relaxed bylaws that support live music by accommodating musician and venue needs, such as allowing loading and unloading to happen at venues without penalty. Additionally, many interviewees referenced the availability of music in Nashville and the city's vibrancy due to the music pouring out of every bar and venue. Throughout the interviews, it is clear that the participants take note and are thankful for the moments that make their roles easier and more sustainable. However, while these positive aspects sometimes exist, the participants clearly articulated that they do not view the music city concept as a two-way street.

It is evident that interviewees do not feel supported by an economic-first approach. The clear message received by participants is that music helps to grow a city's economy, but cities do little to help people in the independent music industry exist. Cities celebrate and promote their music city-ness to attract tourists and skilled workers from other sectors, but this can have self-destructive consequences. As we have seen (Cohen, 2013; Grodach, 2013; Van Holm, 2015; Romão, 2017; van der Hoeven and Hitters, 2019), neighbourhoods gentrify, and spaces such as music venues

and music stores are at high risk for closure and redevelopment. In addition, entire communities are pushed out due to affordability/higher cost of living. This creates a few problems…

1. As participants noted, the spaces in which they create their art and create their communities are disappearing. To them, this signals a lack of support and care from the cities that so often prop up their craft to attract people and money.

2. As a result of the previously rapid embrace of Richard Florida's creative class/cities work, participants are also wary of the music cities concept, especially when considering who is promoting the idea.

For example, in a 2016 interview for an article in Toronto's Now Magazine titled *"Dreaming of music city,"* singer/songwriter Simone Schmidt expresses concern about Toronto's music city aspirations:

> *"I've been somewhat skeptical about the makeup of the Toronto Music Advisory Council because as I understand it, it's actually the Toronto Music Industry Advisory Council." [The council is focused on the "opportunities for the city's music industry," says its website.]* (Now Magazine, 2016)

Similar concerns are shared by others in the same article, as well as through the semi-structured interviews, and from people attending the 2019 music city Summit. It is clear that people within the independent music industry are concerned about their art, work, and sometimes struggles being coopted in order to enhance an economy that is ultimately pushing them out of the city.

By exploring these concerns in conjunction with the experiences and though ts expressed through other parts of the conversation, it becomes clear that the inability to survive in a city with runaway gentrification is more than just about the inability to afford a place to live. It is also the inability to create, the inability to build community, the inability to innovate, and the inability to take risks, share, and be taken seriously.

"Til I Hear It From You" – Language and Communication Matters

One of the core issues relating to music city development is the language and communications used throughout the music city discourse, particularly in the public realm. In fact, none of the interviewees referenced any academic research in their interviews, and only one referenced work from a consultancy report. Instead, all answered based on their understandings, interpretations, and experiences with the music city concept as mediated through the city.

Through a comparison of answers throughout the semi-structured interviews, there is a clear distinction between how the interviewees perceive the concept of a music city in theory, how they feel about the current music city movement, and what they believe makes music special as an art form. This is perhaps the most interesting aspect of the interview coding process and highlights a significant gap within the current music city discourse.

When asked, *"What do you think of when you hear the term 'music city'? What does one look and sound like to you?"* all seven interviewees expressed similar thoughts about vibrant cities, communities that invest in the arts, and cities where both music industry actors and the cities benefit in socially, culturally, and economically. All seven also expressed the importance of diversity in the sounds and communities represented and the diversity in the different times and spaces where music can exist.

In contrast, when asked, *"How do you feel when you hear the term "music city"? Do you use the term yourself? If so, why? If not, why not? If you don't use this term, is there another term you use?"*, interviewees were quick to express scepticism around the idea. Based on the issues around lack of support at a City level, venue closures, lack of diversity, and gentrification, among others, the interview participants used terms like "marketing ploy" and "empty gesture," with one participant posing the questions: *"It's one thing to say you want to be a music city, but do you actually know what that means? Are you going to do anything to make it happen?"* Furthermore, only one participant indicated that they use the term "music mity," while others noted they do not use it because of the connotations previously listed. This is especially true when considering the source of music city conversations. As another interviewee explains:

"I'm immediately suspicious of politicians declaring cities as music cities. I would much rather hear it from someone involved in the industry, whether it's an artist, a publisher, or a record label. Politicians suggesting that cities are music cities, there's just a level of suspicion attached to it, and there's no positive aspect for it to me."

However, an interesting contrast to these conversations is the responses received when asking, *"What is it about this type of art (music) that makes it special?"* When posed with this question, all seven participants talked about the power of music related to emotions, memories, and its ability to connect people and build communities. Furthermore, the interviews highlighted the importance of music in what several participants called "the human experience" and music's role in expressing a society's history.

Based on these interview responses, several themes can be extrapolated. The first is that to have buy-in from people in the independent music industry, councils and committees must include a broader spectrum of people who have a vested interest in the music community (not just the industry). Additionally, many people feel disenfranchised when politicians speak about the music city. This is likely due to the continued struggle of independent music actors to afford to meet their needs while living in the city and having their work, creativity, livelihoods, and industry coopted for broader economic gain that often leaves them out. Finally, and of most interest to me, people in the independent music sphere only see the output of their process as a measure of success in music city discourse. This means that the impact of the songs, records, and live shows are measured to illustrate their impact on the music city. On the other hand, the reasons why they do this work are not represented in the current discourse (i.e. the reasons why music is special).

"More Than A Feeling" - Music and Emotions

Across all interviews, a key theme emerged: the connection between music and its intrinsic and extrinsic value on emotions and emotional wellbeing (individually and collectively). The people interviewed for this project are not researchers or experts in the field of psychology of music. However, they are experts in other ways through their lived experiences. I like to think of them as ethnographers due to their embeddedness in their cities' music scenes, communities, and industries. To me, their roles are integral in developing a rich understanding of the complexities of

music in cities, especially as it relates to the concept of music cities. They understand the sociocultural value of music from lived experiences as practitioners and from their various roles and know the social life, relations, and workings of music in the city. The ideas below are presented through this lens and supported by further research as needed.

In every interview, the participants discussed the symbiotic relationships between music and individuals in many ways, such as providing emotional comfort and safety. For example, the idea of music being therapeutic presented itself in several interviews. As one participant puts it:

> *If people can relate to it emotionally, it can be quite therapeutic and cathartic. When there is emotional catharsis attached to the music, it can create an opportunity for others to relate to it and benefit greatly on an emotional level, which can be a beautiful thing.*

Additionally, others expressed the emotional impact of music via nostalgia by extending the body's reach and transporting people through time and space. One participant noted:

> *I think that for so many people, you can hear a song and then all of a sudden you can smell the pizza that you were eating when you first heard it, or you can see the friend's face that you went to that show with, or you can remember the feeling of, I don't know, like, when [redacted] kissed you when Crash Into Me came on up in Muskoka*

However, the interviewees also articulated that music in relation to emotional wellbeing is not just about music influencing mood (making one happy or sad) or about using music as an emotional outlet. Instead, music in relation to emotional wellbeing can also be about the positive emotional experiences gained through shared experiences, or what I will call "musical moments" - where people are together and caring about each other. This is related to the idea that music can influence our social brains through feelings of 'simulated synchrony' presented by Nummenmaa, Putkinen, and Sams (2021). This means that "the pulsating beat of a song may trick our brains into thinking that we are actually synchronizing with another person, and this behavioural synchronization and concomitant opioid release could promote feelings of social contact" (Nummenmaa, Putkinen, and Sams, 2021). Furthermore, the responses from the interviewees are also congruent with the work of Weinberg and Joseph (2017), showing that engaging in music activities, especially with others, directly correlates with a higher subjective wellbeing.

Understanding the ideas of the emotional connections to music is essential to understanding the under-explored values of music as they relate to music cities. In addition, revealing the emotional impacts of music helps show how music is connected to the idea of community.

"Reconstruction Site"- Building Social Infrastructure and Community

The final and perhaps most interesting theme that emerged from all seven interviews was the critical role of music, music spaces, and music moments[6] in helping to build healthy communities that foster a sense of connection between people. The following chapter will discuss this as enhancing a city's social infrastructure. First, however, this section will focus on how these ideas were presented through the interviews and other research areas.

Perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of this theme is that it presented itself throughout many responses, regardless of the question topic. In line with much of the current music cities research, all participants noted the ability of music to provide spontaneous encounters with other people and an opportunity for meaningful shared emotional experiences and community building. For example, one participant noticed an increase of strangers striking up casual conversations with him downtown after his city introduced music events in that part of the city. He noted that these were enjoyable moments that made him feel connected to others. Overall, all interviewees believe that this is of critical importance when considering the impacts of music. As one participant describes:

> *"Music at its root is community. Because when two people or more are sharing an experience together, that's the founding blocks of community."*

Furthermore, there was a strong theme of care throughout the interviews, especially within the context of community and connection. First, all seven participants discussed the importance of diversity (cultural, racial, socioeconomic, gender, etc.) and shared the idea that music has space for everyone. Not only that, but when asked: *"what do you think of when you hear the term "music*

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[6] I am using music/musical moments to refer to different types of interactions one can have with music in a city (for example, concerts).

city"?" the idea of diversity was a foundational element to everyone's view of a music city. I found this especially interesting when coupled with responses about how musical moments help people see who their neighbours[7] are and how this relates to a general sense of safety (emotional and physical). One participant summarizes this by saying:

> *"[music] provides the emotional capacity to people to feel like you know your neighbours, you're going through something with somebody like you're building this thing together. I feel like it would help communities feel safer and stronger. Like, you feel more united when you're in community with people."*

Adding to this, another participant presented the idea of musical moments as ways to get people out of their "own worlds" to experience diversity and difference. To him, this is paramount for building respect for others and understanding that judgements people have about others are not always based on reality.

The final noteworthy theme that presented itself through the interviews was the idea of reciprocity. This idea emerged in several ways throughout the conversations, especially around accessibility. One interviewee described sharing their music as a way of "giving back to the community," which succinctly describes how others felt. However, to give back to the community, participants mentioned all forms of accessibility being critical considerations, including physically accessible spaces and creating socially safe/accessible spaces. As part of this, two participants noted the importance of ensuring musical moments are accessible at all times of the day and in various spaces. This would open up access to music and allow for more spontaneous interactions with music. These thoughts present an interesting feedback loop when connected to diversity from a systems perspective. Essentially, people feel safer in diverse, vibrant communities, but diversity can only exist when spaces are accessible/safe for people. Therefore, by allowing music to exist more freely (a concept discussed later in this paper), one participant said a city will come "alive with the sounds of its community thriving." The thoughts, feelings, and ideas presented in these conversations helped inform and inspire the design interventions outlined in the next chapter.

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[7] Several participants used the term "neighbour" as a synonym for people in the community, which I believe is powerful.

"What This City Needs" - Design Intervention

The purpose of this paper is to address the following question within the context of the music city movement, and current music city discourse:

How might we use music to create more vibrant and enjoyable cities that enhance the social health and social infrastructure of communities?

Throughout the research, several key sociocultural themes have emerged as under-explored areas in the current popular music city discourse. The most prominent of these themes include: community building; human connection; conviviality; inclusion; diversity, visibility, and accessibility; and the importance of (public) space.

While academic researchers and consultancy groups often mention several of these themes in their work, they often lack a deeper dive into how they truly benefit cities. Additionally, current discourse operates under the assumption that music is inherently good. This assumption creates an overreliance on the idea that the sociocultural benefits of music will emerge organically without understanding them or creating the conditions for them to happen. Not only that, but it is also important to remember that the music city is not separate from the city. Our understanding of music cities must consider the city as a whole and how music fits in to enhance the complex urban experience.

Therefore, I argue that it is critical to develop a more balanced approach to understanding and developing music cities that can work in all cities. Doing so will help create the conditions that allow for more vibrant and enjoyable cities that enhance a communities' social health and social infrastructure. For this to happen, I believe that there must be a greater focus on strengthening the sociocultural aspects of music in cities. By thinking critically about music city discourse, especially within a systems context, reflecting on the music city as a social mess, and drawing on my interview responses, I propose the following design intervention:

To create more vibrant and enjoyable cities that enhance the social health and social infrastructure of communities, cities should do two things:

1. Provide and enable more free music in public space
2. Allow music to exist more freely in public space, and throughout cities

I believe that carefully and intentionally incorporating these two ideas into music city strategies will create a more balanced appreciation for the music city. Furthermore, it will help to establish more vibrant and enjoyable cities that work toward enhancing "bridging social capital."

So, how will this work? First, it is important to understand what these ideas mean.

- Social Infrastructure - Using Eric Klinenberg's definition, social infrastructure is what "fosters contact, mutual support, and collaboration between friends and neighbours" (Klinenberg, 2019). Klinenberg argues that social infrastructure is essential in community and relationship building and that it is "crucially important because local, face-to-face interactions…are the building blocks of all public life" (Klinenberg, 2019). Social infrastructure also creates the conditions for "social capital" to develop, a concept used to measure people's relationships and interpersonal networks (Klinenberg, 2019).

- Social Health - The concept of social health used in this context includes individual social well-being and the idea that "a society is healthy when there is equal opportunity for all and access by all to the goods and services, essential to full functioning as a citizen" (Abachizadeh et al., 2014; House and Kahn, 1985).

- Free Music in Public Space - Informed by urban theorists such as Jane Jacobs, I believe that musical moments must be made accessible to anyone who wants to enjoy them to meet the objectives outlined. Furthermore, the idea of public space is critical because it has the potential to be accessible to everyone and provide visibility to underrepresented groups. Additionally, free music encompasses more than just live music, and I will provide examples later. However, free music is very distinct from music played in places like shopping malls.

- Music Existing Freely - This has multiple meanings for this paper. First, it is the idea that in some circumstances, music should be able to exist with fewer barriers (physical, social, legal, etc.). Second, it promotes the idea of critical reflection and assessment of the

conditions that allow/inhibit the ability for certain types of music to exist in public spaces and across the city. Finally, music existing freely means that it is not bound to a scene or a specific group. Instead, it exists openly for everyone, and therefore it brings people in instead of excluding them based on lack of membership.

Using the idea that a music city is a city that takes music seriously, it is vital to ensure that the discourse and impacts are multidimensional. This means that the focus needs to be on many areas of the system, and not just those that are economically enticing. Additionally, many music city documents, reports, and guides speak to the important sociocultural impacts of music, but few, if any, articulate ways for this to happen beyond music education, protecting music venues, and music programming to help disadvantaged populations. However, it is necessary to make good on these promises.

Much of the current music city discourse around the sociocultural benefits connects to the "bonding social capital"[8] developed through music scenes and small venues. Although this work is essential, and music scenes and small venues are critical to the success of the music city, it is just as important to enhance the "bridging social capital." This means being intentional in designing the conditions that allow music to enhance the "weaker" ties among heterogenous individuals or groups and the ability to connect one to new resources (Agnitsch, Flora, and Ryan, 2009). The goal here is not to suggest that one is better than the other. Rather, the idea is to consider both as equally "relevant to social capital at the community level" and acknowledge that it takes hard work to ensure success (Agnitsch, Flora, and Ryan, 2009). We see the need for this in everyday life, and we already know that people use music to connect and care for each other. Therefore, the goal of this design intervention is to focus on that part of the system.

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[8] Social Bonding Capital is "inward looking and tends to reinforce exclusive identities and homogeneous groups" (Agnitsch, Flora, and Ryan, 2009; Putnam, 2000). It is "found among densely connected groups with strong, affective ties connecting group members to each other, and is important in providing social support and increasing in-group solidarity (Agnitsch, Flora, and Ryan, 2009).

"Cool Party" - Free Music in Public Space

I am writing this paper with the belief that conviviality and positive human interactions are critical to the success of the city and that cities should continually be evolving with the goal of making people happier. As David Sim (2019) writes, "beyond having everything we need in closer proximity, we need to make the in-between times and in-between places more enjoyable and fulfilling." This is also the lens that I am using while exploring the research question in the context of music city discourse. As a result, the idea of free music in public space stands out as a way to honour these tenets while expanding the idea of what it means to be a music city.

The reasons for this idea's "free" aspect are likely obvious. Being free reduces the economic barriers many people face while attempting to participate in and enjoy everyday life. The opportunity to enjoy free music means that people do not have to make tough decisions with their money and allows for greater access for families. It also means that people with time restrictions can participate without having to purchase admission for something they cannot fully attend. However, the free aspect goes beyond providing greater access to music. Since music acts as a connector, it provides more people with the opportunity to access and experience community, difference, diversity, and meaningful spontaneous interactions, and counters the feelings of loneliness. As Doughty and Lagerqvist (2015) describe, embodied and affective reactions to music signal its ethical potential to create a convivial orientation. Therefore, in some instances, it is less about the music and more about the conditions created by the musical experience. All of these things are more likely to happen successfully in public spaces.

First, if done thoughtfully and intentionally, public space is for everyone. All people have a right to be in public space and experience the city from their unique perspectives. The idea of "public" is multidimensional and can be contextualized in different ways. Latham and Layton (2019) outline four ways the concept of "public" exists:

- It refers to freely being out amongst others, experiencing people from different social backgrounds, and doing so without barriers.
- It is about participating in the public sphere and having a variety of interactions with others.
- Publicness can include things that are of concern to a community or society.
- The collective provision of facilities for public or private use.

It is necessary to consider these different dimensions of public because they ultimately illustrate how "communities are built, trust developed, cooperation achieved, and friendships made" (Latham and Layton, 2019). Additionally, we should also consider the power of weak-tie interactions as they directly connect to subjective well-being, feelings of belonging, and overall happiness (Sandstrom and Dunn, 2014). This is what builds and strengthens social infrastructure and encourages "an ethos of citizens as equals in shared space" (Latham and Layton, 2019). With this in mind, music has the potential to play a critical role in building social infrastructure.

There are many reasons why public space is essential for music's ability to enhance the city's social health and social infrastructure. First, incorporating free music in public spaces adds spontaneity to city life and can attract diverse groups of people to participate. Public spaces such as streets and squares "can nurture citizenship by bringing people together and enabling them to spend more time outdoors, participating in public life" (Sim, 2019). Additionally, incorporating diverse types of music can increase the visibility of different people and communities, allowing people to see who their neighbours are. As a result, there is a greater sense of social cohesion and tolerance, leading to people taking care of each other. This contributes to increased reciprocity, as both a practice and a value that comes through music in public space.

A significant commonality between social infrastructure and music is the idea of care. When social infrastructure is at its best, it helps ensure that people care for and look out for each other. Strong social infrastructure can affect who survives in times of crisis and disaster. Through his research on the devastating Chicago heat wave in 1995, Klinenberg (2002, 2019) concluded that one of the most significant contributors to whether people survived across all neighbourhoods (regardless of economic status) was the level of social infrastructure in a community. People who lived in areas where "casual interaction was a part of everyday life" survived because they knew their neighbours and checked in on each other (Klinenberg, 2019).

Similarly, music is often used in times of crisis as a way for people to connect and strengthen social infrastructure. The most recent and most popular example of this is the balcony musical performances in several cities during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Many people experienced feelings of heightened stress, anxiety, and loneliness throughout much of the pandemic. However, as Granot et al. (2021) discovered, those who participated in musical performances from their

balconies (either as performers or spectators) experienced reduced stress and anxiety and developed a sense of social connectivity. These spontaneous moments helped create a sense of community simply by existing in a space and time where everyone could enjoy them without requiring an invitation, admission, or negotiating with different stresses, anxieties, or priorities. Therefore, by taking music seriously and expanding the concept of the music city, music can enhance social infrastructure and the overall social health of communities.

Finally, free music can help protect the public space that is so vital to the strengthening of social infrastructure. Both social infrastructure and public space are "easily overlooked, and their importance as essential structures of society and cities neglected" (Krish and Hiltgartner, 2019). The authors also assert that both concepts are often "taken for granted and only in times of scarcity recognized for what they really are: indispensable structures for our everyday lives" (Krish and Hiltgartner, 2019). Using musical experiences can protect public space by producing more hospitable and convivial atmospheres, where people can experience and celebrate differences and lift them out of their humdrum daily lives (Simpson, 2014). Musical experiences can further legitimize public spaces by facilitating and fostering the creation of community, meaning, and a sense of belonging. These are spaces worth fighting for during times of (re)development.

"Rockin' In The Free World" - Music Existing Freely

Allowing music to exist more freely means opening up the city to (and through) music and creating the potential for improvisation and spontaneity. The ideal result is to nurture conviviality and produce happier, more inclusive and public spaces. First, however, there must be a collective reflection and conversations about what this means to different communities and how some aspects of music cities can impact different groups within a city. Opening up the city through music allows cities to address the connection between music and economic development, which often favours popular forms of music and specific sounds, and "serves to erase or ignore the city's racial, ethnic, cultural, and musical diversity" (Ballico and Watson, 2020; Holt and Wergin, 2013). As Ballico and Watson (2020) note, "this is indicative of a broader issue in that policymakers may imagine the musical 'sound' of a place in very instrumental ways that effectively act to erase heterogeneity with urban musical scenes." Therefore, cities should strive to understand the impacts of favouring a specific sound. While it can be a helpful marketing exercise, it can also exclude

several communities. For example, most people would be hard-pressed to name more than one artist from the Nashville hip-hop scene. In fact, many might not know a hip-hop scene even exists in Nashville. However, it is critical to understand the broader implications of this and how the inability of music to exist more freely in a city can result in the invisibility of communities. Expanding on Sigler and Balaji's ideas (2013), allowing music to exist freely means creating space (physically and metaphorically/symbolically) that challenges the invisibility and marginalization of different groups. Amplifying the voices of these communities will enhance their visibility and help the people within them feel safer. This is particularly true for members of various BIPOC, LGBTQ2SA+, cultural, socioeconomic and disabled communities and the variety of intersectionalities within them.

To foster spontaneous interactions within the city that encourage social cohesion using music, its ability to exist more freely is imperative. This means that music existing freely (and for free) in public spaces must go beyond structured music programs such as concerts and festivals. These events are important and encouraged, mainly because they allow all people to enjoy larger musical acts regardless of income while creating a sense of collective effervescence among all citizens in attendance. However, these events are costly for time and economic reasons, as well as their broader social implications[9]. They are also (understandably) highly scheduled and cannot happen in regular day-to-day life. Therefore, I recommend that cities consider enabling a variety of unique and innovative musical experiences and moments that can occur with increased frequency and require fewer resources.

Additionally, to ensure that music is happening more freely, there should be little-to-no barrier for entry. My recommendation is to involve local independent music actors in these experiences, whether for idea generation or performances. Some examples of music experiences that have been shown to enhance social infrastructure by activating public space, and increasing conviviality, spontaneity, community building, and making diversity more visible are located below (Table 2). However, cities need to think critically about how they are enabling music to exist more freely and incorporating free music in public space.

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[9] While large-scale free concerts and festivals are exciting, they often come at the cost of coopting public space that is used for many reasons, causing many vulnerable people to be displaced (therefore signalling to these groups that they are not welcome at the free event that is for "everyone"). Additionally, these events often result in increased securitization, which can cause many marginalized groups to feel unsafe and unwelcome.

Intervention	Location in City	Description	Required Infrastructure	Impact	Sources (See Works Cited)
Street Music/Busking	Various urban locations	Music performed by diverse groups of [mostly] amateur musicians on the streets and in other public spaces in the city.	In most cases, performers use their own instruments. Cities might consider designated spaces. Some cities require permits.	Positive impacts on diversity and place (re)making for immigrant groups (Doughty and Lagerqvist, 2016); Positive interactions with "difference" are reported. Enhanced conviviality, activated public spaces, vibrancy, accessible, etc. Performers share their identity with their communities.	Simpson, 2014; Doughty and Lagerqvist, 2016; Bennett and McKay, 2019
Musical Stairs (Novel music experience)	Subway stairs, Building stairwells	A set of stairs in a Stockholm subway station were enhanced with technology that made them musical when people stepped on them.	High-traffic stairs. Set up can be costly.	Many people encountered strangers and worked together to create music/sounds. Increased conviviality, vibrancy, and contributed to a positive soundscape.	Peeters et al., 2013
Public Speakers	Public Park	Musikiosk was a program in Montreal where a small portable speaker was installed in a gazebo in a small park. People were free to play music from their devices to enjoy with others.	Low-infrastructure requirements. A small portable speaker that can be secured safely to a surface away from the elements.	Survey respondents reported a positive soundscape that was a change from the regular city noise (challenged norms of space). People reported feeling a sense of community, feeling safer in the park, and there was an enhanced sense of fun, conviviality, and connection.	Bild et al., 2016; Steel et al., 2019

Table 2: Free public music interventions to increase conviviality and connectivity

"The Start of Something" - Considerations for Moving Forward

While these design interventions have been developed with evidence and suggested with good intentions, they are not without their risks. As a result, cities should carefully consider their implementation strategies when applying the ideas of free music in public space and allowing music to exist more freely within cities. First, music cannot happen in all public spaces, all of the time. A variety of experiences are required for people to enjoy public spaces and benefit from them. Music, especially via larger concerts and festivals, can interrupt this. While all public space comes with a level of activity, larger-scale music events and moments can be an enhanced disruption, especially for those looking for light socializing, low-activity, or contemplative spaces. Therefore, music should not be a priority over other activities. Instead, music should be one of the vehicles used to build social infrastructure and enhance social health.

Furthermore, the overuse of some types of musical activities can lead to the commercialization and festivalization of public space (Krish and Hiltgartner, 2019). This ultimately restricts access through the privatization and securitization of those spaces. As a result, many citizens, particularly those who experience marginalization, will feel unsafe, unwelcome, and further disenfranchised, which counters this paper's objectives.

Another consideration is that cities must pay close attention to the representation of different cultures and communities through these musical experiences. On the one hand, city officials must work hard to ensure that opportunities exist for their diverse populations and make space for those in need. But, on the other hand, there is also a risk that "culture becomes a commodity and people feel that nationalities are being staged, and thus become inauthentic— 'performances were often described as a gimmick, a business idea, a well-thought-out concept for selling the same thing everywhere, as something out of Disneyworld'" (Bennett and McKay, 2019; Doughty and Lagerqvist, 2016). In addition to this, cities must walk a fine line to determine what music is appropriate for public space while being very careful not to damage any communities. This will take very careful assessment, reflection, and consultation.

Finally, cities should also consider the cautionary tales of the unintended consequences of placemaking. It is important to incorporate independent music actors along with policymakers while considering implementation strategies. Given the disenfranchisement of creative actors, especially

musicians, due to creative city policies, cities should expect some resistance (d'Ovidio and Morato, 2017;). Many musicians have lived experience of being pushed out of their communities due to gentrification. Therefore, their concerns should be explored, and careful implementation of the suggested design interventions is required.

"Saying Goodbye" - Conclusion

While it sounds like a simple idea, the music city is a complex network of systems of systems that result in a "social mess." Many have theorized what a music city is, and as a result, there are many interpretations of the concept. As I have argued, thinking more critically about music cities through a systemic lens opens up more opportunities to extend beyond a preoccupation with economic benefits and embrace the sociocultural values of music that my interview participants described as central to their experience (see Findings). For my work, I have elected to adopt the definition of the music city being a city that takes music seriously. "Taking music seriously" can mean many things, and it will look different in different cities with their own unique contexts.

I have identified several broad themes that can all contribute to design interventions across different settings through my research. This has culminated in design interventions that are held up by two pillars of thought: intentionality and improvisation. On the surface, these may seem counter-intuitive, but as I have shown, they work best as a kind of feedback loop:

1. Intentional, careful design: using public space; foregrounding community safety; increasing free and public-facing music opportunities; reducing privatization and securitization of music events; prioritizing accessibility; and attending to social health and infrastructure…

   …which creates space for

2. Allowing music to exist more freely: opening up the city to and through music; creating the potential for improvisation and spontaneity; nurturing conviviality; and producing happier, more inclusive, and public spaces…

…which enables future projects that return to intentional, careful design as part of a methodology.

Additionally, the design interventions provide a case for implementing a variety of free music experiences in public space. This includes actionable items for cities to consider when implementing the interventions and shows the need to think beyond structured music programs such as concerts and festivals. A list of examples of music experiences that contribute to strengthening social infrastructure is in Table 2.

Furthermore, I advocate for design approaches that take greater care to learn about music in different contexts to ensure the needs of specific cities and communities are adequately met. This requires a more dedicated attempt to include and actively seek input from people who make – and connect through – music (rather than prioritizing those who maintain economic or political power through music city development). As I discussed in the Methodology section, for example, many people who make a living through music (whether economically or socially) tend to occupy multiple positions in music scenes and industries, forming multi-layered relationships with and through music. This shows there are many kinds of knowledges and expertise that would provide useful insight for future music-based design but often get silenced when cities focus explicitly on economic benefits or risks.

Advocating for the sociocultural elements of music and music-making as part of design strategy does not mean excluding economic considerations; instead, it requires being more intentional about giving the sociocultural equal weight in discussions about the roles of music in public life. There is room for all kinds of relationships – social, cultural, emotional, economic, political, health – but they must be put in conversation with one another if music cities (or cities that take music seriously) are to flourish.

However, the work is not complete, and many important considerations require further exploration. Given the unique circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic, more research should consider how to respond to and implement music city strategies within the context of a global crisis (with care for all actors in the system). There is also a lack of research focused on the future of the music city in the face of new policy interests. Therefore, consideration for what it means when cities that promised investment in the music city idea no longer have the same level of political will is imperative, especially for artists and fans who are residents. Additionally, work on how the music city concept fits into a rural context would help to expand the idea further. And finally, it will be essential to consider the consequences of focusing on the ancillary benefits of music and how this ultimately impacts it as an art form.

For now, I believe the growing body of research in the field of music cities is moving in the right direction. Researchers are beginning to focus on different aspects of the system that will help to provide a more balanced understanding of the impacts and potential of music in cities. It is my

hope that the future of the music city continues to incorporate an approach that (re)centres humans and their social, emotional, and cultural needs, along with the sociocultural elements of music. This will enable music to create more vibrant and enjoyable cities that enhance communities' social health and social infrastructure. This way, when people or their communities are in need, *"somehow the vital connection is made"* (Fischmann, 1994).

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Appendix A – Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Semi-Structured Interviews - Practitioner Interview Questions

Objective: The objective of this interview is to understand and explore current music city discourse and music ecosystems to identify under-explored needs and gaps in the priorities for music city development. Using the information gleaned from these interviews, and the stories told, I hope to understand the greater impact that music can have in cities and on the people who live there. Finally, I will use this information to inform my recommendations for building stronger and more holistic music cities that can benefit everyone.

This information will be used to help frame the research I am conducting.

Prior to asking questions, the researcher will review the informed consent form and ask for any questions or concerns.

Preliminary Questions

1. What is your role/are your roles in your local music community?
2. How long have you been involved in the music community?
3. What city do you live in?

Indicative Questions (to be refined upon receipt of additional information)

1. What do you think of when you hear the term 'music city'? What does one look and sound like to you?
2. How do you think cities benefit from music?
3. How do you think people and communities benefit from music?
4. Aside from economic benefit, how do you think music can help cities and the people in them?
5. What are some ways we can make music more accessible to people in cities?
6. How do you feel when you hear the term "music city"?
7. Do you use the term yourself? If so, why? If not, why not? If you don't use this term, is there another term you use?
8. In your opinion, what goes into making a successful music ecosystem?
9. What are some of your favourite music cities and what makes them appeal to you? Have you ever had a chance to visit? What did they feel like?
10. Based on your experience, what do you think the primary factors are that contribute to creating a "good" music city? What are secondary factors?
11. Reflecting on your experiences, what do you think are the under-explored needs that would help create a sustainable and more holistic music city?
12. What is it about this type of art (music) that makes it special?
13. What do you think the future of music looks like after the pandemic is over?
14. Is there anything else you would like to say that has not yet been discussed?

Appendix B – MRP Playlist (Section song titles and artists)

Song Title	Artist	Section
Connection	Elastica	Title of Document
What Am I Doing Here?	Blue Rodeo	Project Purpose
Introduce Yerself	Gord Downey	A Music Cities Primer
This Chaos	Li Hua Li 化力	Music Cities as a "Social Mess"
Don't Sweat The Technique	Eric B & Rakim	Methodology
Book Club	Arkells	Literature and Popular Media Review
Making Sense	In My Eyes	Ethnographic Observation and Discourse Analysis
Let Me Explain	Metro Politan	Semi-Structured Interviews
Feedback In the Field	Plants and Animals	Critique of Popular Music City Discourse and Research
State of All Things	Ruby Velle and The Soulphonics	Music Cities Research and Expert Discourse
Come Walk with Me	M.I.A.	Music As A Social Good
My Definition of a Boombastic Jazz Style	Dream Warriors	(Re)Defining A Music City
Tell Me What You See	Fucked Up	Findings and Analysis
Flip The Rules	Kae Sun	Re-Thinking Music Cities
Money City Maniacs	Sloan	The Economy Matters
Til I Hear It From You	Gin Blossoms	Language and Communication Matters
More Than A Feeling	Boston	Music and Emotions
Reconstruction Site	The Weakerthans	Building Social Infrastructure and Community
What This City Needs	Sam Coffey and The Iron Lungs	Design Intervention
Cool Party	Mal Blum	Free Music in Public Space
Rockin' In The Free World	Neil Young	Music Existing Freely
The Start of Something	Voxtrot	Considerations for Moving Forward
Saying Goodbye	JS Ondara	Conclusion