

Popular Music, the Peripheral City and Cultural Memory - A Case Study of Perth, Australia

Author

Bennett, Andy

Published

2014

Book Title

Music City: Musikalische Annaeherungen an die Kreative Stadt

Version

Version of Record (VoR)

Rights statement

This text was published as Andy Bennett, Popular Music, the Peripheral City and Cultural Memory - A Case Study of Perth, Australia , in: Alenka Barber-Kersovan, Volker Kirchberg, Robin Kuchar (eds.), Music City: Musikalische Annaeherungen an die Kreative Stadt, transcript Bielefeld, 2014. The text is posted here by permission of transcript Verlag for personal use only, not for redistribution.

Downloaded from

<http://hdl.handle.net/10072/67035>

Link to published version

<http://www.transcript-verlag.de/978-3-8376-1965-2/music-city>

Griffith Research Online

<https://research-repository.griffith.edu.au>

Popular Music, the Peripheral City and Cultural Memory

A Case Study of Perth, Australia

Andy Bennett

During the course of the last twenty years there has been an extensive level of discussion and debate among academics about the relationship between popular culture in local and global contexts and the production/reproduction of everyday life (see, for example, Lull 1995; Bennett 2005). Not surprisingly, given its role and significance as a contemporary popular cultural form, this discussion has also extended to the fields of popular music production, performance and consumption (Bennett 2000; DeNora 2000). Seminal ethnographic studies of music and place, notably those from Sara Cohen (1991) and Ruth Finnegan (1989), have stressed the importance of locality, and local structures of feeling, in revealing the significance of musical life for specific communities. Shank (1994) has similarly mapped the interaction between global trends in popular music and their imprint on local geographies of taste, feeling and affective association with specific scenes and communities. Within this focus on popular music and locality, there has also been a steadily developing emphasis on the tiedness of popular music to other aspects of local history, heritage and culture (Bennett 2002, 2008, 2009).

Studies of local popular music scenes and communities have been criticised on the grounds that they appear to close off any consideration of the impact of the global media and cultural industries on constructions of local identity and culture (see, for example, Thornton 1995). It could, however, be argued, that such criticism has been largely off the mark in that neither Finnegan nor Cohen, nor indeed a number of other researchers who have examined the importance of the 'local' in relation to popular music's everyday significance have wanted to dismiss the presence of the local-global interplay in this context. Rather, such work has been concerned to address the importance of the local as a space in which individuals make connections with and understand the everyday value of music as something important in their lives. Arguably, such perspectives assume added resonance when one moves from the global centre to global periphery, that is, to places where

access to cultural resources has played out in a more uneven fashion. In such places the ›local‹ often assumes enhanced significance as both a physical and mythical tapestry for the re-working of global popular music and associated resources, their use in the fashioning of local identity and their impact on local forms of collective memory and remembering. Within such contexts, the articulation of cultural memory can also play a potent part through facilitating particular notions of the past and reproducing them in the present. Focusing on the example of the Australian city of Perth, this contribution considers the relationship between popular music and cultural memory in peripheral spaces. The article draws on data from a three-year research project funded by the *Australian Research Council*.¹

(RE)LOCATING THE ›PERIPHERAL‹ CITY

In the early 1990s, Canadian sociologist Rob Shields (1991) published a study entitled *Places on the Margin* which brought a critical new perspective to our understanding the way in which peripheral spaces are constructed. For Shields, a centrally defining characteristic of the ›margin‹ is its status as a non-cosmopolitan netherworld, separated off from a continually advancing mainstream culture and stuck in limbo of the past. Thus, Shields observes:

›Marginal places, those towns and regions that have been ›left behind‹ in the modern race for progress evoke both nostalgia and fascination. Their marginal status may come from out-of-the-way geographic locations, being the site of illicit or disdained social activities, or being the other pole to a great cultural centre. (...) They all carry the image, and stigma, of their marginality which becomes indistinguishable from any basic empirical identity they might once have had. From this *primary* ranking of cultural status they might also end up being classified in what geographers have mapped as systems of ›centres and peripheries.‹ (1991: 3)

In his alignment of the margin with the non-urban, that is to say with geographically remote, and/or socio-economically dysfunctional towns and regions, Shields paints a very definite picture of marginality as something imposed from the outside; an involuntary label affixed to whole communities, their ways of life, and everyday physical environments through their positioning in powerful centre-periphery discourses that emanate from dominant centres of economic and cultural

1 | The broader project is called *Popular music and cultural memory: localised popular music histories and their significance for national music industries*, and was funded under the *Australian Research Council's* (ARC) *Discovery Project* scheme for three years (2010-12, DP1092910). Chief Investigators on the project are Andy Bennett (Griffith University), Shane Homan (Monash University), Sarah Baker (Griffith University) and Peter Doyle (Macquarie University), with Research Fellow Alison Huber (Griffith University).

power. Indeed, this is typically how marginal places have been theorised in many examples of academic work examining centre-periphery relationships (see, for example, Shils 1961; Massey 1992). Missing from Shields's interpretation of the margin, though, is any consideration of its potential for evolution from a label imposed on non-cosmopolitan regional and rural sites, to a *self-imposed* and *self-perpetuated* form of collective social and cultural identity; a means through which fashionable discourses of otherness can be woven together and used to articulate a sense of place from within. Indeed, when interpreted in this way, an added dimension of the ›margin‹ comes into play, one that may ultimately transcend its common association with notions of ›out of the wayness‹ parochialism and disfunctionality to become a potent symbol of urban identity, not to say urban chic – the self-styled ›periphery‹ city (see also Kirchner on Baltimore, and Lloyd on (East) Nashville, in this volume). As illustrated in the following section of this article, a range of cities around the world, with varying claims to actual geographical separation, actively mobilise discourses of marginalisation and peripheral presence in ways that often project inwardly as much as they do outwardly. It is notable that discourses such as these persist even as the world becomes smaller in terms of the ever multiplying links that now exist between places by dint of the Internet, global travel and the increasingly sophisticated array of images, objects and texts produced in particular local spaces, including remote spaces, and circulated out to the rest of the world through the global media and popular culture industries.

The concept of the ›peripheral city‹ can thus be said to act as an important discursive anchor for local residents at a variety of different levels. In particular, it can be used to connote the preservation of a highly distinctive local identity, one that is claimed to be untainted by the rush of globalisation and collectively resilient to globalising social and cultural trends experienced in other more metropolitan areas. In this sense the discourse of the periphery draws on a binary similar to that which has often been applied in folk music and analogous forms of local cultural production (see MacKinnon 1994) in which the local becomes a barometer of authenticity in opposition to the global which is considered emblematic of mass-produced plasticity. The notion of the peripheral city can also be used to connote self-sufficiency, self-pride and independence, a discourse that seamlessly extends to aspects of creative practice and expression. Although present throughout the social and cultural landscapes of late modernity, what Raymond Williams (1961) describes as residual cultures – dialect, local custom, folklore and tradition – often assume an exaggerated resonance in the peripheral city, working easily through the lens of contemporary popular cultural and other creative media to reinforce local discourses of difference engendered through separation from global metropolises. Shanene Ditton's (2010) on-going work on creative hubs of artists and creative practitioners on Australia's Gold Coast in south-east Queensland is a salient case in point. Although only an hour's drive from Queensland's capital city Brisbane, a strident discourse of separation from the Brisbane arts and culture scene exists among the Gold Coast's artistic and creative practitioner scenes. The

representation of the Gold Coast as a city on the edge permeates local discourse, including that shared by local artists and creative workers for whom a critical objective is to create sustainable networks of creativity in a collective effort to rid the Gold Coast of its ›cultural desert‹ moniker (see Wise 2006).

POPULAR MUSIC AND THE PERIPHERY CITY

Popular music has long been acknowledged as a highly contradictory form of popular culture. Since the mid-1950s it has existed primarily as a cultural form that is at once largely dependent for its production and dissemination on global industrial processes. At the same time, however, claims among artists and their audiences regarding the authenticity of popular music has often centered upon a shared aesthetic discourse of separation from the global popular music monolith. This became apparent during the late 1960s when rock journalists began to frame authenticity around issues of musicianship and artistry, a discursive device that allowed them to distinguish artists such as the *Beatles*, the *Rolling Stones* and Bob Dylan from what they regarded as the more ›commercial‹ pop fare of the day (see Shuker 2001). As the rock discourse lost momentum in the mid-1970s, emerging genres such as punk and new wave asserted their own discourse of authenticity, one that focused around a back-to-basics approach to composition, production and performance (Laing 1985). The importance of the local, and in particular, the non-metropolitan, was re-engaged with as a means of claiming musical significance and integrity and this was to be further punctuated with the growth of independent music (popularly referred to as ›indie‹) in the UK and elsewhere (see Bannister 2006; Percival 2010).

The concept of indie and its trans-locally inscribed discourse of separation from the global mainstream music industry has often been accentuated by aspects of social, cultural and physical geography. Thus, as Percival (2010) observes, the Glasgow indie music scene creatively layered aspects of social, cultural, physical and, indeed, political geography to assert its visibility and distinctiveness from the more major centres of music production in the UK, notably London and Manchester. In other, more remote parts of the world, the indie discourse has been used in conjunction with geographical perceptions of isolation in similar ways to create shared notions of integrity and authenticity. Thus, as Bannister (2006) observes, the city of Dunedin on New Zealand's South Island for many years featured a highly vibrant local indie scene supported by local indie record label *Flying Nun*. Although the Dunedin scene shared much in common with other local indie music scenes around the world, the shared notion of independence that permeated this particular scene was given an added resonance through its geographical location at the southern point of a sparsely populated country in the southern hemisphere. Another example of a ›music city‹ that has effectively capitalised upon its peripheral status is Iceland's capital city Reykjavik. Despite being the one major city in a country with a little over 328,000 inhabitants, over the last 20 years Reyk-

javik has acquired an aura of ›coolness‹ among cultural producers and audiences (see Prior 2012, 2013). In large part this is due to the number of popular music artists, among them *The Sugarcubes*, Björk and *Sigur Rós*, who have emerged from the city. Surrounding this surge of popular cultural activity is a discourse of artistic inspiration fostered through the remoteness of Reykjavik, the rugged, austere and volatile nature of the Iceland's volcanic geographical base and the extremes of the winter temperatures.

THE MOST ISOLATED CITY ...

As illustrated above, discourses of periphery and the ›periphery city‹ can assume a significant potency in relation to popular music. The remainder of this chapter considers a specific example of this phenomenon as it manifests in Perth, the capital of Western Australia. Local residents routinely describe Perth as the most isolated city in the world, a statement that crumbles under scrutiny as a number of other cities, including Honolulu, Anchorage and the aforementioned Reykjavik are technically more isolated, in a strictly geographical sense, than Perth. This, however, serves merely to underscore the point made above regarding the often self-ascribed quality of periphery discourses. Irrespective of the inaccuracy of the ›most isolated city‹ statement as this is applied to Perth, its potency as a discourse of belonging in a city that has often felt under-represented in the national cultural landscape is writ large.

This is not to say, of course, that the myth of isolation has no basis in reality. On the contrary, for many years Perth suffered from a significant lack of connection, even to other cities in Australia. Situated on the south-west coast of the world's ›largest island and smallest continent‹, as Australia is sometimes dubbed, Perth is separated from the cities on Australia's Eastern seaboard by vast tracks of desert and sparsely populated outback regions. Even the closest city, Adelaide (the capital of South Australia) is some 2,793 kilometres away. Parts of the Eyre Highway that connects Perth and Adelaide (also referred to as the Nullarbor Crossing due to the fact that it traverses the Nullarbor desert) remained unsealed until as recently as 1976. Among those who recall the experience of travelling the Eyre Highway in the days before it was sealed for regular domestic use are the group AC/DC, who were at that point a relatively unknown pub-rock band in Australia struggling for recognition (see Kerrang Files, 2001). Indeed, Perth's distance from other Australian cities had a significant impact on its exposure to national and international popular music artists between the 1950s and the 1980s. Thus, Dave, a local music fan, mobile record store-owner and DJ observed that

›very few people used to come to Perth, international acts would[n't] come to Perth because it was so far away from everywhere else, even Adelaide, so a national tour would basically maybe start in Sydney and finish in Adelaide and that would be it.‹

This sentiment was echoed by many other interviewees, the general sense here being that Perth's geographical distance has served to rob local music fans of the opportunity to fully participate in significant moments of popular music's evolutionary history. This view was accentuated through a somewhat different account offered by a person who had relocated to Perth, at a critical point in her personal development (including the formation of her musical taste) from a global centre of popular music production, performance and consumption. Susan, a woman in her mid-forties who had worked in PR and was completing a PhD, explained her experience of arriving in Perth as a child during the mid-1970s having emigrated to Australia from the UK with her parents.

«I mean, being obsessed with the Osmonds as I was, they weren't really so popular here as they were in the UK, and so arriving here and finding that a lot of that music was quite different. It was really quite a strong sense of separation and having been deprived of something that you just kind of assumed at age nine (...) would just be everywhere in life, and it wasn't, and I really did feel that sense of separation quite keenly from a thing that I had always associated [with]. It had always been very important to me, and it was no longer available, and the magazines would take two or three months to arrive, so by the time you got them in the shops, everything was out of date. You'd be reading, and looking through for the latest single that you hadn't heard yet, and so it just kind of compounded that sense of disconnection at that age, I think.»

As each of the above accounts suggest, until quite recently Australia, and Perth in particular, was subject to a significant element of disconnect from global mainstream popular music due to a combination of circumstances including geographical isolation and economic logistics (globally established groups and artists would often miss out Perth, and, indeed, sometimes Australia as a whole, in world tours in favour of more accessible and lucrative North American and European destinations). This factor has had a clear impact on the nature of the Perth music scene, which, not surprisingly perhaps, has nurtured a high number of home-grown artists. Jon Stratton (2008) has suggested that the high percentage of working class British immigrants who settled in Perth between the 1950s and early 1970s had a profound effect on the style of local popular music to emerge from Perth during this period. Thus, according to Stratton, a highly discernible influence from the British beat bands of the sixties can be heard in local music written and performed by local bands in Perth at this time. The extent to which this was a bona fide facet of demographic, geographical and socio-economic circumstances of Perth between the mid-1950s and mid-1970s and not merely indicative of globalising trends in rock and pop at this time is debatable. Undeniable, however, is the sheer amount of local music produced in Perth at this time and arguably this was a product of the city's geographical location. Thus, in a city that appeared at the time to be permanently off the beaten track for national and international touring bands, local bands stepped up to provide the vital missing ingredient in rock and pop

music – live performance. Thus, as Richard, a university lecturer, music fan and amateur musician from Perth recalled:

»[W]hen I was about 15 it was early, mid '60s, there would be bands like Ross & The Little Wheels, Johnny & The Strangers, Ray Hoff & The Offbeats, that we would hitchhike from Scarborough to Swanbourne or to Cottesloe to go (...) and see them and they were great. Really good bands, there's a very few recordings but they are all really high quality for the time. In those days we were even more isolated and it was hard. (...) I mean after that early jive, you know, Ray Hoff, Johnny Young, Russ Kennedy era there's another era of Blues bands, there's quite a strong Blues tradition in Western Australia. Bands called Last Chance Café and The Elks, Aces, Beagle Boys, very good bands. Just about five or maybe more now years ago they had a thing at the Ed Centre site, where the FTIs and Clancys called the Old Day Out. They got together a lot of those bands and particularly the Beagle Boys, Scott Wise, Gary Masel, just great musicians, got together and without rehearsal, did a set and it was just sensational. I was so relieved because I wasn't deluded it was great, it was just, because when I first saw them it took my breath away. Life changed, it was so good, such a tight rhythm section, great singing, great playing and here 20 something years later when they did this spot it was just fantastic.«

As the above observation illustrates, by the mid-1960s, the local Perth popular music scene had already acquired a sense of itself as a scene on the periphery – a music scene that was not serviced by and thus felt it owed nothing to popular music artists from other national and international settings. Although not popularly used to describe this situation by local people then or currently, a strong sense of DIY (do-it-yourself) practice fed the local Perth music scene and this trend has continued. Indeed, over the years this ›survival instinct‹ understanding of Perth popular music, born of the city's geographic isolation, has emerged as a key factor through which locals both account for and in many ways ›celebrate‹ what they perceive to be the distinctiveness of the popular music produced in Perth. Speaking about the sheer amount of local, ›home-grown‹ music written, recorded/performed and consumed in Perth over the years, John, a local musician and music promoter commented:

»I think that as a scene [Perth has] punched well above its weight, I think, in terms of population and there is just something about Perth where I don't really know why, maybe because of the isolation.«

As Richard's and John's comments collectively reveal, if the local representation of Perth as a ›music city‹ on the periphery fuels potent memories of Perth's popular music past, then such memories also play a significant role in reproducing Perth's musical sense of itself in the present. Thus, discourses of isolation, although increasingly romantic in a practical sense, continue to work through the local knowledge of Perth residents to inform ideas about the quality, character and signifi-

cance of popular music in the city. The WMBC music documentary *Something in the Water* presents as an interesting example of this. Despite being released as recently as 2008, the documentary draws heavily on the discourse of isolation in its treatment of Perth as a musical hotbed. The musicians interviewed, including a number of who have had national and even international success, are uniformly reverent in their appraisal of Perth as a city on the edge, and therefore forced to ›think locally‹; to act largely on its own initiative in nurturing and maintaining a vibrant music scene. Thus, rather than bemoaning a sense of isolation and being ›off the radar‹ musically speaking, those interviewed in the documentary turn this potentially negative factor into a highly positive aspect of the Perth popular music experience. Indeed, as one of the people centrally involved in the making of *Something in the Water* observed, on the evening when the documentary was premiered in a local Perth cinema, not only was the event sold out but appreciation from the capacity audience was unanimous. In *Something in the Water*, the collective memory of Perth as a city on the edge is creatively reinvigorated as a critical aspect of what Perth has to offer as a vibrant 21st century music city. The authenticity and integrity of the music, and its role in the on-going cultural transformation of the city, is held to be rooted in the do-it-yourself ethic which those involved in the local Perth music industry have long embraced. This attitude was exemplified by Richard who observed:

»The isolation of the place has meant a couple of things for music, I think. It's meant that there's always been a lot of good music in Perth because it's got nowhere to go, except stay here. And if you're involved in music in Perth, because it is a small place, you can be quite successful and become known. I mean, it's easy to tie your identity to that in a place like Perth, because it's small.«

Interestingly, at one level the discourses espoused by many local musicians in Perth do not seem too distant from those adopted by local musicians in other cities struggling for space to perform and or artistic recognition. Indeed, much of what is said by those involved in music production, promotion and performance in Perth is actually part of a much wider and an inherently global rhetoric of the gigging musician looking for a break – and occasionally finding it (see, for example, Cohen 1991; Rogers 2008).

However, in the context of Perth such discourses of art, creativity and struggle are supplied with a specifically localised resonance through the concept of periphery as this is rehearsed by locals in their accounts of geography and physical distance from other centres of music-making. Indeed, such can be the tenacity of this inward representation of Perth, even in the present context of a shrinking world and more easy connection – both physical and virtual – that the periphery discourse applied by locals involved in the production, promotion and consumption of local music can be seen to undergo a discernible shift – from an actual physical obstacle to a form of branding; a means through which to actively promote and

»sell« the music and broader creativity of a periphery city to the wider world as culture made on and representative of the edge. This shared sentiment assumes a critical currency – being a way in which local musicians and fans understand and articulate the importance of music, and music-making, among themselves and with outsiders who temporarily visit the city. The following observation from Phil, who works for a local independent radio station, despite being in some ways critical of this viewpoint effectively captures its essence:

»There's (...) a perception that, or [there] has been for a number of years and I think it's starting to be dispelled, that in order to be successful, Perth bands need to go overseas or over east and so when we see local bands becoming successful, there's often mixed feelings because we feel as though in a way, they sort of betrayed us by leaving which again clings on to this really weird sort of parochial sense of cultural ownership but there's also a sense of pride because – you know, that [they] are a product of the cultural milieu in which we exist.«

Phil's comments constitute an extremely astute and highly reflexive observation concerning the increasingly romanticised, still widely endorsed, belief among Perth locals concerning Perth's popular music and the sense and communities that produce, promote and consume it. Thus, the discourse of periphery has symbolically »moved on« from being an objective reality of the circumstances pertaining to musical life in Perth to one in which memories of the past are creatively threaded through and used to rationalise and evaluate Perth's position as a music city as it becomes an increasingly global space. It is on this process of collective memory that the final part of this article focuses.

CULTURAL MEMORY AND THE MAKING OF PLACE

In order for a discourse of Perth as a city on the »edge« to have assumed such potency as a collective means through which locals connote the city's musical past and present with qualities of difference, authenticity and integrity, a significant level of collective endorsement for the rhetoric of isolation needs to have taken place. In this respect, the concept of cultural memory and its relationship to aspects of space and place is highly pertinent. According to Mieke Bal (1999: vii), »the term cultural memory signifies that memory can be understood as a cultural phenomenon as well as an individual or social one«. Andreas Huyssen (2000) extends this argument, suggesting that key to understanding memory as a »cultural« process is the way in which the past is continually re-produced and re-presented in the present. Memory then is something that individuals can collectively »work on« to produce a particular representation of the past that accords both with their preferred perception of the latter and with their acquired understanding of how the past has shaped the present. Huyssen emphasises the significance of cultural resources, notably objects, images and texts, as critical drivers for the production

and articulation of cultural memory. According to Pierre Nora (1989), however, the significance of space and place, that is physical and tangible locations that individuals inhabit, can also have a significant bearing on the ways in which cultural memories are produced and applied as makers of meaning in everyday life. What Nora is suggesting here is that, just as cultural artefacts can be inscribed with symbolic meaning in the production of memory, so physical spaces themselves can be the bearers of similar processes of inscription and re-presentation. In such aligning of cultural memory with space and place, music can often serve as a powerful interlocutor. A particularly vivid example of this is seen in the commodification of certain city spaces as themed attractions – notably the Blues tourism of Chicago and the *Beatles* tourism of Liverpool (see Grazian 2004; Cohen 1997). In the case of these latter examples, particular representations of the urban past are transformed into key texts through which locals and tourists alike celebrate the respective musical heritages of Chicago and Liverpool.

It is important to bear in mind, however, that just as memory itself is a highly moveable feast, forever being made and remade in accordance with the ever-shifting terrain of the present, so space and place are deeply contentious and contested concepts. This aspect of space and place assumes particular resonances for places on the ›edge‹. Thus while cities such as Chicago and Liverpool now have established, though not universally accepted, popular music histories and legacies, the same cannot be said for peripheral cities such as Perth where local government and state authorities have yet to realise the value of popular music heritage as driver for urban regeneration and tourism. However, if official representations of local popular music memory and heritage have yet to come into play, this ›void‹ is filled by a rich array of local, vernacular, grass-roots representations which, as observed earlier in this article, foster highly potent discourses about the significance of Perth's popular music history and legacy. Indeed, in many ways it is precisely the absence of an ›official‹ version of Perth's popular music history that facilitates the particularly rich play of unofficial discourses through which locals envisage and explicate the importance of Perth and its environs – in the past and in the present – as a hotbed of musical activity. Within this, the malleability of space and place has a signature importance. Bennett has coined the concept ›multiple narratives of the local‹ which he describes as follows:

»In referring to the ›local‹, we are in effect speaking about a space which is crossed by a variety of different collective sensibilities each of which imposes a different set of expectations and cultural needs upon that space. In doing so, such sensibilities also construct the local in particular ways, a process which ensures that terms such as *locality* and *local identity* are always, in part at least, subjective elements which begin by utilising the same basic knowledges about the local, its social and spatial organisation, but supplement such knowledges with their own collectively held values to create particular narratives of locality.« (Bennett 2000: 66)

This observation speaks directly to the way in which individuals symbolically ›own‹ space and place, inscribing it with their own values and meanings, the latter directly underpinning individual and collective understandings of local identity, community belonging and a sense of inclusion. Concepts such as these are in themselves, of course, deeply problematic and overlap with their own layers of conflict and subjectivity. Again, at the local level music often plays a significant part in enabling individuals to overcome such tensions and conflicts. In their work on music scenes, Peterson and Bennett note that one of the key drivers of a scene – and the social glue that bonds it – is the sense of community and belonging that it provides for a specific group of musicians, promoters, fans and so on:

»[W]e view a local scene to be a focused social activity that takes place in a delimited space and over a specific span of time in which clusters of producers, musicians, and fans realize their common musical taste, collectively distinguishing themselves from others by using music and cultural signs often appropriated from other places but recombined in ways that come to represent the local scene.« (2004: 8)

A further element that needs to be added in understanding the formation of a local music scene is the spatial dimension. Although the latter is often associated with a specific ›cultural‹ quarter or with the more scattered location of prime music venues in a city (Spring 2004; Rogers 2008) the spatial dimension of a local music scene may, as this contribution argues, be positioned beyond the micro-dynamics of space as these present in a physical sense and manifest itself instead through the vernacular narrativisation of a city, its spaces and places. In this context, it is not merely tangible aspects, such as particular bands, venues or signature performances that feed collective perceptions and cultural memories of a local music scene. Rather, more intangible elements of space and place may also come into play. Examples here may include, for example, growing up in a particular place, going to school there, learning to play a musical instrument, or time spent in leisure activities such as going to the beach or shopping. Such forms of recall were often highly instrumental in the ways in which locals described their attachment to Perth and its local music and in the ways that they articulated their sense of Perth as a music city on the edge. Thus as Patrick, a retired machine worker, observed, for him a highly important aspect of his years as a teenager in Perth were the rock and roll dances on his local beach during the summer months. For Patrick, such dances were an opportunity for him and his friends to engage in a form of popular culture that they understood to be a global phenomenon but that they simultaneously felt disconnected from. Similarly, locals would often draw on their memories not of the local live music scene as such, but of other local efforts and initiatives to furnish Perth music fans with a broader repertoire of music choices: Thus, as Richard observed:

»[F]riends of mine opened a record shop which was just behind where we're sitting [in a café close to Perth's central business district]. And they were the first people in Perth to import records, or find other avenues besides the Australian distributors who didn't bring very much in because of the size of the market. They went on to be a very successful business. But built on that idea of getting access to music that was more than just what EMI [or] CBS would be bringing into the country here, which has always been safe [by which he means mainstream music that would be guaranteed a market].«

In other instances, interviewees would refer to relatively obscure – in as much as they were not frequently discussed even by the majority of locals – music events in Perth that had fostered for them a perception of Perth as a space in which live music, though very present, often seemed to occupy spaces that felt as peripheral as the city itself. An interesting case in point here was a brief account offered by Jill, a university academic, of the so-called ›rock masses‹ of the early 1970s. As Jill observed, although now largely forgotten, the rock masses, which took place in *St. George's Cathedral* and featured re-worked versions of church music utilising acoustic and electric instruments to imbue the music with a rock feel, regularly attracted audiences of up to 1,000 people. As with performances by local Perth musicians in more ›conventional‹ venues and surroundings, at one level the rock masses catered for local youth's desire to hear popular music gigs performed in a live context and to experience the feeling of being part of an audience, a scene and a community. Such memories, while largely lost at the level of everyday conversation and recall, work in equally potent ways as other more widely endorsed memories of Perth's musical past in constructing present-day Perth's credentials as a music city ›on the edge‹.

As the above accounts serve to illustrate, the construction of local music in Perth as a facet of the city's peripheral status relies upon a complex and highly diverse blending of spatially grounded cultural memories. While working out from a commonly shared, local discourse of Perth as a city on the edge, the way that this is then used to portray how this has impacted – and continues to impact – on the local music scene is highly contingent on particular forms of local experience. Moreover, the individual and collective memories that individuals operationalise and apply in their every-day place-making have an intangible quality to them, that is, an ability to slip between other everyday discourses of place and to temporally crystallise at specific moments in localised statements about the relationship between music, space and place before re-assuming their liquid and intangible quality again. In considering this aspect of cultural memory and its bearing on the significance of popular music, Bennett (2010) suggests that, while such memories may be articulated at an individual level they characteristically combine and cohere into an affective sense of association with a specific place and region. Such memories can also be sparked through a temporally felt sense of commonality – for example in the case of the aforementioned rock masses in Perth where a strong generational narrative of ›being there‹ and sharing a

unique moment along with others of a similar age and disposition – underpins collective memories. In this respect ›local‹ music often takes on an added level of resonance, providing a primary text for collectively shared memories as opposed to official renderings of musical pasts as portrayed, for example, in official rock and pop historical documentaries produced for television such as *Dancing in the Street* or, in the specific case of Australia, *Long Way to the Top* and *Love is in the Air*. Again, the example of Perth presents an interesting case in point. Thus, even as the city enjoys an increasing sense of connectedness with other parts of Australia and the wider world, and even as residents of the city are becoming clearly aware of this, the cultural memory of Perth as a city on the edge is still frequently rehearsed in discussions of local music and its significance. Here, geography is again reinforced as a powerful metaphor in constructing Perth as a periphery city – an enforced quality that has made for, and continues to make for, music that assumes a particular quality and character both locally and, increasingly, on the global stage as well.

CONCLUSION

Focusing on the city of Perth in Western Australia, this chapter has considered how the concept of the periphery can be reflexively utilised as a potent form of branding for contemporary cities and city spaces as a means of promoting local popular music. In the case of Perth, a critical element in this process is the way in which locals mobilise their cultural memory of the city as isolated due to its geographic location as an on-going means of justifying a perception of Perth as a city ›on the edge‹, that is to say as a city whose popular music output is the product of Perth having spent a significant period of time on the global periphery. There is, of course, nothing specifically unique in the fact of describing popular music as having distinctive qualities because of its professed tiedness to place. This has always been an aspect of the way in which popular music is discursively constructed and, indeed, in many instances commercially branded (see Bennett 2008). But the periphery city discourse adds another layer of complexity to this process of musical spatialisation. In the context of the early 21st century where, among western developed countries and regions at least, time and space are increasingly compressed, the notion of the periphery city functions as a form of everyday resistance to such shifts, reinvesting particular spaces with a romanticism and distinctiveness grounded in remoteness and isolation from large metropolises. Perth is not alone in its rehearsal of a periphery city discourse in this way. As noted earlier in this article, very similar discourses can be seen to emanate from other cities on the geographic periphery, notably Dunedin on New Zealand's South Island and Reykjavik, the capital city of Iceland. Although each of these cities experiences an increasing level of connectedness to the rest of the world, a sense of ›distance‹ continues to act as powerful driver for musical creativity and expression. In this

way, the notion of the periphery remains current as one means through which we can understand the aesthetic construction of the ›music city‹ both from within and without.

REFERENCES

- Bal, Mieke (1999): »Introduction«. In: Mieke Bal/Jonathan V. Crewe/Leo Spitzer (eds.), *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present*, Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, pp. VII-XVII.
- Bannister, Matthew (2006): *White Boys, White Noise: Masculinities and 1980s Indie Guitar Rock*, Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Bennett, Andy (2010): »Popular Music, Cultural Memory and Everyday Aesthetics«. In: Eduardo de la Fuente/Peter Murphy (eds.), *Philosophical and Cultural Theories of Music*, Leiden: Brill, pp. 243-262.
- Bennett, Andy (2009): »›Heritage Rock‹: Rock Music, Representation and Heritage Discourse«. *Poetics* 37, No. 5-6, pp. 474-489.
- Bennett, Andy (2008): »Popular Music, Media and the Narrativisation of Place«. In: Gerry Bloustien/Margaret Peters/Susan Luckman (eds.), *Sonic Synergies: Music, Identity, Technology and Community*, Aldershot: Ashgate, pp. 69-78.
- Bennett, Andy (2005): *Culture and Everyday Life*, London: Sage.
- Bennett, Andy (2002): »Music, Media and Urban Mythscapes: A Study of the Canterbury Sound«. *Media, Culture and Society* 24, No. 1, pp.107-120.
- Bennett, Andy (2000): *Popular Music and Youth Culture: Music, Identity and Place*, Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Bennett, Andy/Peterson, Richard A. (eds.) (2004): *Music Scenes: Local, Trans-local and Virtual*, Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press.
- Cohen, Sara (1997): »More than the Beatles: Popular Music, Tourism and Urban Regeneration«. In: Simone Abram/Jacqueline Waldren/Donald V. L. Macleod (eds.), *Tourism and Tourists: Identifying with People and Places*, Oxford: Berg, pp. 71-90.
- Cohen, Sara (1991): *Rock Culture in Liverpool: Popular Music in the Making*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- DeNora, Tia (2000): *Music in Everyday Life*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ditton, Shanene (2010): »Realigning Community, Culture and Development in Dispersed Urban Settings«. *Local-Global Conference Proceedings*, Sept. 2-4, Melbourne, pp. 164-182.
- Finnegan, Ruth (1989): *The Hidden Musicians: Music-Making in an English Town*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Grazian, David (2004): »The Symbolic Economy of Authenticity in the Chicago Blues Scene«. In: Andy Bennett/Richard A. Peterson (eds.), *Music Scenes: Local, Translocal and Virtual*, Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, pp. 31-47.

- Huyssen, Andreas (2000): »Present Pasts: Media, Politics, Amnesia«. *Public Culture* 12, No. 1, pp. 21-38.
- Kerrang Files, The (2001): *AC/DC: The Definitive Story*, London: Virgin.
- Laing, Dave (1985): *One Chord Wonders: Power and Meaning in Punk Rock*, Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Lull, James (1995): *Media, Communication, Culture: A Global Approach*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Massey, Doreen (1992): »Politics and Space/Time«. *New Left Review* 196, pp. 65-84.
- MacKinnon, Niall (1994): *The British Folk Scene: Musical Performance and Social Identity*, Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Nora, Pierre (1989): »Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire«. *Representations* 26, pp. 7-25.
- Percival, J. Mark (2010): »Britpop or Engpop?«. In Andy Bennett/Jon Stratton (eds.), *Britpop and the English Music Tradition*, Aldershot: Ashgate, pp. 123-143.
- Prior, Nick (2013): *Scenes, Fields and/or Networks: The Case of Reykjavik*, unpublished paper presented at Social Spaces of Music, CRESC, University of Manchester.
- Prior, Nick (2012): *Why Reykjavik? Understanding Cultural Density*, unpublished paper presented at IASPM Norden, University of Roskilde, Denmark.
- Rogers, Ian (2008): »You've Got to Go to Gigs to Get Gigs«: Indie Musicians, Eclecticism and the Brisbane Scene«. *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* 22, No. 5, pp. 639-649.
- Shank, Barry (1994): *Dissonant Identities: The Rock'n'Roll Scene in Austin, Texas*, London: Wesleyan University Press.
- Shields, Rob (1991): *Places on the Margin: Alternative Geographies of Modernity*, London: Routledge.
- Shils, Edward (1961): »Centre and Periphery«. In: *The Logic of Personal Knowledge: Essays Presented to Michael Polanyi*, London: Routledge, pp. 117-130.
- Shuker, Roy (2001): *Understanding Popular Music*, London: Routledge.
- Spring, Ken (2004): »Behind the Rave: Structure and Agency in a Rave Scene«. In: Andy Bennett/Richard A. Peterson (eds.), *Music Scenes: Local, Translocal and Virtual*, Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, pp. 48-63.
- Stratton, Jon (2008): »The Difference of Perth Music: A Scene in Cultural and Historical Context«. *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* 22, No. 5, pp. 613-622.
- Thornton, Sarah (1995): *Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Williams, Raymond (1961): *The Long Revolution*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Wise, Patricia (2006): »Australia's Gold Coast: A City Producing Itself«. In: Christoph Lindner (ed.), *Urban Space and City Scapes: Perspectives from Modern and Contemporary Culture*, London: Routledge, pp. 177-91.