Chapter 15

Local Music Scenes in France: Definitions, Stakes, Particularities

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Introduction: From Festivals to Music Scenes

With the increased dematerialization of commercial practices and uses related to sound recordings, it is now commonplace to say that the economic and creative potential of music depends on more than just the CD sector. For some, it is the internet which is the leading influence, whilst many others suggest that it is primarily on music scenes (what is often referred to in France as 'live performance') that study should be focused. Since the beginning of the current century, there have, moreover, been countless articles on audiences' increased interest in concerts,[1] in addition to articles on the usefulness of festivals as symptoms of the triumph of 'authenticity' represented by concerts compared to recorded music. From this perspective, the summer of 2007 was particularly unusual. Attendance at rock festivals in France appeared, unusually, to be rather unpredictable. For the first time, festivals which never failed to sell out (for example, *Vieilles Charrues* in Carhaix, Brittany, *Rock en Scène* at Domaine de Saint Cloud in Paris or, on a smaller scale, *Microcosm* at la Roche-sur-Yon) saw attendance figures fall despite scheduling many headline acts. Why?

Some blamed bad weather, pointing the finger at persistent summer rain. Others, more aware of the economic functioning of the music industry, underlined the increasing standardization of headline acts, accusing tour managers of having absolute control over scheduling and creating a relative standardization of the supply of acts. What can be said with certainty however is that there had never been so many festivals organized in France,[2] which inevitably led to a relative fall in financial subsidies allocated to them individually;[3] competition between festivals was particularly strong, and it could be said that saturation point had been reached. Thus, it seems reasonable to suggest that the potential audience of such events,

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[1] For example Benjamin Bibas, 'L'avenir du disque, c'est la scène?', *Rézo international – magazine de l'AFAA,* 13, (2004): pp. 29–38.

[2] CNV, *Éléments statistiques sur la diffusion des spectacles de variétés et de musiques actuelles en 2006. Présentation des données et éléments d'évolution 2005–2006* (Paris, 2007).

[3] Fédurok, *Enquête tour de France, résultats 2001 et 2003*, www.la_fedurok.org.

overly solicited, was smaller than the supply of entertainment. The unique aspect of an event such as a festival no longer exists when they become so widespread.

Reflecting upon the exponential growth of festivals since the 1990s[4] leads us to the question of 'music scenes' because, behind a unity of time, festivals are characterized by a unity of place. Over the last 15 years many local authorities have seen, in the use of subsidies for festivals, a means of generating positive effects on the localities under their responsibility, whether from a cultural, tourism and/or economic development perspective. Local authorities[5] realized that through their 'impact' as events, festivals could have effects in terms of communication (publicizing a town or area), symbolically (demonstrating the dynamism of an area and aiding it to forge a visible identity), and economically (generating business for local firms). It was thus that, at the end of the 1990s, the multiplier effect of economic activity calculated by impact studies became a frequent justification,[6] prior to the adoption early in this century of the notion of sustainable development – often linked to specific localities – by festival stakeholders.[7] More pragmatically, the private stakeholders in the world of music who are often described as 'mediators' (tour managers, producers, artistic promoters), also grasped festivals as a means of asserting their brands (for example, 'Les Jeux' as undertaken by the promotions company Olympic Tour or the 'Reggae festival' from the producer Garance Production). Amidst this mass of events, it was, understandably, those which developed a consistency in musical styles or other specific characteristics and linked them to a local area who met with the most success (for example, emphasis on 'emerging artists' at the Transmusicales de Rennes festival).[8] The piling high of scheduled artists – however high their record sales or their media visibility[9] – was in itself insufficient to ensure a festival's success in the medium term. The festival as a kind of musical 'Mecca'[10] and its status as a not-to-miss event, is progressively constructed beyond what it simply is, building on what it represents and the image it forges for itself. It could, therefore, be said that festivals – seen through the perspective of regional development – raise the question of the geographical location of 'current music'.

The Concept of a Music Scene

To study the way in which musical practices operate in relation to geographical areas, French researchers are beginning to talk about 'music scenes'.[11] In so doing, they are following research from Anglophone countries which began in the 1990s.[12] It is interesting to note that the foundations of research in English-speaking countries came in part from concepts elaborated by French researchers, foremost among whom is Henri Lefebvre.[13] However, here just as in England or America, the term 'music scene' was already used by journalists before being adopted by academics.[14] The notion appeared useful prior to being theorized by social science research, doubtless because it allowed the question of musical cultures in relation to geographical areas to be readdressed, whilst however avoiding several pitfalls. The first of these was of research questions designed in too essentialist a manner concerning the aesthetics of amplified musical genres and their contemporary folklore in terms of appearances, mythologies, instruments used or the sounds generated. The next pitfall was that of research questions defining music within closed social spaces (for example, from the perspective of music belonging to particular communities or music as belonging to the 'world of art').

In sociology, and more widely in intellectual society, amplified music – seen without historical depth[15] – was for a long time considered without truly taking into account regional particularities surrounding its production. Admittedly, this analytical short-sightedness can, at least in part, now be explained by the concentration of cultural industries in Paris, which could, until the 1980s, be considered as monopolistic. In Paris, there were music industry professionals and, everywhere else in France, consumers, as if music came from 'the top' to reach the 'receiving' listeners at the end of the chain. With supply looming over a somehow spatially undifferentiated demand, it was social differentiation which enabled

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4 Luc Benito, *Les Festivals en France. Marchés, enjeux et alchimie* (Paris, 2001).

5 Local and Departmental councils chiefly, but also Regional councils or communities of villages and cities, if we take as a basis our field study into festivals, commissioned for the cooperation cluster of contemporary music stakeholders in the Pays-de-la-Loire region in 2007.

6 Joëlle Farchy and Dominique Sagot-Duvauroux, *Économie des politiques culturelles* (Paris, 1994) and Yann Nicolas, *L'analyse d'impact économique de la culture. Principes et limites* (Paris, 2006).

7 Stéphanie Loup and Marion Polge, 'Quel entrepreneuriat pour quel développement durable? Le cas du terroir', in *Actes du congrès de l'AIMS*, 2003, http://www.strategie-aims.com/dd03/comdd/polgeloup.pdf and Mathias Milliard, 'Agenda 21 : un moyen de repenser la production des festivals?', www.cij.irma.asso.fr.

8 Jean-Marie Lucas, *Rock et politique culturelle: l'exemple de Rennes, 1976–1983* (Paris, 1984).

9 On this subject refer to the article by Bruno Lesprit, 'Malgré Björk, bilan mitigé pour Rock en Seine', *Le Monde,* 28 August 2007 and letters from readers of *Rock & Folk*, October 2007.

10 Bernard Debarbieux, 'Du haut lieu en général et du mont-Blanc en particulier', *L'Espace géographique*, 1 (1993): pp. 5–13.

11 Here I shall refer to my own PhD thesis, *Scènes locales, scène globale. Contribution à une sociologie économique des producteurs de musiques amplifiées en France*, université de Nantes, Sociology department (2004).

12 See notably Will Straw, 'Community and Scene in Popular Music' and Sarah Cohen, 'Scene', in Bruce Horner and Thom Swiss, *Key Terms in Popular Music and Culture* (Oxford, 1999).

13 Notably the books *La Vie quotidienne dans le monde moderne* (Paris, 1968); *La Révolution urbaine* (Paris, 1970); *La Production de l'espace* (Paris, 1974).

14 Max Well and François Poulain, *Scènes de rock en France* (Paris, 1994).

15 This is one of the criticisms made of the term 'current musics'.

explanation of the diversity of existing musical genres. This holistic and macro-sociological approach worked particularly well in France where, for a long time, a Jacobin, Republican and centralist tradition existed, just as much in practice as in discourses:[16] given that all citizens were equal, there had been no reason to highlight the specific diversities existing in different geographical areas. Following an implicit evolutionist logic, it was considered that Paris – as a forerunner and generator – experienced, particularly for music, and several years early, trends that would later spread to 'the regions'.

The increase in the supply of culture coming from almost everywhere in France finally undermined this debatable notion. For new musical trends, rather than a chain linking producers to listeners (the music industry), what was important was what was happening by and through 'the fan', listening and making music right up to the home production of music (the 'underground'). This meant that to properly understand new popular musical phenomena, they had to be seen as more than mere products of the cultural industries (see Figure 15.1).

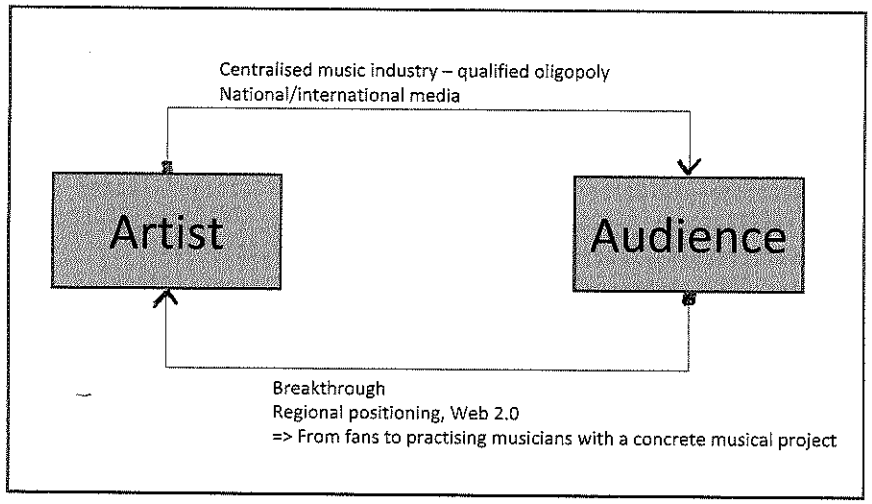


Figure 15.1 The two economic branches of the music industry

What is a Music Scene?

From the second half of the 1980s, social science field research began to analyse the group dynamics at work in rock, and more widely in amplified music.[17] The ties between locally emerging groups and local audiences who support them by attending their concerts (the 'following') can, according to Patrick Mignon, be explained following two perspectives. It could be 'feelings of strong local identity, such as the feeling of isolation which sets people from Le Havre apart from Normandy and from France as a whole. Elsewhere, such as in France's overseas islands, it's an issue of musical style'.[18]

Local identity or stylistic identity: these two major concepts can both refer to the notion of the musical scene, as used in social sciences. The first, which can be described as interactionist, following Goffman, refers to the dramaturgy of the social world. Behaviour, body techniques and positions adopted are all linked to musical genres by an ensemble of values, found in spaces where people who share an interest in a particular musical genre meet, such as cafés, concert venues or festivals. The second concept is the more widespread. It views the notion of a music scene on a wider scale, as a tool allowing both for the explanation of ways in which musical dynamics develop or are lived locally, and also a way of shedding light on their relations with the translocal (in other words between music scenes) or the global.

A music scene appears for itself and for the outside world through a merging of these understandings, through individual stories which collectively incorporate the paths of people involved in its music.[19] A music scene is strengthened from the moment collective activity becomes visible (the repeated performance of artists linked to local events) and once it is taken up by agents (what economists call the Penguin effect).[20] The scene increases in density if real connections exist in terms of concrete projects, beyond mere geographic proximity, but also if agents are involved in various interrelated and interdependent activities (the network effect).

These encouraging effects can then be confirmed by the media – local then national – which may designate a geographical area – more often than not a city – as being a sort of musical 'trademark': the Versailles music scene and its *French Touch* in the mid-1990s is an example of this.[21] Just as much as realities of musical practices, it is the spotlight cast upon particular locations which amplifies the strength of a music scene. From the multiple and interstitial relations between agents, competition develops during a given space and time and is amplified performatively by the media and public policies.

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16 Mona Ozouf and Jacques Ozouf, *La République des instituteurs* (Paris, 1989).

17 See for example Jean-Marie Seca, *Vocations rock* (Paris, 1988), Catherine Doublé-Dutheil, 'Les groupes de rock nantais', in Patrick Mignon. and Antoine Hennion (eds), *Rock. De l'histoire au mythe* (Paris, 1991), pp. 147–58.

18 Patrick Mignon, 'Paris, Givors. Le rock local', in Mignon and Hennion, *Rock, de l'histoire au mythe*.

19 Bruno Latour, 'Pourquoi viens-tu si Tarde?', in Bruno Latour, *Chroniques d'un amateur de science* (Paris, 2006).

20 Raphael Suire, 'Formation et stabilité des *clusters* d'activité TIC : questions à la politique des pôles de compétitivité', in Pierre-Noel Favennec (ed.), *Communications et territoires* (Paris, 2006).

21 With artists such as Air, Phoenix, Alex Gopher, Étienne De Crecy, etc.

Examples: Contexts – Geographical Areas – Networks

These few theoretical works discussed above can be considered in relation to music in various local geographical contexts. In the discussion that follows this will be done using data gathered from field studies undertaken in the west of France.

Contexts

Local scenes first appeared in France at the beginning of the 1980s.[22] Several factors came together to create the conditions required for these scenes to emerge. Firstly, the agents involved had become numerous enough to reach critical mass and even numerous enough to be specialized in musical sub-genres created by newer generations of fans. Rock'n'roll had been present in France for 20 years and those born post-1945 had become familiar with its electric instruments, with listening to its records, with rock'n'roll dances and at the very least some recent artists. For the most part self-taught, people involved in music during this period had adopted what Marc Touché termed 'the potentiometer culture',[23] using amplification systems and its various sound effects when performing music on stage or in the studio.

Moreover, they were usually the composers of the music which they performed. This factor was significant because it challenged the hierarchical understanding of the music industry, at least in as much as it was represented. Until then, within classical music, just as in variety or town band music, this hierarchical understanding did indeed seem to make sense when describing music from the 'conceptual' summit (professional composers linked to copyright companies) which filtered down to the 'executive' base (professional and amateur musicians across France).

While the amount of time available for music – freely chosen or imposed – had grown for younger generations (extended education, time spent unemployed), the use of new technologies, and the self-made items and innovations which resulted from them were made possible by falling relative prices of new equipment. After vinyl records at the end of the 1950s, the audio cassette in the mid-1960s and then the twin tape recorder in the 1970s allowed people to record, allowing in other words for musical creation to be captured. From the early 1980s, audio cassette multitrack recorders were sold, and these devices allowed groups to make demos at home, such recordings then constituting musical visiting cards – a necessary tool in canvassing concert organizers and record companies.

Where people played – from places of study (high school through to university) to bars via youth clubs, rehearsal rooms, record stores or nightclubs – local music scenes were in part created through the different audiences attracted to the music and its fashions. Whereas the musical genres at the time were wide-ranging, at the turn of the 1980s, the variety of styles claiming an influence from punk (often called post-punk) were particular catalysts because they promoted a do-it-yourself (DIY) approach to music, favouring autonomy, initiative and spontaneity rather than professional production with a commercial outlet. They allowed the emergence of relatively autonomous 'simplified circuits of music production'. This 'buzz' allowed musical recordings to circulate as well as enabling beginner musicians to play on stage.

Many local music labels supporting groups from their local area or city thus began to appear. The majority were established by fans, with the legal status of an association. Recording a record on vinyl became affordable (from the second half of the 1980s, 500 vinyl record singles could be produced for less than the then monthly minimum wage), with cassettes even more inexpensive. In post-punk thinking, music labels offered records known as splits (different groups on each side) or compilations which were to a certain extent labels' artistic manifestos.[24] Record producers could, therefore, offer records to mailing lists (printed or photocopied), which are nowadays often complemented by web-lists. The better-organized labels, those whose organizers were hoping to become professional, themselves sought out distributors who could channel their productions towards retail music stores so as to reach anyone who might be interested.[25]

In the 1980s, the creation of several independent distributors from local post-punk scenes (such as Danceteria in Lille or New Rose in Paris) offered many independent labels the chance to become known. This bypassing of showbusiness had never been seen before at this level of the industry and contributed towards the national and international image of French music scenes. The growth of alternative musical press (fanzines) available in record stores or by mail order was similarly encouraged through the availability of photocopiers and DIY attitudes in music. Furthermore, the early 1980s fostered alternative local media in France after the legalization of free radio broadcasting in 1981, which led to a marked proliferation of programmes broadcasting the widest variety of music and which paid heed to local musical initiatives, whether or not they were taken up on a national level and whatever their precise technical form. Current development of websites and blogs, webzines and web-radios on the internet, to a certain extent nowadays perpetuates this way of working.

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[22] Gérôme Guibert, 'Les musiques amplifiées en France. Phénomènes de surface et dynamiques invisibles', *Réseaux*, 25/141–2 (2007): pp. 297–324.

[23] Marc Touché, 'La culture du potentiomètre est-elle soluble dans les clichés?', *Fusibles*, 4 (1996): pp. 6–7.

[24] For N. Heinich, 'a manifesto is a text which demonstrates the minimum form of an event presented by a band, or a group of artists …, this allows a group to exist in the public domain. An artistic strand of music thus requires on the one hand a band or a group, and on the other hand a programme or manifesto'. See Nathalie Heinich, *Être Artiste* (Paris, 1996), pp. 44–5.

[25] During the 2000s, this model was taken up on the internet by the '*agrégateurs*' who allowed for a critical mass to be reached in terms of back catalogues on offer, as well as a referencing system by search engines.

Geographical Areas

The particular characteristics of different locations determine the development of individual music scenes. By comparing the local music scenes in the city of Nantes (in the Loire-Atlantique region) and the town of Montaigu (in the Vendée), it can for example be observed that the sociability and the workings of associations are very different in rural and urban areas. Whilst in the urban milieu, concert organizing associations, fanzines or webzines are run by a small hardcore of enthusiasts highly specialized in a 'cutting edge' musical niche, in rural areas, associations frequently bring together dozens or even hundreds of supporters during unifying events which cover various musical genres.

Alongside this structural variable, other factors linked to the history and geography of music scenes often explain some of their features. One such example is Rouen, whose garage-punk scene was a much noted phenomenon in France during the later 1970s. This music scene emerged around an independent specialist record dealer (Mélodie Massacre) – a fan of 'garage' – who established a record label and signed local groups formed by customers with whom he shared a passion for the genre; some of these, such as *les Dogs*, began rehearsing in his cellar. Other labels of similar musical genres then emerged (Closer, Teenage Records). In this process, it must be understood that the location of the city was itself significant. Situated in Normandy, close to holiday destinations frequented by Parisians during vacations and also close to the UK, the city was able, long before many other French towns, to stage rock concerts given by renowned foreign or Parisian groups. Furthermore, from the 1960s, people in Rouen had been able to tune into pirate English radio stations broadcasting from the Channel, just as the nearby port town of Le Havre – Rouen's fraternal enemy – was able to attract many groups and agents from the music sector who were competitors but also aesthetically close to those forming the music scene in Rouen.

Regional cultures and diasporas should not be neglected in understanding the constitution of local scenes. A city such as Nantes, whose Breton identity is largely debated, was at the very forefront of the wave of folk music in the 1970s (with the group Tri Yann an Naoned) before a new wave of celtic groups affiliated with 'world music' appeared in the 1990s (a number of associations were in existence as well as labels such as Dastum or events such as the *Naoned Breizh Fever*). Equally, diasporas play a part in the development of music scenes. For example, during my own ethnographic study conducted in 2001 in the Vendée, I realized that many musicians of African origin (Togo, Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal notably) who were performing in the reggae roots music scene between La Roche-sur-Yon (Vendée) and Nantes were linked in one way or another with the group Apartheid Not, a forerunner reggae outfit in the region from the mid-1980s.[26] This group was one of the first French reggae groups to record an album and its roots can be traced back to the first wave of African immigrants who sought employment in the Vendée region.[27] Unravelling the threads of inter-agent connections in this reggae roots scene proves particularly informative regarding the forces at work in the dynamics of local music.

Networks

As a local scene is created, fans of a particular group who travel to another city create an image of that local scene on the outside. Similarly, when fanzines interview groups who are foreign to a particular music scene as they are in concert in a city, or associative radio broadcasts specializing in any given musical genre, the strong aesthetic or geographical identity of music labels allows ties to be visualized between recorded groups. These ties are today magnified by the development of the internet, and more particularly by what is termed web 2.0, where content is developed by agents themselves. The same applies for webzines or sites like MySpace and, more generally, web forums. Although some groups limit their activities strictly to the internet (seeking to promote their images and sounds), most musicians hope to have an impact in 'the real world' (through record sales or increased attendance at concerts).

Moreover, individual recognition of an artist or group when considered alone does not enable the artist to enjoy the positive effects of a scene, which is by definition a collective phenomenon. Geographical ties – whether real or virtual – or even an aesthetic identity are not sufficient to allow groups to benefit from a music scene, in the same manner as self-produced records do not allow for alternative networks to be used.

The mere juxtaposition of many groups in a geographical area and a shared musical genre may indeed lead to a music scene (the 'penguin effect' of economists) but such a scene remains fragile, often relying on the image of a key group – such as the Thugs in the Angers music scene for the latter 1980s. For a music scene to impose itself, and therefore have positive effects on its members, closely interlinked and jointly interdependent networks are required. Recording studios or key sound engineers can constitute examples of this 'network effect'.

To be even more specific, the emergence of a collective movement where musicians outline various artistic projects in common is another factor allowing music scenes to develop. This jazz-based method of organization is notable within post-rock genres. In Nantes, the new indie-pop scene which was established around

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[26] Such was the case for Natural Expression, Wailing Natty Roots, Unity Reggae Style, Ossoffo, Yaoundé or Jade. Moreover, I was able to identify, in addition to musicians, associations promoting 'African culture' in an ecumenical manner such as Kori (La Roche-sur-Yon) as well as activists behind the Maison des Rastas (Nantes – Olivettes District).

[27] A monograph on Apartheid Not remains to be undertaken. According to some accounts which I gathered in 2001, the group was offered a residency and financially supported by the local council in La Roche-sur-Yon around 1983 as an arrangement with an African footballer who agreed to play for the local club provided his family and friends, including the band members, were assisted by the local council.

the Effervescence collective operates in such a manner: when a musician aims to release a record of his/her own compositions, other members of the collective are called upon, a method again mirrored when musicians go on tour, which enables the majority of artists concerned to qualify for the Social Security regime as an 'intermittent du spectacle'.[28] In this way a dozen musicians circulate in an equal number of groups who release recordings on various local labels (Effervescence but also Kithybong, Autres Directions In Music, Labo lofi). Moreover, to supplement their incomes, musicians employ their know-how in other roles, for instance in graphic design and/or concert organization in cafés, as well as tours and promoting groups for the company Muraille Médias belonging to the Effervescence label. Thus, the contacts established by any one of the members can benefit the others.

These features enable the establishment of a central core whose organization is not necessarily immediately visible from outside, but which can lay the foundations of a local music scene in a specific geographical area known for a specific musical aesthetic. If local audiences identify themselves with such a collective, and if nationally, media and audiences establish a link between place of origin and musical style, a local scene becomes identifiable. There are, however, two factors which are critical for the crystallization of a local music scene. It is firstly necessary for musicians themselves to emphasize their (regional) origins, which is rarely done in France,[29] and secondly, it is necessary for the local or regional authorities representing the geographical area to make use of the image created by the music scene to favour the local economy by using it in tourism policy for example, which is also rarely done in France in the 'contemporary music sector' although in England this type of opportunity is already widely seized upon.[30] Today such strategies are only beginning to be noticeable. To take Nantes as an example, since 2007 the spotlight has been on the local music scene as part of an annual one-off event where dozens of artists are scheduled – by genres – to perform at the Zénith venue, attracting over 6,000 concert goers. The issue here is to clearly demonstrate the importance of the city's creativity through the organization of a well-attended large-scale event hosting emerging artists coming from parallel cultural networks to which more traditional local references are thus attached. It is this very same idea which led in 2007 to the May Cooperative movement in Clermont-Ferrand, uniting local artists on a Velvet Underground cover album sold as a vinyl record before an advertising campaign allowed the project to roll out nationally.[31]

Whereas the economic dimension of centres of cultural competitiveness has long been underestimated in France, what really exemplifies the ways in which the music scenes here have been transformed compared to other countries is the role of public cultural policies. These policies have gained in scale since the 1980s, primarily being State-led – via the intermediary of the Drac primarily – before local authorities took over, notably at the level of towns and regions. Cultural policies have considerably modified the appearance of local music scenes, because they have formally recognized the creation of music in which we have an interest as culture, but also because they have contributed to the professionalization of a number of agents involved in these scenes.

A Specifically French Feature: Public Policy and its Effects

French State intervention inherited from its Jacobin tradition is a well known specificity. As early as the Third French Republic, alongside education, the town band movement allowed a certain central idea of what popular music should be to spread through France. Although the emergence of teen culture in the 1960s began to qualify the influence of the public sector – as a superstructure – the emergence of local music scenes, from the late 1970s, was in part enabled through the use of youth clubs and other socio-cultural facilities which were products of an ambitious government policy for young people. Whilst they had not been intended for this kind of activity, local youth clubs and other community and arts centres played host to many groups for rehearsals or concerts. But State involvement was to radically transform the manner in which local music scenes operated following the arrival of socialist governments into power in the 1980s. It was subsequently a more pragmatic and also anthropological vision of culture which was to be adopted. After a more general national policy (including the Zénith concert venue programme, the establishment of a special tax funding for live performance or the establishment of the *Fonds pour la création musicale*), this culminated, via the Culture Ministry, in the recognition of subsidies provided to the principal local agents involved in the musical domain (designated festivals and performance venues). With regional centres for contemporary music, this vision would, at the turn of this century,

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[28] On this subject refer to Dimitri Della Faille, 'Espaces de solidarités, de divergences et de conflits dans la musique montréalaise émergente', *Copyright Volume!*, 4/2 (2005): pp. 61–74.

[29] Thus, in the early 1990s, in Nantes, the local music scene *chanson*/pop had failed to work properly as the agents involved (Dominique A, Katerine, Little Rabbits, Perio, Françoiz Breut or Elliot *alias* Pierre Bondu) with organizations such as the music label Lithium, the association Karen, the club Le Floride and record stores (successively Fuzz to Black et Noir) were not interested in this local affiliation, although they had recognized the importance of networking. We can suggest that their unwillingness – less common today in popular music – to espouse this type of categorization was linked to the French concern for music to be 'art for art's sake'. However, for an illustration of such discourse, see Sylvain Chantal, 'Billet d'humeur ', *Magic*, 110 (2007): p. 3.

[30] For example, Andy Bennett, 'Music, Media and Urban Mythscapes: A Study of the "Canterbury Sound"', *Media, Culture and Society*, 24 (2002): pp. 87–100.

[31] In 2006, the attempt to construct a Parisian rock scene from the media buzz kick-started by the magazine *Rock & Folk* (BB Brunes, Naast, Plasticines, Les Shades, etc.) was also symptomatic of a turnaround in the French perception of the phenomenon of a 'music scene'.

be adopted at devolved level, thereby accentuating interconnections between initiatives resulting from policy and those resulting from actors in the scenes.

Three Local Music Scenes

To conclude this chapter, we can take the examples of three local scenes studied in the west of France – Angers, Montaigu and Périgueux[32] – providing a summary of their development in terms of government intervention. In these three towns, artistic creativity linked to the emergence of alternative rock groups developed during the 1980s and was relayed by local media (radio stations and fanzines), record shops and independent record producers, and performances took place in cafés and on wasteland. Following initial measures presented at national level by the Minister for Culture (festivals organized in Rennes, Lille, Bourgues, États du rock in Montpellier etc.), local agents, musicians or otherwise, campaigned to obtain support from local government. It is interesting to note that in these three towns – as in many others – at various times in the 1990s, those agents involved in the local music scene acted collectively in the form of legally constituted associations. As well as symbolic recognition of the cultural value of their musical styles, they requested construction of rehearsal studios, and particularly concert venues, and thus the possession of a specific performance venue, or a 'place to perform' as people from Angers and Montaigu would say. The Fédurok network established in the 1990s united these new venues of hybrid economics (public/private/reciprocity) which resulted from the demands of agents and the reactions to these demands by various local authorities, such as in Angers (Le Chabada) and in Périgueux (Le Réservoir).

In many towns, it was after a period of campaigning that collaboration and teamwork led to the construction of facilities subsequently 'approved' by the Ministry for Culture. Together with rising professionalism and the establishment of a legal framework for this sector, these facilities permanently transformed the identity of music scenes and their functioning. After professionalization, these facilities tended to reproduce previously criticized modes of operating of the cultural infrastructures which had preceded them, notably music scenes at national level.[33] Consequently there was a large fall in participation by agents who had previously worked in local scenes, whether this was bands or associations of stakeholders in local live performance. With the introduction of government subsidies, many local scenes seemed to be transformed, and to have developed specific stylistic identities moving towards musical ecumenicalism and a weakened core where the numbers of genres represented had increased. Furthermore, with increased legal regulation, the decreasing number of *café concerts* led to a concentration of the supply of music in these new facilities which had an increasingly strong influence on the local music field and in ways more societal and communitarian, to use the distinction proposed by Tönnies.

In the three towns studied, the situation in terms of government intervention was identical until the late 1980s: local authorities were initially ill-prepared and contact with musical associations began with conflict (protests, features in the local written press, campaign leafleting, impromptu concerts etc.), but subsequently, reaction of the local authorities diverged in each of the three towns.

In Angers, the association (established 1988) adopted the title *Adrama* (association for the development of rock and other music in Angers). The town hall, followed by other local and regional authorities, opened negotiations with this grouping leading to the construction of rehearsal premises (La Cerclère, 1990) followed by a licensed venue with two performance halls (le Chabada 1994) managed by *Adrama*, which had in the meantime repeatedly changed leadership. With the legal status of an association, le Chabada operated with around ten employees but some volunteer members did not feel their views counted and the local scene often came into conflict with the small professional team running the venue. Moreover, the licensed bar, open every evening for the first few years, was later only open for concerts. The team sought to work alongside local associations to co-produce concerts but met with obstacles. Éric Sourice from Angers – guitarist with the Thugs (the most important group in the music scene until the early 2000s) and also chairman of *Adrama* – stated, before resigning:

> The beginning of the 1990s was a pivotal period ..., it was at then that the Fédurok network began. 1990 was the time when everything became institutionalised within the sector ... it became difficult for groups to perform in bars etc. Until then people had great fun. There were some crazy record labels, notably Gougnaf, Bondage etc. There was a swarm of activity, loads of associations organising concerts. Later, after the late 1990s, people began playing in big venues with anonymous organisers. There was a completely different mindset. In the 1980s things were rough and ready, amateurish, not professional, but still it was a million times better than what we saw afterwards.[34]

By bringing together all of the stakeholders, *Adrama* became the sole point of contact in Angers for local government and thus found itself in a difficult position. This position was rendered even more difficult with the construction of the Chabada venue, the increase in subsidies and the creation of permanent posts. The fact that employees at the Chabada were primarily former local musical activists

[32] For details of the local scenes of the first two cities, see Gérôme Guibert, *La Production de la culture. Le cas des musiques amplifiées en France* (Paris, 2007). For Périgueux, see Carole Le Rendu-Lizée and Gérôme Guibert, *Gestion prévisionnelle des emplois et compétences au sein du Rama* (Bordeaux, 2007).

[33] Philippe Teillet, 'Le "secteur" des musiques actuelles. De l'innovation à la normalisation ... Et retour?', *Réseaux*, 25/141–2 (2007): pp. 269–96.

[34] Éric Sourice interview in Arno Rudeboy, *Nyark nyark! Fragment des scènes punk et rock alternatif en France. 1976–1989* (Paris, 2007).

led to envy, and for others not sharing this specific background, the Chabada was deemed to be the symbolic property of a wider grouping of activists (the Angers music scene), in reality not in charge of its activities. In some cases, *Adrama* was criticized for stifling all other musical initiatives, and conversely, the Chabada employees and management underline the difficulties they encounter with people who 'continue to think in outdated ways'.

In Périgueux (Dordogne), it was the association 'Collectif24' which initially brought together the demands of the local scene in the early 1990s. A project undertaken in collaboration with the local council then followed, leading to the construction of rehearsal rooms and subsequently a concert venue (Le Réservoir). Initially however, members of the association wanting it to retain leadership of the project imposed elements of participative democracy in the running of the *Sans Réserve* grouping created to manage the venue. The management board includes three representative committees of the agents involved; 'musicians', 'associations' and 'audience', and the neighbouring town of Boulazac was also a stakeholder in the project. The mission statement indicates that the manager of the venue must offer musical genres which are not campaigned for or representative of local music associations. Scheduling of acts is not understood as the artistic choice of a single individual with informed artistic tastes (as is the case in many venues having adopted a typical 'national music scene' culture). Furthermore, the venue has to encourage co-productions with local volunteer associations (under favourable conditions for the latter). According to the chair of the association *Sans Réserve*, 'the plus point is that the underground associations have networks and contacts which we do not and which can allow us to host key bands at a reasonable rate'.[35] When the venue opened in the late 1990s, the local council demanded the recruitment of a manager from an outside town so as not to create local 'jealousy', even if it advised the new manager to hire local figures involved in the amplified music scene to form part of the team. Today, Le Réservoir is well recognized by local stakeholders, even though, according to the manager (who is paid and heads a team of five paid employees), 'some decisions are taken undemocratically outside of the board, but we still ensure all stakeholders are informally consulted'. However, the various stakeholders do talk to each other, and there is a respected record dealer who is a member of the association in the town and some cafés organizing concerts. The association *Some Product*, for example, specializing in independent rock and hardcore-punk, schedules concerts both in bars as well as at Le Réservoir.

Finally, in Montaigu (Vendée), where the local music scene is dense and well-recognized, despite the small size of the town, *Icroacao* (which unites seven associations involved in the amplified music sector) began organizing concerts in various venues (former rail station, youth centre, bars, etc.) in 1990 and since the 1950s has been demanding a 'performance venue'. But the local town authorities, led by a predominantly MPF[36] mayor has turned a deaf ear to these appeals, claiming that the music in question cannot be defined as culture and that such activities should be managed by the private sector. From the late 1990s, initiatives led by *Icroacao* intensified (unofficial concerts, disturbance of one stage of the Tour de France, presentation of a 'protest party' list for the 2001 municipal elections which received 11 per cent of votes in the first round) but there was no solution to the conflict. Unlike in Angers however, *Icroacao* still today works with a large number of heavily involved volunteers and there are deep-rooted interpersonal and intergenerational networks in place. As early as the mid-1990s, musicians created their own self-managed rehearsal venue (the owner of one of the café-concerts – himself a musician – held the keys); there have been many low-budget concerts given in a wide variety of locations and musicians usually paid cash-in-hand.

Whilst several members of the music scene found employment in professional concert venues in other towns (La Roche-sur-Yon, Saint-Nazaire), many agents of the Montaigu association have simply given up, whereas others are prepared to take more 'extreme' measures in protest against the formalities for authorizing concert venues which thwart numerous initiatives.[37] The legendary 'underground' music scene in Montaigu, focused on resistance, remains small-scale and does not have the resources to develop. The sole paid employment within the association no longer exists as the employment contract, created by the Youth Employment Policy, is currently expired and the main links with local authorities have been severed. It could be said that whilst the national context has evolved, in Montaigu the music scene has retained old methods of functioning, characterized by a vast gulf between those involved in music and cultural policies, as well as by an economics of solidarity based on the short-term and on informal financial transactions.

Conclusion

This brief overview has shown how local music scenes represent an interface between different worlds: the old and the new, but also between public and private spheres, diverse musical cultures, amateurs and professionals. Today in France, maintaining and conserving creative dynamism is a real challenge within an increasingly complex and rationalized legal framework (copyrights, employment law, health and safety, sound pollution, etc.). Possessing financial resources in proportion to the volume of activities is often the sole guarantee of respecting legal requirements. This is why subsidized musical venues – which are the hub of musical activity in France – are amongst the rare organizations able to consistently ensure long-term continuity in this brief to preserve creativity (which is particularly difficult since it includes performance, rehearsal, support etc). Doing so requires

[35] Interview March 2007.

[36] Right-wing conservative political party led by Philippe de Villiers.

[37] For example, up until 2007, successive refusals by security inspectors prevented the association from repeating the annual festival which attracted 7,000 people in 2000.

active involvement of a number of heterogeneous stakeholders (users, members, professionals, volunteer managers, local authorities) so as to jointly construct in a given location an area for democratic exchange and activity. But barely has this project been defined than new relationships between stakeholders have begun to develop: following major record labels, it is now mobile telephone operators and telecommunication groups such as Clear Channel who are adroitly moving their business model towards diversified musical activities which generate profit (sometimes incorrectly called '360 degrees'). They have made a noticeable entry into a market where cultural industries had not yet ventured, namely live performance: SFR is developing its own performance venue in Paris and has signed a partnership agreement with La Cigale concert venue, whilst at the Saint-Malo Route du Rock festival, Le Palais du Grand Large has been renamed the Sony Ericsson venue. Clear Channel is a multinational maintaining its business of urban street advertising and bicycle transport systems while its performance arm Live Nation signs exclusive contracts with internationally recognized artists and organizes high-ticket-price festivals in Europe of exclusive performances by numbers of internationally recognized musicians. Will such a new deregulation lead to a new musical order? The impact this will have on local music scenes remains to be explained by future research.

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