

Creative milieus, scenes and local-global communities: rethinking concepts at the light of the musical kaleidoscope

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Abstract

Drawing upon the work both authors have been developing for several years on the territoriality of cultural activities and on urban creative scenes, this paper aims to bring a theoretical reflection on the potential of combining the scenes and creative milieus conceptual frameworks in order to disentangle the complexity of the dynamics of cultural production, consumption and mediation processes in contemporary art worlds. Crossing several disciplinary borders and debates, in economics, sociology, cultural and urban studies, a conceptual framework for the analysis of local creative dynamics is proposed, particularizing for the case of underground music scenes.

On one hand, the creative milieu approach, drawing upon the innovative milieu concept, comprises three interdependent analytical layers which enable us to understand the territorial dynamics that are present in these processes: (i) a specific local productive system (be it more production or consumption driven, be it more locally or externally oriented, be it more or less diversified, but naturally territorially embedded in its historic, cultural, social, economic geographical, physical characteristics); (ii) a particular governance system, linked to the coordination mechanisms of the socio-economic relations between those agents (expressing the regulation mechanisms, formal and informal, self or externally oriented, be it market, public action, hierarchies, interdependencies, etc.); and (iii) a representations system, involving the symbolic sphere, both considering the internal and external images that are produced and reproduced about the area.

On the other hand, the scenes approach, enables us to articulate culture, society and territory, assuming that a scene is the specific result of this articulation, being (i) a cultural milieu, (ii) consisting of multiple actors, such as musicians, producers, promoters, critics, audiences, (iii) who share among themselves different roles (some being audiences, or promoters, or co-producers of others), (iv) that refer to sets of values and activities, not only music-based, but also performance, communication, aesthetics or corporal hexis related, (v) whose combined effect creates an artistic and cultural atmosphere that penetrates and distinguishes a given territory, be it a neighbourhood, an urban district, a city, a region, or a virtual world.

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Crossing these two perspectives, a conceptual framework to understand the importance of local/global communities in these art worlds is proposed, highlighting the importance of local and specific territorial dynamics in the constitution and development of these music scenes.

Keywords:

Creative Milieu, Scenes, Music, Communities; Local/Global; Territory