Musicking in the Merry Ghetto:

The Czech Underground from the 1960s to the 2000s

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# ABSTRACT

By investigating the case of the Czech Underground from the 1960s to the 2000s, this thesis seeks to explore ways in which an enacted cultural space enables acts of 'togetherness' and as such 'protects' or 'immunizes' individuals and groups from perceived forms of oppression. The data presented in this thesis is taken from an ethnographic and archival study of the Underground through interviews, participant observation and archival research in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland. I describe how the term 'Underground' does not refer to a physical place but rather to a conceptual and symbolic space or set of occasions where dispositions are learned, maintained and adapted and where the world can be viewed, imagined and acted upon. I describe how that space was created through the location, arrangement and informal learning about how to appropriate a cluster of cultural practices and materials: physical appearances, actions, felt dispositions, mental states and objects. For those who became part of this Underground, to varying degrees, this cluster of cultural practices facilitated embodied, emotional and cognitive postures toward social and cultural life in Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic. These postures were in turn a platform for collective experience. I examine actors as they furnished this Underground cultural space through locating, opening up and crafting available aesthetic resources in local environments. My focus is on 'non-official' musicking practices in Czechoslovakia starting from the 1960s such as listening to the radio, seeking out records tapes, listening to LPs, growing long hair, illegal concerts, and home-studio recordings. Within these practices, I look to how aesthetic material—raw, un-tuned, heavy—took hold and provided a resource for the

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bases of community activity. Through these grounded examples, I show how a group of people assembled a parallel aesthetic ecology that allowed for acts of rejecting and communing, the doing of resistance. In this way, I attempt to show how resistance became a form of immunity or 'cocooning' against unwanted cultural material and thus a technology of health at the community level.

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

# FIGURES, TABLES, COPYRIGHT

Note on translations and copyright

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

This thesis takes as its research field the forty-year case of the Czech Underground within Czechoslovakia and Czech Republic. The Czech Underground[1] is a collective that can broadly and briefly be conceived as an embodied, emotional and cognitive posture toward social and cultural life in Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic. The Underground, as I will describe it, is not a place but a cluster of physical appearances, actions, felt dispositions, mental states and objects that form a cultural space from where to view and imagine the world. Specifically, I use data from the 1960s to the present to focus on the non-official uses and reinvents of 'music-as-resource' within the Underground to understand the aesthetic bases of community activity. Taking the call from scholars to examine culture in situ (Fine 1979 and 2010; DeNora 2000) and over long periods of time (Eyerman and Jamison 1998; Roy 2010), I explore how music, sound, and sound technology help to furnish a cultural space that affords new and socially important cultural practices where dispositions are learned, maintained and adapted.

In particular, for this case, I am in interested in what I will describe as the aesthetic foundations of 'communing', which involve reciprocal human and non-human ties that produce a feeling of 'togetherness' within small group culture (Latour 2006; Hennion 2007). Thus, I am not interested in documenting a musical underground community per se, but rather in showing how music and sound entered Underground actions in situated contexts and helped to configure interaction and intimacy, at times to

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[1] From hereafter in thesis, 'the Underground' will refer to the Czech Underground.

the level of near kinship. Throughout the thesis, I select cases and examples from Underground history that highlight key moments of how actors locate and craft cultural resources, calling attention to local spaces, arrangements and conditions while offering a chronological account of the development of the Underground cultural space.

My empirical intention is not comprehensively to map the complexity of the Underground or the extremely varied usage of different music and technologies within what I describe as an umbrella 'non-official cultural space' of which the Underground was a small, albeit highly influential and politicized part. Moreover by prioritizing music I do not intend to suggest that other non-official cultural practices in Czechoslovakia at this time were not important; to the contrary, practices such as explicit political activism (cf., Skilling 1989), literature production (cf., Gruntorád 2001; Machovec 2009; Pilař 2002), embodied practices (cf., Blažek and Pospíšil 2010), visual arts (cf., Klimešová 2001), photography (cf., Moucha 2001), magnitizdat (cf., Vaníček 1997) and theater (cf., Just 2001; Jungmannová 2001) were all vital components of Underground activity. Indeed as the sources I have just cited make clear, these extra-musical practices are critical to understand the complex richness of non-official activity in Czechoslovakia. Music was, in other words, but part of the story.

## 1.1 The Czech Underground: a Brief Description

For many parts of the world, 1968 signaled moments of social change and prospective freedom in the twentieth century. In Czechoslovakia, that year at once saw the height of a socialist thaw on censorship in music, film, and literature only to be later quelled by the

five-nation army invasion[2] of Warsaw Pact countries on 21 August 1968. During this socially and culturally turbulent period in Czechoslovakia a disparate Underground collective began to take shape, which continues today.

As I will show throughout the thesis, the Underground formed a network of dispositions that emerged through the sensibilities, felt experiences and practices of musicians, poets, artists, sculptors, philosophers, hippies, manual laborers and writers during Czechoslovakia's 'normalization[3]' period of the 1970s and 80s. Thus the Underground came to be a diverse, inter-generational collection of people[4] living in a cultural space that was parallel to that of the official culture. This space generated new areas of habitat for people who endeavored to develop and maintain a particular 'way of life', which came to be distributed across Czechoslovakia throughout the federation's normalization period. Many of these individuals referred to their cultural space as "The Merry Ghetto"[5], suggesting an emotional state, physical space and socio-political relationship.

Community activity in the Underground took shape in relation to this cultural space. Interactions between diverse groups and materials were pulled together and crafted over time, taking on a collective 'feeling' and 'being' Underground. Such groups, at the beginning, included 1960s rock'n'roll-inclined musicians (specifically members of the

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[2] Soviet Union and 175.000 troops from Bulgaria, Poland, Hungary, and East Germany
[3] Normalization refers the social and cultural climate of Czechoslovakia throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Generally it is characterized as a socio-political project of the Husák regime to 'normalize' the liberalized Czechoslovak citizen by returning to pre-Prague Spring status quo conditions. See section 4.2.
[4] As Machovec (2006b: 1) describes: "hippies, folk singers, historians, theologians, rockers, painters, photographers, feminists, radical Marxists, drug-addicts, teetotalers, environmentalists." Paper given by Machovec at the University of Texas at Austin, 10 April 2006.
[5] Egon Bondy's widely used term referring to the Underground.

group *The Plastic People of the Universe*[6]), artists (such as those connected to the informal *Křižovnická School*) along with *máničky* (so-called Czech hippies). The crafting of an Underground cultural space allowed for a rejection, or rather replacement, of noxious, oppressive and unwanted cultural practices and materials associated with 'official' social and cultural life following the political consolidation of power by the 'normalizing' Husák regime after 1968. The Underground offered, in other words, a place for potential transcendence of, and thus temporary immunity and relief from, official culture. This space was related to, but also set apart from, other non-official activities.

The term 'official' is important. Throughout the thesis I rely on the term "non-official", borrowed from Czech musician Mikoláš Chadima's writings on music during communism, which delineated musical activities as official and non-official (1992: 9-10). I extend this scope of non-official activity to refer to how people were able to create resources in often 'make do' ways, often potentially illegal in the political climate (e.g., tinkering with antenna for tuning in to foreign radio broadcasts; recording on homemade mixing consoles). Activities such as these highlight just how far-reaching non-official cultural space became, and how it could be entered into ('dipped in') with varying degrees of commitment.

Many of these individuals dipping in to the non-official cultural space (at whatever levels of commitment) did so via music. The many who came to make up the Underground were enthusiasts of Western rock music in the 1960s, such as *The Fugs*, *Captain Beefheart*, *Frank Zappa and the Mothers of Invention*, and particularly the *Velvet*

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[6] Referred to as the *Plastics* for the remainder of the thesis.

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*Underground* as well as Czech ensembles (notably *Hells Devils, AKTUAL, The Primitives*). Some of these Undergrounders were musicians who were ultimately not allowed to perform or were forced to stop playing officially after 1970. Yet despite the regime's initial attempts to suppress Western music, many still considered it a necessity to continue playing and listening to music of their choice rather than conforming to the "establishment's" musical and cultural standards, which then would have meant joining, as some saw, "the commercial sea of mental poverty" (Jirous 2006 [1975]: 7) of 1970s 'normalized' Czechoslovakia. As Ivan Jirous[7] (considered the primary 'theoretician' of the Czech Underground) asserted, "it was better to not play at all than to play what the establishment demanded" (Jirous 2006 [1975]: 7).

As well as the *Plastics*, the Underground contained an abundance of musical ensembles during the 1970s, for instance hard rock groups like *Umělá Hmota, Doktor Prostěradlo Band,* and *Bilé Světlo,* solo singer/songwriters Charlie Soukup and Svatopluk Karásek, poet Pavel Zajíček and his ensemble *DG-307*, happening-like performances of *Hever and Vaselina* and satirical Dadaist ensembles like *Sen Noci Svatojánské band*; in short, a wide range of sounds, styles, practices and approaches that the Underground cultural space came to accommodate.

In addition to developing an historical account, I will also address the contemporary (c2008-2012) state of the Underground in order to consider how aspects of the Czech Underground are brought into high definition by the present. While many undergrounds and subcultures that had been born within the communist system

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[7] Referred to throughout the thesis by Undergrounders by his nickname "Magor", meaning madman or lunatic.

experienced an "identity crisis," losing a sense of direction (Szemere 2001: 221-222) after the democratic transformations across the communist bloc in the late 1980s-early 1990s, uniquely, the Czech Underground is, in stark contrast, still very much present, with many of its musical groups, poets, artists and writers active[8]. Thus, throughout the thesis, I rely in part on interview data from the present day in order to understand how the telling of experiences of the past come to inform and furnish an Underground cultural space in the 2000s. I accomplish this by zooming out from historical moments in the discussion to bring in contemporary memories or commemorations of certain events, people and places. By incorporating such data and giving due notice to the post-socialist era of when the data was collected, this thesis aids in interrogating the '1989' gap and how dispositions learned in one political system are still able to provide a modified, adapted template for action nowadays.

## 1.2 Music in the Eastern Bloc

Much has been written about popular music during communism in the Eastern Bloc. Most of this body of literature was being told in academia in the early 1990s when the revolutions were still effervescent (cf., Ryback 1990; Mitchell 1992; Ramet 1994). The thesis returns to the case of the Czech Underground over twenty years after these democratic transformations, at a time when the many Eastern Bloc countries are members of the European Union and NATO (a qualitatively different research climate). Thus the

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[8] A notable exception to disappeared undergrounds is the Orange Alternative in Poland. See Kenney (2002), Tyzska (1998) and Misztal (1992) for an explanation into the historical roots of movement. Its contemporary manifestations can be seen in the Warsaw mayoral elections of 1999, participation in the Ukrainian Orange Revolution of 2004, and the New York Public Library for the Performing Art's 2009 exhibition "Performing Revolution" (an exhibition I helped to curate from 2006-2009).

questions asked are different than those asked before—how does the Czech Underground hold together after all this time? How did they/do they furnish a cultural space that is flexible yet durable, enabling navigation and organization over differing political regimes and socio-economic conditions?

Most previous studies have focused on the Underground's music (Skilling 1989: 79-83; Falk 2003: 84-87) as an expression of freedom or reflection of an unjust system of governance. While such a perspective may be valid in that Undergrounders were persecuted in judicial and extra-judicial manners because of their music, it does not have a sufficiently sharp analytical edge for considering the particular context and case of the Underground musicking; in other words, one could make a similar argument for music in the "West" expressing freedom in the face of capitalist ideologies, mainstreams or establishments. At the same time, a focus on expression and liberation highlights how 'suppression' is mediated as a lived, and felt, experience, and how music is at times less a vehicle of protest as it is a means for coping and 'cocooning' (self-protection). The point here is that it is necessary to consider how suppression[9] (as a result of oppressive actions) is *felt* (anywhere at anytime) and how music, configured in specific ways by groups of people, is used to alleviate and protect against such feelings. To this end, I show a more enriched understanding of how music was used as one material in an ecology of aesthetic forms that came to mediate activity in a cultural space leading to increased agency at both individual and collective levels. For this project, I have drawn on certain key developments in music sociology as it has taken shape over the last three decades, in

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[9] Often articulated in the Czech case to questions of human rights.

particular the production of culture/art worlds perspectives and, more recently, the focus on how music gets "inside" action (Acord and DeNora 2008: 226).

1.3 Sociology of Music to Music in Action

Emerging from organization studies (DiMaggio and Hirsch 1976; DiMaggio 1977, 1987; Hirsch 2000; DiMaggio and Mukhtar 2004) and production of culture (Peterson 1976; Regev 1994; Peterson and Anand 2004), the focus on production and action examines how creative 'work' takes shape through intersecting institutional and discursive factors like materials (instruments, scores, technologies), economics (markets and institutions), personnel (performers, producers and consumers) and built up conventions (of style, performance) (DeNora 1995; Frith 1998 [1996]: 36). Art, in this perspective, is a form of social or collective action that occurs through production and consumption (Becker 1974; 1982). Much of the 'cultural turn' regarding the sociology of music in this perspective, particularly popular music can be traced back to Simon Frith's oeuvre starting with the *Sociology of Rock* (1978) and *Sound Effects* (1981). Here, Frith puts forward that music is more than structure and form, more than just sound influences, more than an object to be consumed, but rather is a social activity (such as leisure) and a means to not only express ideas but live them. Frith's work has helped in framing the debate surrounding the value of popular music by arguing against widely held notions of serious music (Frith 1981; Frith 1998 [1996]). In this sense, Frith has helped to redraw how we think about music and musicality by not only considering questions of talent and musical notes but also of how it is used by people in action.

In complement to this 'worlds' perspective the more recent focus on music 'in action' (Fuente 2007; Acord and DeNora 2008) develops the concept of 'affordance' through situated contexts of use and often at non-conscious levels of attention, which come to provide conditions for action (cf., DeNora 2000, 2003, 2011a, 2011b; Hennion 1997, 2001, 2007; Frith 2003; Ansdell 2004; Clarke 2006; Fuente et al. 2012). In this 'affordance' perspective, the researcher's focus is on how actors use (appropriate) music's properties; in other words, how rhythm, timbre, harmony or melody afford, or get into action. In short, music makes some things possible. The affordance perspective reconceptualizes the musical 'object', understanding music's meaning and content as located between musical properties and their everyday use; music's potency emerges, in other words, from situated contexts through people thinking and talking about music, configuring modes of listening attention, and appropriating musical materials. Accordingly, music does not contain its own ends nor does it offer any guarantees but is only 'completed' when *used* (drawn into practice, read, interpreted) by an actor (Hennion 2001: 12; Frith 1998 [1996]: 58). Thus, music becomes an active ingredient in producing social relations, not merely a mirror of them or a reflection of society or a homologous structure of a group (Frith 1998 [1996]: 108).

The affordance perspective provides theoretical foundations for broaching the subject of musical communities and music in communities. Considering this relationship, Andy Bennett (2005: 120-121) has identified two primary uses of music in this social grouping: 1) music provides an anchoring identity to a place or locality and 2) community as a symbolic construct that brings together disparate individuals in a manner of music as "a way of life". So far, however, far too little interest has been paid to *how* a

"way of life" comes into being, is enacted and is sustained through aesthetic forms mediating activity that in turn affords not only communing but also rejecting unwanted forms of culture.

The Underground offers precisely such a case to bridge this gap in the literature. In order to accomplish such an analysis that explores the sharing and negotiating of a 'way of life', we need to move from considering music-as-text to music-as-practice. While the former perspective relies on semiotic explanations based on decoding a 'way of life' from the music, the latter perspective, rather, helps to address how a clustering of people, objects and materials come together in relation to music: for example, in real-time musical practice (rehearsing, performing) or in the ways people come to hear, listen to, talk and think about music. In short, how music actively comes to underpin and mediate a variety of action.

Here further concepts are useful, in particular, the concept of 'musicking' (music as practice) coined by Small[10] (1998: 9). Musicking frames music and musical meaning not as something that lies in the text of music but rather as arising through the social activity of engaging with music.

> To music is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing, or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing) or by dancing. We might even at times extend its meaning to [whomever] contributes to the nature of the event that is a musical performance.

Such a definition gives the researcher the tools to take apart how music is not just notes but a thing people do. Yet Small's musicking concept focuses explicitly on performance and therefore defines too narrowly how music is a form of practice. This requires

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[10] Smalls's 'musicking' has been presaged by Elliot's (1995) 'musicing'.

expansion of the concept to consider a wider range of activity: attending concerts, tuning

into the radio, practicing scales, humming, clapping, foot-tapping, dancing, imagining

music or singing along; in other words, micro attunements to music that rely on a form of

'core musicality' and that happen, often, without us even realizing what we are doing.

Therefore, by taking a modified form of Small's definition, musicking helps us to

consider how aesthetic materials are located, patterned, and crafted in often tacit ways

that come to empower how one cares for the self or 'cocoons' against unwanted

'pollutants'. Considering how 'cocooning' works at a community level of analysis,

Ansdell (2004: 78) describes how music can afford, sustain and realign "disparate moods,

energy levels, [and] modes of attention in a sense of mental, physical and emotional

congruence". This expanded definition of musicking gives us an operationalized way of

understanding music as it enters collective action bit by bit (hearing, listening, imitating,

anticipating, composing, rehearsing, distributing). Moreover this expanded definition

prioritizes emotions, which can be seen to lead to more cognitive forms of awareness.

Such emotional and cognitive experiences through musicking are at the center of notions

of togetherness and resistance present throughout the thesis.


1.4 Organization of Thesis


In what follows, I discuss how the Underground furnished a 'second' culture by

exploring the diverse ways people participated in musical practices, or musicked. This

ultimately created a habitable, health-promoting cultural space for communing and

building immunity against things that they sought to reject, in other words, a space for the 'doing' of community.

In **Chapter Two** I review literature that considers community activity in anthropology, sociology and psychology and how culture actively informs space creation for the making and doing of communities. Specifically, I take into account how people come together and how music is implicated in generating emotional convergence in the feeling of 'togetherness'. Such examination of music's role in community activity demands an ethnographic methodology that does not disguise music's power through "black-boxing[11]" (Latour 1999) but rather gives a grounded voice to the many ways people musick and its potentializing effects for acting upon us. I describe this methodology in **Chapter Three** in detail, describing such a grounded approach to studying cultural spaces in an ecological perspective. In order to examine ecologically the multiple uses and reconfigurations of music, I focus on how clusters of individuals in local arrangements learned, used and developed cultural resources.

**Chapter Four** addresses the beginnings of aesthetic assembly of the Underground cultural space. I take a closer look at historical conditions of 1960s to early 1970s Czechoslovak politics and actors' engagement with circulating cultural media in order to define specific cultural spaces embedded within other more general spaces. I focus primarily on how actors tacitly 'dipped in' to a non-official cultural space creating, for some, a liminal transition into what would eventually come to be arranged into a more particular Underground cultural space. Such furnishing of the Underground relied on

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[11] "Black boxing" refers to disguising or cloaking how mechanisms and relationships between actors may work, function or change. Considering black boxing the 'power of music', this is often best seen in a stimulus-response relationship: play Mozart (A) to children and they will be smarter (B). How the input (A) makes the output (B) is hidden by a 'black box'.

locating aesthetic materials, putting them together with other sounds and materials and crafting them into patterned ways of use. Thus, the chapter seeks to ask how one enters a cultural space, furnishes it aesthetically and what this furnishing activity can do.

From this crafted non-official space in the 1960s, a more distinct Underground cultural space emerged in the 1970s. **Chapter Five** outlines how acts of oppression led to suppressing environmental conditions that enabled a feeling and practice of 'truth to self'. This suppression in turn leads to heighten forms of collective awareness of an Underground 'way of life' and pointing to the politics of musicking in the Underground cultural space. Thus, I consider some of the core building blocks of the Underground by asking how music mediates knowledge production, commitment-making and ontological security. Continuing the chronological development of the thesis, **Chapter Six** concerns musicking within the 1980s that grew out of the space furnishings of amateur, semi-official and non-official musical streams in the 1970s. Here I examine the blurring between the wider non-official cultural space (jazz, protest music, alternative music, New Wave) and the Underground cultural space.

**Chapter Seven** casts an even wider net of non-official activity in Czechoslovakia. I do this by addressing public-private sphere tensions in normalized Czechoslovakia during late socialism and the potential of distributed practice for social and cultural change. Using data from Radio Free Europe listeners, the aim is to consider how technology and sound played a leading role in how these listeners could 'dip in' to non-official practices. Finally, **Chapter Eight** concludes by drawing together the various components of the thesis argument and proposing thoughts for future research and how the case of the Czech Underground helps us to understand the revolving nature of how

cultural spaces are enacted in everyday life regardless of political contexts—revolutions

in other words, but spelled with a lower case 'r'.

# CHAPTER 2: MUSICKING IN CULTURAL SPACES

Debates within cultural sociology have reshaped how culture is studied within the discipline (Alexander 2003; Woodward 2007). The so-called 'cultural turn' has brought culture to the fore in sociological research not as a system of belief but rather as something that underpins our daily life of actions, practices, thoughts, and feelings (Jacobs and Hanrahan 2005: 1; Jacobs and Spillman 2005). Within cultural sociology, music has long been used as lens to examine the many arenas of the social. This is evidenced, to name a few examples, through popular music as social activity (Frith 1978, 1981), symbolic and social boundaries of musical taste and consumption (Bourdieu 1984; Thornton 1995; Peterson and Kern 1996; Byrson 1996), music listening attention and forms of behavior (Stockfelt 1997; Bull 2000), music as medium of collective constitution (Eyerman and Jamieson 1998; Bergh 2007) as well as music, gender and identity (Frith and McRobbie 1990 [1978]; Waksman 2006). In short, music's far-reaching reverberations in social life have been explored at several levels, contributing to a more specific 'sociology of music' within the 'cultural turn'. Yet with this 'cultural turn' has also come a widely constructivist approach in cultural production concerning music, which has privileged culture as an organizational practice rather than an active aesthetic material (DiMaggio 1976; Peterson 2004); in other words, the musical object has been studied as being *the result* of social relations (DeNora 2003: 3).

More recently, sociologists have re-engaged with aesthetics to realign this imbalance within social-musical studies. The aesthetic shift within the cultural turn has been prominent within a "post-critical […] new music sociology" (Prior 2011: 122;

Fuente 2000; 2007), which shows how music is good material for taking apart and reassembling larger debates concerning core sociological variables as agency and structure (DeNora 2003; Hennion 2007). As DeNora (2003: 2-3) asserts, a focus on music's aesthetic materials returns a 'sociology of music' ("*what causes music*") to a 'music sociology', which concerns music as a key element "in and as" society (DeNora 2003: 2-3). Music sociology's focus on aesthetic materials (cf., Acord 2006; Robertson 2010; Sutherland and Gosling 2010; Bergh 2011; Hara 2011b) and what they make possible thus illustrate the core of cultural sociology's "strong program" considerations of the active properties culture plays within social life (Alexander 2003).

In the following I put forth a conceptual model to understand how music is implicated in notions of 'togetherness' found in what can be called community activity. This chapter begins with a focus on how to understand community through its conceptual and disciplinary roots as a unit of analysis in order to see how classifications and typologies of community have directed how we think about what comprises community. Next I consider how music sociology can expand our understanding of community from its reified form by interrogating the aesthetic bases of community activity. These aesthetic bases help us explore how we can conceptualize resistance and immunity in everyday politics.

2.1 Community in Sociology

There has been a long tradition of literature on the theme of community within sociology and anthropology (Tönnies 1963; Durkheim 1964; Bell and Newby 1974; Bauman 2001). The term community is a resonant concept for the social sciences, embodying key

concerns as trust, social bonds, structure and agency. Therefore, community has been used in many, sometimes-contradictory ways. Indeed, to date there is little agreement within academe over what is 'community'. However, by refocusing the level at which one examines community and how to understand it—in its tacit formations and as a process— I argue that community still provides a meaningful mode of analysis.

The first serious analysis and discussion of community was introduced in Tönnies's writings on *gemeinschaft* and *gelleschaft*. Tönnies' (2002 [1887]) key work distinguished between rural-urban social ties, *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft*, where the former is related to levels of kinship within village settings and the latter is linked with impersonal, mechanistic city ties. *Gemeinschaft* has been understood in relation to ascribed entry into the community, based on birth, gender, religion, or residence. *Gesellschaft* puts forth achieved entry though qualifications, degrees and diplomas (Bershady 2003: 534-535). These binary definitions have been criticized on the grounds of idealizing the village and not giving attention to more elective forms of community (Urry 1995: 10), however Tönnies's concepts have become useful more as analytic concepts than as real, lived phenomena (Bershady 2003: 535).

In developing Tönnies initial work on *what* is community, researchers have dissected it in varying ways. It has come to be referred to in debates on identity, place and belonging (Ramsey 1996), social fragmentation and civic life (Putnam 2000), industrialization and immigration (Bender 1978), community in virtual spaces (Rheingold 1994), physical spaces (Oldenberg 1999), and informal network associations (Granovetter 1973). It is possible to trace throughout all of these studies common themes of what community *should* look like, incorporating a set of values based on trust,

recognition, tolerance, intent, and solidarity; geographical locations as city, neighborhood, or imagined; and ideals.

These themes have led to a plethora of typologies regarding the term. Quoting Bell and Newby (1976), Urry (1995: 10) summarizes three typologies of community: first, as a topographical entity; second, as a local social system; and third, as communion based on personal ties. Urry includes a fourth type of community based on ideology. Urry's generic forms, which summarize a majority of scholarly work in community studies, indicate community as involving both a cognitive state existing somewhere between the individual and collective and an embodied state achieved through practice.

While these typologies address community as a noun, they do not address community as a process, as a lived and enacted thing. By focusing on the process of how community occurs rather than a reified terminology that takes as its object of study the end product, it is possible to move away from what community *evokes* (comfort, home) to how it *happens* (comforting, locating). Neglected from the studies mentioned above is how community activity is built up, how an actor enters collectives and how community activity is used to learn new forms of meaningful interaction that come to produce 'togetherness'.

2.1.1 Community Activity and Group Culture

Notions of 'togetherness' have been highlighted in Victor Turner's writings on the liminal social relation communitas. In his study of rites of passage, Turner (1957: 125-130) suggests that people exist in a 'liminal phase' during ritual, being neither here nor there, in between two planes of existence. It is in these transitional periods of liminality

where communitas is treated as a form and practice of being together by providing

bonding material between relations. Thus social relations are "an achieved state, part of a

cultural process […] using cultural artifacts [of rituals]." Communitas is then "a *way* of

being together—a mode of being together" (Turner 1982, 2008 [1969]; Ansdell 2004: 78).

This 'way of being together' provides an important mechanism for considering

conditions that can lead to social and cultural change. According to Turner (1982: 44)

communitas emerges from the liminal ritual experience as a result of its "anti-structuring"

properties. 'Anti-structure' can lead to "the liberation of human capacities of cognition,

affect, volition, creativity […] from the normative constraints incumbent upon occupying

a sequence of social statuses" (Turner 1982: 44). 'Liberation', in Turner's view, is a

result of different modalities of communitas: firstly, "spontaneous communitas", which

occurs in 'click'-like moments of "emotional recognition" between people. Here, as

Turner argues, one feels such fellowship almost instinctually. Secondly, "normative

communitas", which addresses how groups shape collective goals and solidify bonds over

time. As such, liminal moments where communitas resides indicate a "kind of

institutional capsule or pocket which contains the germ of future social developments, of

societal change" (Turner 1982:45).

In this sense, community 'building' as a form of social change (e.g., disparate

individual to group) is a liminal activity that occurs in certain environments furnished

with materials. In other words, combinations of things—place, aesthetics, people—can

bring about liminality when there is a 'click' between resources and action within a

meaningful space. Within such a space, it is possible to then expand 'fellowship' (or what

I refer to throughout this thesis as 'togetherness') as not only between people but also to

describe a relation between a network of objects, materials as well as people. 'Togetherness' takes into consideration a whole range of what can be considered to be 'the social' (cf., LaTour 2006). Liminality (be that of an object or a person) may be pursued at subtle or fine degrees of commitment over time, which may often occur in tacit-level formations. Therefore it is possible to consider how liminality occurs in everyday life in meaningful spaces.

The creation of a meaningful space in which such tacit-level community activity is carried out is a topic broached by sociologists of interaction. Gary Alan Fine's body of work presents grounded accounts of small group culture, where, as Fine (2006: 1, 15) states, "is a site of action, not merely a filter of 'collective representations' […]." Continuing, Fine asserts that "[small groups] are arenas of action, incorporating situated meaning, embodied action, and the power of co-presence." To explore how culture is grounded in interaction, Fine (1979) situates cultural creation in the case of Little League (youth) baseball teams, arriving at a definition of culture as a negotiated, shared, and constructed perspective via microsocial interaction. According to Fine, in and through interaction in small group settings, culture is located and produced.

Fine addresses these specific features of local cultures that form according to what is *available* in the local environment (2006: 1). Fine's focus on 'availability' helps to indicate how a cultural space is able to take shape through material furnishings at hand as well as what environmental conditions are able to provide. This focus, then, suggests what could *not* happen when those materials are *unavailable*, or suppressed. Moreover, Fine asserts that resource availability aids in developing a group's own culture, or "idioculture" (Fine 1979: 734), which molds future actions, consequently taking into

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account new and shifting contexts in which group culture persists. Idioculture thus outlines how cultural creation builds on the past for long-term group projects. In later work that examines interaction in the workplace, Fine (2006) introduces the concept "arena" as a physical and symbolic site where idioculture takes shape. An "arena" becomes a useful tool to observe how such a space frames interaction between a social group who may not otherwise be bound by categories of class, race and gender. "Arena" helps to move away from "homologous" forms of cultural appreciation, which posits "structural resonances" between social standing and cultural forms (Middleton 1990: 9), to an approach where culture and small groups are actively being co-configured.

### 2.1.2 Musical Scenes and Cultural Spaces

Fine's "arena" of action-framing for small group cultures has been similarly explored through the concept of 'cultural spaces' within popular music studies. The notion of how people use music within a cultural space has been presaged in the 'scenes perspective'. As Bennett (2004: 223) observes, the theoretical framework of the "scenes perspective" has become integral in understanding how music is used as a resource. The perspective's strength lies in its examination of series of meditations, use and constitution of music in local, translocal and virtual environments (Bennett 2004: 223). The contemporary scenes perspective reconfigures previous localized and fixed approaches to scenes, which placed undue emphasis on local identity, geographical and historical processes.

Countering this fixed perspective, Will Straw's "scenes" (1991) helped to re-conceptualize musical practices, styles and collectives as connecting local musical practices and allegiances at a translocal level. In one sense, systems of scenes have

supplanted formulations of subculture by providing a less fixed and frozen perspective of the interaction between music and groups (Shepherd 2003: 64). This is due to Straw's consideration of material aspects, such as the circulation of cultural commodities, and socially temporal aspects involving canonization, accrual of values, and durability (1991: 374). Straw's focus on "cosmopolitanism" in musical scenes draws attention to the ways in which local musical practices can be mapped upon international musical practices and characteristics, which "may endow them with a sense of purpose" (1991: 374). As an analytic tool, it allows the researcher to conceive of transnational music trends underpinned by global media circulation. Yet Straw's description of circulation does not take into account the *nature* of practices associated with how some media actually flow (such as smuggling, tuning in, tinkering) or how one comes into contact with such material, which is ultimately a local experience and relative to 'available' resources. These are mediations that ultimately configure ways of reception, forms of use and negotiated meaning that come to craft a cultural space and subsequently give cues for future action.

In a similar effort to define a meaningful cultural space via aesthetic forms, Eyerman (2006: 19) describes art as an "experiential space". This definition asks a key question in considering a meaningful approach to the sociology of arts: how can art help someone experience and understand the world around them? Eyerman (2006: 16-18) asserts that this "collective mode of aesthetic experience" rests on the contextualized duality of art: it at once reflects a reality while providing a meaningful form to engage with that reality. This reflection/engagement primarily occurs through imagination and creativity constituting the space, rather than the space being "something external and

determinant, a reified space [such as a 'field' or 'art world' that] one enters like a maze"
(2006: 19). Such imaginative and creative engagement with a reality, which art affords,
thereby opens up the *aesthetic experiential space* as a *space for experimentation*, in
Eyerman's view (2006: 19-20), for cognition ("ideas, identities, and ideals") and
performance. In this sense of a cultural space, art is both experience and practice: what
does art "teach us […] about ourselves […] and the world" and how might (and how can)
we respond to this (Eyerman 2006: 22)?

Straw's and Eyerman's perspectives help bring about the understanding of scenes
and cultural spaces as liminal environments of transition where sensibilities and
affiliation take shape with reference to, among other things, materials such as music (and
art) that act in ways to draw people together (communitas). Scenes and spaces thus
become meaningful to those who enact them, relying on both aesthetic experience and
practice. Activity, then, is mediated by such sensibilities and occurs in environments that
are grounded in available cultural material and underpinned by imagination and creativity.
That is, cultural spaces are furnished and furnishing: they are created by, and aid in
sensitizing, people's aesthetic sensibilities. Meaningful interaction transforms and
converts such sensibilities into dispositions, which can develop into community activity.

### 2.1.3 Ecological Perspectives of Community Activity

The literature on small group culture and activities within experiential, liminal spaces has
helped to ground notions of community activity through a focus on situated clusters of
people interacting in a material context. However, constructivist approaches can rely too
heavily on socially constructed meaning and thereby ignore properties of an environment.

It is here that psychologists of perception have contributed to our understanding of community activity by examining objects and their properties within social environments and how these properties 'afford' possible forms of learning and action (Gibson 1977; Greeno 1994).

Originally developed by ecological psychologist J.J. Gisbon (1979), Greeno's (1994) account of affordances outlines the co-configuring features of action by environmental affordances and actors' abilities. For example, certain objects (e.g., a ball) have properties (e.g., spherical) that allow it to do things (e.g., roll) that require of the actors (e.g., the ball, you and I) certain abilities (e.g., to roll, to kick) that enable meaningful action (e.g., passing a soccer ball to another player). Along with affordances are a person's abilities (such as 'to kick'), which in Greeno's (1994: 338) understanding, refer to what the person comes to contribute to interaction that are attuned to an environment. In this sense, we see a relationship between dispositions and abilities, wherein learned affordances (Gibson and Pick 2000) and abilities contribute to disposition formation (Glenberg and Robertson 1999). Affordances and abilities aid in an ecological understanding of how environments or objects can provide forms of action and how people articulate meaning to such action (e.g., passing a ball to a teammate in order to win the game), which consequently helps to refute stimulus-response forms of behavior while integrating interactionism. This reading brings to light tacit mechanisms (e.g., attunement and embodiment) involved in learning and ability.

Discussing music's affordances, DeNora (2011a: xi) has described an "aesthetic ecology" around clusters of people, objects and symbols. An aesthetic ecology helps to refine and replace the above mentioned constructivist accounts of 'cultural spaces' by

also considering properties of environments or objects in co-coproducing experience. Similarly, Ansdell (1997: 43) sees "music as an ecology rather than a structure. An ecology is a balance of interlinking forms [e.g., melodies, rhythms, sensibilities] and processes [e.g., composing, performing, appropriating] in a context that sustains them and guarantees diversity." Clarke's (2006) work helps to highlight ecology as a perceptual system grounded in real-world events and environments. Ecological perspectives in this light focus on a process of 'exposure-identification-attunement', which echoes DeNora's (2011b: 310) notion of ecology as "the ability to align oneself and be aligned with". This resonates with emotional convergence, like-minding thinking as well as Becker's (1953) learning steps and recognition, discussed below.

Moreover, an ecological perspective renovates interactionist terminology. By having a strong focus on situations, contexts, places, moments, people and objects, an ecological perspective is better suited to see how collective efforts *furnish* a cultural space through *locating, opening up* and *crafting* activity in relation to what information is available, or not available, in material surroundings and what a cultural space can offer those who have the ability to use it (which is a function of learning). In this sense, to speak of 'furnishings' is much like the collaborative and coordinated action in how we might build and furnish a home: build walls with wood, stormproof windows with glass, roof with shingles, drag in a chair one found at a flea market, install locks on the door, put up light fixtures, quilt blankets for beds, and then renovate when material is worn or someone moves in or out or next door. However, instead of nails, glass and wood, I speak here about aesthetic materials.

The 'potentializing' aspect of aesthetic resources for building a habitable place is not determining of actions, rather it makes possible forms of action through the indexical nature of aesthetic material, as I discuss in section 2.1.6 with the affordance perspective in music sociology. Thus, ecological understandings of community activity help to situate how objects and environments play a role when considering enduring webs of dispositions that come to be linked together (Latour 2006: 66), rather than only considering human-human interaction within a context as an explanation for creating social bonds, as others suggest (Fine 2006; Eyerman 2006; Straw 1991).

Until this point I have considered literature concerning community as a process of 'togetherness'. Community activity implicates aesthetic learning as a key point in thinking about how people 'enter' communities over time, underpinning notions of 'togetherness' in an ecological perspective. Often, the learning process is negotiated in tacit activity where one may not be coordinating action to a specifically adopted goal (are we building a house together?) but rather to how conditions of an environment can afford action (sitting underneath a tree provides relief from the sun). In this perspective, the vocabulary changes from 'strategy of action' to 'action by chance, likelihood or possibility'. This makes room for seeing not only how one enters a community but also shifts the focus away from determinate explanations of action within community based on ascribed social positions and inscribed dispositions (Tönnies 2002 [1887]). Learning dispositions and ability attunement help to shape community activity that occurs in cultural spaces. In keeping with an ecological perspective of grounded community activity, I consider learning and disposition formation as central issues within larger debates on how things come together in situated contexts.

### 2.1.4 Learning Dispositions

By starting off with typologies of community as a reified noun, we have arrived at community as something achieved through coordinated activity with an environment. We know that this activity of coming together rests on sensibilities that are learned tacitly and in often informal manners, which pave the way for cognitive forms of awareness, or dispositions. The question remains as to *how* dispositions are learned. In an effort to refute 'inscribed' dispositional orientations, Howard Becker's (1953) essay "How to become a marihuana user" considers this tacit level of learning through interaction.

Becker's essay opens up the debate on disposition formation within sociology. The essay argues against essentialist claims of predispositions that were believed to motivate deviance. Becker's argument, rather, contextualizes behavior as emerging and performed in situations. Becker explains that behavior is the result of an acquisition process of meaning, thus subject to cognition. As Becker continues, dispositions toward objects and situations are "built up in the course of learning" (1953: 235). Becker thus changes the conversation from 'innate traits of behavior' to how a person frames the activity, what it does for them and with whom they do it.

Becker (1953: 242) introduces how we orientate toward objects, such as marijuana, through learning in situated contexts.

> If a new form of behavior toward objects is to emerge, a transformation of meanings must occur, in which the person develops a new conception of the nature of the object. This happens in a series of communicative acts in which others point out new aspects of his experience to him, present him with new interpretations of events, and help him achieve a new conceptual organization of his world, without which the new behavior is not possible.

Further, the study focuses on the sequence of changes of a person's marijuana use, showing the transformative stages within an actor-object relationship. This sequence, at which a person's "willingness to try marijuana" is the first step, matches Turner's conception of social relations in that there is a threshold which someone transitions through with the help of others and the environment around them. Of the steps Becker outlines in this transition, stages of observation, imitation and modeling are critical in learning how to use the drug for pleasurable effects.

Becker (1953: 237) notes that without this social learning, "marihuana [sic] was considered meaningless"; not only is a "presence" of an object necessary for effects to happen, but one also needs "recognition". Therefore, to experience fully, one must be aware or conscious, which, as Becker argues (1953:240), emerges from interaction with others, particularly with "experienced users", or teachers. Recognition speaks to the complex, entangled process of how an object is mediated or discursively encountered within group cultures; yet this learned orientation is not always consciously articulated as Becker states but also occurs at unconscious or even 'instinctive' levels of knowing; or to put it more simply: what 'naturally' feels good and what doesn't.

Antoine Hennion (2005: 141) addresses learning in his pragmatic theory of reflexive taste. He reflects on Becker's social learning through interaction, recognition and teachers along with an ecological perspective of exposure, identification and attunement:

> It is necessary to get together (this can be a physical meeting, as is often the case, but it can also simply be an indirect influence on a community, on traditions, on accounts and writings, or on others' taste); to train one's faculties and perceptions (both collectively and individually), to learn tricks and ways of doing things, to have a repertory,

classifications, and techniques that reveal the differences between objects; to become aware of the body that makes itself receptive to these differences and that not only learns about itself but also invents and shapes itself during the experience.

The importance of the "teacher-student" relationship, or apprenticeship, is similarly voiced by Wenger's (1998; Wenger et al. 2002) "community of practice", where learning is an ongoing, self-collective project based on participating in activity in situated contexts. Wenger's focus on learning from relationships points to how dispositions emerge from situated activity; moreover this focus on *participation* has a more active, engaging dimension for action as opposed to consumption, which implies a more passive social actor (Ito et al. 2010: 15).

In Becker, Hennion and Wenger's studies, the process of meaning configuration via objects and with others who 'show the way' is one that is revealed through gradual, habitual, achieved and "built up" actions in an environment of use, evidenced by the transitional process of "becoming". These approaches help to challenge conceptions of durable and fixed networks of dispositions conditioned through social position, as Bourdieu (1977) has termed habitus.

2.1.3 Bourdieu's Habitus

Habitus, as a network of class-conditioned dispositions that orientate people's behavior toward the objective world, posits a culturally constrained domination of action. Emerging from material class conditions, these "systems of durable, transposable dispositions" (1977:72) are subconsciously adopted from an external reality as embodied orientations and not explicitly mobilized toward rational goals. As Bourdieu explains,

"the habitus is necessity internalized and converted into a disposition that generates meaningful practices and perceptions'' (Bourdieu 1984: 170 qtd in Bergesen 2005: 38).

Habitus is implicitly learned in situ and is, in Bourdieu's view, the mode for reproducing social relations. Pessin (Becker and Pessin 2006: 282) criticizes this perspective, claiming that it is constraining due to "the weight of the habitus" on action. Partly this is because Bourdieu's habitus does not take into account emergent dispositions and performed abilities within given situations as Becker and Greeno above have shown. Agency is thus greatly restricted in Bourdieu's habitus paradigm, being subject to social origins and deterministic, almost predictable, 'trajectories' within a social space of objective relational structures, as he has termed as "fields". As King (2000: 422) sums up: "society no longer consists only of interactions between individuals [as his theory of practice would assume], but rather Bourdieu sees society as a dialectic between practice and structure."

While Bourdieu's ontological "theory of practice" asserts an inter-subjective social world of individuals non-determinately interacting together, King (2000: 423) has pointed out that habitus slips into the very objectivism that Bourdieu attempts to subvert with his theory of practice; habitus becomes "a key vehicle for […] his retreat to objectivism". Habitus' *a prior* internalization of objective social conditions thereby undermines his ontological inter-subjective theory of practice by positing conditioned, deterministic cultural constraints that are generative of action. As King (2000: 423) continues:

> There are no "calls to order by the group" nor any subtle consideration of the reactions of
> others when Bourdieu discusses the habitus, nor does there need to be, for the habitus

ensures that the individual will inevitably act according to the logic of the situation. The origin of individuals' actions lies not in their interaction with other individuals but in the objective structures, which confront them. It is to those structures, the *opus operatum*, not others, to whom they must now defer.

Constructivist literature and ecological approaches have corrected this absence of "calls to order by the group" by asserting culture as an organizing means of action within local spaces and arrangements as well as embracing chance and happenstance in social life. This focus takes us into the limitless resources of an 'art worlds' perspective that highlights such 'happenstance possibilities' in cooperative group interaction.

### 2.1.5 Art Worlds

Forms of cooperative interaction between people around objects are at the heart of Becker's *Art Worlds* (1982). Taking place in a bounded area of activity similar to Fine's "arena", Becker argues for the collective action that takes place around a "work" of art which gives the art work its meaning. This approach's description of networks and collectives organized around cooperation, which also contributes to the artwork's aesthetic conventions, helps to see a quality (e.g., cooperative) of interaction that is useful when considering aspects of community activity where trust, kinship and fellowship emerge. However, as I will show, 'cooperation' mustn't always assume goodwill by participating actors. The approach also develops lines of gradual activity through negotiation with other social actors: "seeing how others respond to what they do and adjusting what they do next in a way that meshes with what others have done and will probably do next" (Becker and Pessin 2006: 278).

Becker's worlds approach proves beneficial particularly for what it offers to marginalized groups. Implied in the worlds approach is a "sociology of the possible"

(Becker and Pessin 2006: 279), where social relations exist not in a field of limited resources (as Bourdieu's "trajectories in fields" would have it), but rather in a world of limitless resources. Indeed, "you could always do something else" as Becker notes (Becker and Pessin 2006: 279). In her critique of Habermas's single elite bourgeois public sphere, Fraser (1990) proposes the existence of a multiplicity of publics, not as a threat to democracy but as a positive benefit in establishing participatory parity between different groups. She calls these publics "subaltern counter-publics" and sees them as ''parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter-discourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs'' (1990: 67). Moreover, thinking with the idea of limitless resources within counter-publics, it is possible to analyze how power is built up between (human and non-human) relationships as well as how counter-discourses between these groups may 'merge' or 'meet up' at different discursive and experiential points for the generation of more resources. I return to this below when discussing resistance.

The sociology of the possible thus analytically aids in understanding how a group of people reject unwanted material by engaging in the cultural effort of "doing something else" in order to locate and craft a parallel or alternate space for more comfort and less dis-ease; in short, for greater agency and well-being. This helps to ground this case study of the Czech Underground in observable phenomena rather than determinate explanations via "trajectories" within Bourdieu's conception of "fields" (cf., Hagen 2008). People's actions and responses within this limitless world of resources is thus anything but determined or predictable but rather based on interaction with available resources within local environments. However, the main weakness of the 'worlds' approach is a neglect of

how aesthetics can be an active ingredient in making possible individual and collective

states of being and how aesthetics helps hold together 'togetherness'. The concept of

musical affordances within an ecological perspective helps to correct this absence of

aesthetics and provide a model for how to navigate and research such bases of action.

### 2.1.6 Affordances and Mediations

As indicated above, affordances are a mechanism of perception pursued in ecological

psychology. DeNora (2000) takes this approach when considering music's affordances,

which play a central role in the capacity of music to act as a "technology of the self".

DeNora's "music as technology of self" considers how actors use music in "the reflexive

project of the self" (DeNora 1999: 32). Her focus is on how consuming music can be

used to regulate emotion, constitute the self, elaborate and sustain identity, produce

knowledge, create templates and backdrops for action. This view of music's role as an

action resource (i.e., a precondition of action) within social relations moves away from

explicit cultural products that contain semiotic codes or are commodities for consumption.

DeNora's work has thus been influential in bringing about the 'aesthetic turn' in

sociology (Fuente 2007; Prior 2011) by going past representations or imagery and

considering more rigorously the properties of music and what they make possible.

DeNora describes music's affordance qualities (2003: 48) as

> extend[ing] [the] developments in reception theory, emphasizing music's effects as
> dependent upon the ways that those who hear it respond to it; how they incorporate it
> into their action; and how they may adapt their action (not necessarily or in most cases
> consciously) to its parameters and qualities.

These selective, sometimes unconscious uses of music's affordances are termed

"appropriations" (DeNora 2000: 45). Appropriation here differs from how we find the

term in cultural and media studies, wherein it is taken to be a form of transculturation, or borrowing a sign or symbol from another culture (cf., Hebdige 1979: 103-108). Rather, musical affordances (e.g., bodily entrainment or dancing) are brought out from musical properties (e.g., rhythm or 3/4 time signature) by the configuration of people and objects (e.g., Viennese Ball) that constitute the music (e.g., Strauss's waltzes); similar to the above example of a ball's spherical properties allowing a meaningful sport to be played by a team on a pitch.

This constituting process of musical meaning has been referred to as the process of mediation (Hennion 1997; Born 2005). Musical mediators help to clarify, shape, and negotiate agreement and meaning of musical information. This echoes Frith's focus (1978) on discursive aspects of meaning creation in music, which also serves to challenge the 'texts' approach study of musical meaning lying inherently in the music. As others have noted within the study of popular music (cf., Stockfelt 1997; Bull 2000), these mediations can be technological (radio, CD player, car stereo), spatial (venue, city, bedroom) or interpersonal (listening with friends, strangers, alone, with family). These mediations, or contextualization cues, as DeNora (1986: 91) has described, are "various conventions or ritual practices that, through experience, come to carry certain connotations which serve as the tools for the work of sense-making and meaning construction." In other words, mediations highlight the ways in which musical meaning is constituted and what it does for people.

The meaning constructed, in part, arises from the situated use of music that includes human and non-human relations (Latour 1999; Geisler and Wickramasinghe 2009). A 'sociology of mediations' (or attachments, associations) departs from critical

sociology, which suggests the actor as a "cultural dope" or "cloaked in a social game" (Hennion 2001: 5). This is opposed to Bourdieu's habitus, which suggests a social actor who embodies their external social conditions and continually reproduces it (Bourdieu 1977: 79). Instead, a 'sociology of mediations' posits the amateur as a highly reflexive, ingenious user of cultural material—a key to understanding how one uses music for 'cocooning'. The user, or amateur, then, is one who is able to deploy and manage instantaneously and often spontaneously, an innumerable heterogeneity of links and attachments in order to innovate, reform and refine taste. Inevitably, this deployment of taste in a gesture or a moment evidences "traces" of learning from others, of having learned from a collective of people (Hennion 2007:109; Frith 1987: 272).

Further, Gormart and Hennion (1999) consider the co-production of subjectivity. They address how objects act on subjects, putting the latter into a 'passive state' while actors actively prepare to be 'moved' by music. Primarily, this arises through the co-configuration of objects: "works make the gaze that beholds them, and the gaze makes the work" (Hennion 2005: 134). This reflection on a state of being as dually active/passive brings to view how ways of feeling, thinking and knowing *emerge* from a configured set of mediations that come to constitute music (Hennion 2005: 134). I return to this active/passive duality in section 2.2.

So far the review has presented debates on work surrounding notions of community from anthropological, sociological and psychological perspectives. I first addressed key theoretical work on community, exploring the conceptual underpinnings of how community is formed and how one enters into it, arguing that these texts do not consider the correct level of analysis needed to fully explain such forms of sociality,

learning and 'togetherness'. Yet the question remains as to how music within an aesthetic ecology can lead to qualities of 'togetherness' and thus help to produce intense fellowship.

2.2. Coming Together Musically

In his account of musical identity, Frith (1996: 111) identifies 'coming together' through music as a performative social and emotional project, evidencing 'togetherness' as a result of an aesthetic build up and achieved through "experience and collusion". Here, he stresses "[social] *groups* only get to know themselves […] *through* cultural activity" (1996: 111, Frith's italics). In this sense, Frith begins to tease the question of how music mediates emotional and cognitive bases of community activity. Communing is something that happens while musicking and has effects that can be long lasting and durable.

Considering a further aspect of *how* social groups tune in to the 'we' via musicking, Frith (1998 [1996]: 91-4) draws our attention to "genre rules". In *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music,* Frith builds on Fabbri's work to delineate five points that build a "genre world". These points are: 1) formal and technical rules; 2) semiotic rules; 3) behavioral rules that guide the performance rituals; 4) social and ideological rules; 5) commercial and juridical rules. This outline of a genre world, particularly rule three, helps call attention to how music can be used as a template for mental representations and sensuous experience that guide behavior and action. Music can then guide or provide a "touchstone" for interaction thus helping actors to learn idioculture of an audience or of performers (DeNora 2000: 127). Similarly, it can also 'cue' actors into genre normative

modes of conduct (Stockfelt 1997; North and Hargreaves 1997).

The focus on genre worlds and music as a 'cue' or 'touchstone' prompts three additional questions. Firstly, how does someone learn such genre-related behavior? Secondly, when outside of the 'arena' of interaction (being where a performance ritual takes place), how do genre rules guide behavior? Thirdly, how do feelings of fellowship amongst a disparate group of people within the 'arena' (e.g., at a concert) carry on afterward?

While Frith takes into account "off-stage" behavior of performers and audience members when interacting with an object associated to that genre (e.g., a performer giving an interview, fans listening to records at home), the 'shelf life', as it were, of such behavior when the music stops remains unexplored. How long do such genre-normative modes of conduct last? In other places, Frith (2007: 255) has dwelled on the problematic of when the music stops: "do people 'hear' harmony when they kiss outside of films too?". Frith has (1983: 181) partly answered this question elsewhere, pointing out how social conditions help in creating links between social groups (e.g., youth) and popular music, indicating how articulation environments may carry on to inform future behavior and self-projects.

In an effort to identify how people come together musically in both explicit and informal manners, Ruth Finnegan (1989) explored people's musical "pathways" in Milton Keynes, UK. Finnegan's (1989: 324) "pathways" is a response to, as she states, bounded and "concrete-sounding" concepts as worlds and communities. Pathways, as she puts it, are "culturally established ways through which people structure their activities on habitual patterns that are shared with others" (1989: 323). Finnegan's focus on habitual

patterns identifies a key component of musical learning, pointing to music's 'craft' features: practice, rehearsal and education (both formal and informal). However, "pathways" leaves little room for the amateur shower-singer, wallflower foot-tapper or hum-along radio-listener. With a musicking-based focus, we can consider music as more than just playing in a band while also locating the 'traces' of musical activity after the music stops. Thus questions remain about how music gets underneath tacit modes of attention, away from actual craft musical practices and considerations of extra-musical practices.

Such questions of coming together, as explored above, point to how musical connections are an emotional project as much as a cognitive one. To pursue this nexus of action, Witkin and DeNora (1997: 2) draw our attention to "aesthetic agency". The term helps to formulate interaction as not only following along lines of cultural conventions or learned mental schemas. Rather, aesthetic agency focuses on the moments before an actor learns a disposition, thus taking into account sensibilities and embodied orientations that constitute the "emotional preparation" for action (Acord and DeNora 2008: 228).

Emotional preparation helps to prime emotional convergence. As an example of how groups may come together emotionally via music, Frith (2007: 167-68) has discussed performing such social and emotional moments using Elton John's performance of "Candle in the Wind" at Princess Diana's funeral as "performing sincerity […] a performance of grief in which we could all take part." This becomes central when addressing abstract concepts as trust and fellowship implied in certain forms of community activity and how people come together through performing, listening or thinking about music. Connell (1990: 526) suggests that "a patterning of emotional

attachments" orders and anchors culture. Likewise, Anderson et al. (2003: 1054) describe the process of "emotional convergence" demonstrating how emotions of people in relationships become "increasingly similar over time […] as they navigate the terrain of long-term bonds. Emotional similarity […] promotes coordinated thoughts and actions, mutual understanding, and interpersonal cohesion and attraction".

Returning to Turner's liminality and the anti-structural 'liberation' in this state of transition, the possibility of emotional convergence of individuals is therefore increased, as addressed within community music therapy literature as the musical communitas: "a common shared world of time, space, gesture and energy, which nevertheless allows diversity and unity" (Ansdell 2004: 78). Musical communitas thus points to how the social and emotional project of 'togetherness' is enabled, empowered, and made possible by musicking. Moreover, musical communitas shows how musicking, as a form of community activity, occurs at human and non-human interactional moments that imply both cognitive and emotional orientations. Musicking, in short, helps people to "tune in" to relationships to find the "We" (Schutz 1976: 161).

2.2.3 Community Health, Musicking and Resistance

The material and imaginative dimensions of an experiential aesthetic ecology offers an account of how sensibilities come to underpin community activity. Ecologies, in this sense, also implicate thresholds of emotion, behavior, cognition and expression. Such thresholds, situated at the boundaries of other ecologies, in turn indicate liminal points where transition (from one ecology to another) may occur. These thresholds, however, require an amount of upkeep via community activity, similar to how one performs upkeep

on a house (repairing, repainting, re-shingling). In this sense, the doing of 'upkeep' means promoting a 'healthy habitat' of continuity for collective well-being. Community activity can therefore be considered as a question of health promotion.

Antonovsky (1987; 1996: 13) has proposed the "salutogenic" model of health promotion for solving, preventing, curing and rehabilitating problems related to collective well-being. Within this model, Antonovsky (1996: 14) proposes a continuum of "healthy/dis-ease" as a more realistic (and holistic) understanding of health in relation to one's environment and how that environment may promote well-being. Therefore, using a 'salutatory' (health-promoting) approach, we start from a more flexible and emergent definition of health as being relational to a material and imaginative environment in which one builds with others (Freund 2001: 690). An orientation toward health in this regard, which considers not a single pathogen but rather health as a complex system, lends itself to the complexity of practice. Similarly, it helps us consider aesthetic ecologies' affordance qualities as health technologies, which help collective well-being by making us feel 'good' of 'comfortable' (i.e., more healthy) or less at 'dis-ease'.

More specifically, Ruud (2002; 2006; 2008: 48) has conceptualized music's health technology aspects as a "cultural immunogen". By this, Ruud refers to music as a medium for care of the self—how it can come to regulate emotions, aide in coping, maintain concentration and also keep out, or replace, unwanted 'pollutants' within an ecology. In a sense, music is seen to build immunity to that which is perceived and experienced as 'dis-ease'. This type of immunization at a collective level is, then, a defense at the thresholds of ecology through community activity. Cohen (1985: 15) points out that boundaries may be thrown up and accentuated for protection (or

prevention) for collective well-being. In a similar fashion, Derrida (Derrida and Caputo 1997: 108) has alluded to these forms of exclusion through his alternative reading of community: "to have *communion* is to be fortified on all sides, to build a 'common' (*com*) 'defense' (*munis*), as when a wall is put up around the city to keep the stranger or foreigner out" (qtd in Ansdell 2004: 80). Similarly, it is then possible to highlight a membrane-like quality of community through "*commune*" (sharing with) "*immunity*" (resistance to).

In other words, immunity is implicated in coming together and therefore a question of resistance. Resistance as building something impermeable has been presaged as ideological resistance (Corrigan and Frith 1976: 235-236) wherein there is a rejection of norms and values of a dominant institution. It is thus possible to see resistance as a rejection of cultural material that threatens a particular 'way of life'. This perspective chimes with Gomart and Hennion's (1999: 242-245) "effective resistance", but at a collective level. Gomart and Hennion define effective resistance as "making oneself not open to the possibilities of passion induced by music". Accordingly, how music is (or is not) potentialized helps problematize resistance as an everyday aesthetic occurrence, as someone learns abilities and dispositions that aid in conditioning the acceptance/rejection of pleasure of certain music and therefore an acceptance/rejection of a mode of being or a regime of action. This focuses analytic attention at ecological psycho-social collective levels of subconsciously learned aesthetic reflexive techniques that are orientated toward keeping out unwanted modes of feeling, thinking and being.

In a similar manner as we might use music to 'keep out' or distance ourselves from unwanted materials, Frith (1987: 141) has pointed toward music's

experiential/practice qualities as being "a way [to manage] the relationship between our public and private emotional lives". Such use of aesthetic material to manage emotions indicates forms of resistance. While Frith's discussion here is specifically of 'love songs' in popular music as a way to enrich our sense of intimacy and 'shaping emotions', it directs attention to a subjective state of aesthetic negotiation. This negotiation is where individuals dip in tacitly (to circulating media, environmental properties) that, in some instances may provide expression or may help for a removal from a (perceived and experienced harmful) public in ways that could be described as having 'buffer zone' or 'cocooning' qualities (i.e., resisting public life). Such dipping in for 'cocooning' purposes affords personal transition further and further—or just a bit—depending on how much and what one needs in order to balance the public and private emotional life to achieve a state of well-being. In other words, music for emotional management, when configured within an aesthetic ecology, can come to be used in the 'caring of the self' that can be conceived as a form of resistance.

Community activity, as a learned way of togetherness that rejects threatening material, is then one that promotes well-being for its members by offering protection. This conceptualization of resistance rests on re-placing one ecology (e.g., the communist('s) regime) with another, healthier ecology that is located and configured aesthetically by engagement between community members and objects. In this light, resistance is similar to immunity, with music acting as a cultural immunogen (Ruud 2002) but at a collective level. To be more immune, thus healthier, an actor appropriates aesthetic material that has been placed as furniture in the cultural space. As such, the liminal practice of dipping in to the aesthetic ecology of a cultural space is where one

begins to be sensitized to objects via a continuum of mediations and thus learning (tacitly) how one may engage with the furnished space for 'pleasurable' effects (i.e., how might the space promote health for the individual by being together in different ways). Therefore, in this light, dipping in—as a concept that harmonizes liminality and tacit learning—becomes a question of coming together/resisting by practices associated with rejection and re-placement. These practices of rejection and re-placement become clearer as I move into the specific nature and socio-political context of my case study. Set within a communist political system that ideologized most parts of everyday life, we can begin to see how a group rejects (e.g., the official culture) while creating an entirely new ecology from where to live (the Underground cultural space).

### 2.2.4 Summary: a Music Sociology of Keeping Together

So far I have addressed key theoretical work on community, looking at the conceptual underpinnings of how community is formed and how one enters into it, arguing that these texts do not address the right level of analysis needed to explain such forms of social learning and 'togetherness'. I have mobilized literature from music sociology to show how I can pursue a focus on community that bubbles up from, and is shaped by 1) learning 2) aesthetic practices 3) material conditions 4) artifacts and objects. Thus to understand community activity associated with Underground musicking, a grounded, ecological perspective is needed to gain insight into the situated use of musical material. Given everything I have said so far, what is still necessary in this literature review is to take a brief look into what has been written on music and resistance in the Eastern Bloc.

2.3. Resistance, Revolution and Music in the Eastern Bloc

Scholarly writings in English on popular music in Eastern Europe have emerged in two different streams: firstly, monographs of specific, nation-based musical cultures; and secondly, edited volumes that bring together several cases from individual countries to 'map' the Bloc's popular music scene. Considering the former, Cushman (1995) has detailed the Soviet-era St Petersburg rock counterculture in the time of 1990s transition as Szemere (2001) has explored the 1980s Hungarian Underground New Wave in the early years of post-socialism in Budapest. Fenemore (2007) has more recently taken the East German case of 1950s and 1960s rock'n'roll in East Germany. Edited collections relying on a series of 'local experts' are more common. For example, Klaniczay and Trencsényi (2011: 169) have arranged case studies of popular music during the communist era from different Eastern Bloc countries to examine their "transnational cultural mediations […] and complex linkages to other art branches". Previous to Klaniczay and Trencsényi's edited volume, popular music-associated cultures during communism have been largely unexplored besides Ramet's (1994) similar country-by-country 'scene-mapping' attempt. These two writing models—monograph and mapping—provide orientation points for not only how these histories have been put together but also how music has come to be seen as a driving engine in thinking about non-official resistance.

Notably, Timothy Ryback's (1991) book *Rock around the Bloc* was one of the first (and nearly only single-authored volume) to attempt a systematic description of the rock'n'roll scenes throughout most of the Eastern Bloc from the 1950s to 1989. Ryback's

explanatory efforts are a valuable map of the region's popular music during socialism.

Yet this wide net that Ryback casts is part of the weakness of this study: local

contingencies of use, reception and consumption are barely given a glance. Moreover,

Ryback (1990: 5) concludes on the widely argued note of rock'n'roll's values and its

perceived relationship with resistance in the Bloc:

> Western rock culture has debunked Marxist-Leninist assumptions about the state's ability
> to control citizens. […] Rock music has not only transformed the sights and sounds of
> Communist [sic] society but has also altered the very policies and structures of Soviet
> Bloc governments.

From Ryback we can distill three assumptions that persist throughout much literature on

popular music in the Bloc: 1) rock music has intrinsic values that are exportable; 2) the

regimes are unquestionable 'bad guys'; 3) resistance is something oppositional toward

ideologies, institutions and policies. In Ryback's case, the discussion remains at this level

throughout the entirety of the book, whose claims can be misleading; indeed, many of the

main themes that have guided this body of work on rock'n'roll in Eastern Europe take a

similar tone. Part of the problem indicates how researchers have orientated themselves to

the research field; in other words how have they constructed maps and models to navigate

the cultural landscape. Goldfarb (1978: 920), in early work on studying on Polish

independent theater, cautioned against ideological systems (in both the West and the

East) skewing research results—a call that is still applicable today.

Specifically Ryback's 'Western' gaze not only dilutes and cloaks the debate

concerning mechanisms of cultural change but also implies passive local reception of a

reified 'rock message' that seemingly challenged every norm in its path. Indeed, such an

argument black boxes mechanisms of music and change while supporting a romantic

'power of music' perspective (Bergh 2010), where seemingly cause and effect relationships between social change and rock'n'roll are assumed. This marketable (and consumable) assumption of music's power becomes enough of a satisfactory research warrant so that digging deeper is, apparently, unnecessary. Pekacz (1994) has argued against this over emphasis on rock music (what could be termed the "rock smashed the wall" argument). Instead Pekacz argues that systemic structural changes and unemployment are the root cause of regime collapse. Ryback's writing thereby leaves a gap in analysis on events (revolutions) and phenomena (rock culture) that have a far more complex and unclear relationship than his claim of (Western) music's power to change (Eastern) regimes.

Another difficulty with resistance conceptualized in this manner is that it is presented as a challenge *to* something; resistance is directed toward an actor (e.g. the state) with seemingly consciously adopted goals and intent. In other words, resistance is opposition toward the communist regime—indeed, this is how some rock musicians from the former Eastern Bloc would have us believe[12]. This formulation of resistance is clearly not relegated only to communist societies, however there is already a wide vocabulary that conflates resistance with dissidence (Skilling 1981, 1989; Pollack and Wielgohs 2004; McDermott and Stibbe 2006).

By decoupling resistance with dissidence, we arrive at a definition of resistance that is not based on opposition, 'direct action' or protest but rather, in the case of the Czech Underground, is based on rejection as a form of immunity. This is a crucial point

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[12] A good example of this can be viewed in the 2010 documentary of Polish rock music in the 1980s: *Zew wolności* (Beats of Freedom). This presentation of rock'n'roll's political opposition qualities is accomplished not only in the narratives produced by the interviewed musicians but also through montage techniques of tanks and rock music, street protests and punk music.

that much of the literature on rock'n'roll during communism misses. Moreover, operationalized in this manner, resistance is more complex than simply rejection of an imposed cultural system; rather it involves cooperation (not of goodwill) *with* that which it is rejecting in order to replace unwanted ecologies with nearly entire new ones. Indeed, this then entails a developed set of contrast and comparison structures, a point I return to in Chapter Five when I consider the political dimensions of knowledge production via Underground musicking.

Specific case studies of music during communism help outline the particularities of the Czech Underground. In an account of rock music in the East German Republic, Peter Wicke and John Shepherd (1993) detail the bureaucratization of music (specifically rock'n'roll in this case). They present a thorough account of the East German state bureaucratizing rock culture. The case illuminates questions of "authenticity" and "commercialization" within a "rock state apparatus" where musicians are caught in "structural contradictions" between not aspiring to commercial success but still having to work within a bureaucratized state music industry. Wicke and Shepherd's work here, and Wicke's other work concerning music in East Germany (cf., Wicke 1992), brings to light not only the conditions during communist regimes within which some musicians had to negotiate as they "had no other option", but it also shows the particularity of the Underground when compared with other music makers around the Bloc (and even compared with other musicians in Czechoslovakia): musicians in the Underground did not have this dilemma of "structural conditions" as they opted out completely from these conditions in order to create something different. This is not to say that, when conceiving of a broad non-official cultural space of activity within Czechoslovakia, of which the

Underground was the most radical part, that other musicians did not face these deliberations (specifically the so-called Alternative musicians such as Mikoláš Chadima, discussed throughout the thesis, primarily in Chapter Six).

Considering the 1980s Hungarian underground, Szemere (2001) is one of the few who addresses the transition of regimes in 1989 for non- or semi-official musical groups. Szemere's monograph claims that much of the values, morality and alternatives that counterculture offered in the communist Hungary context vanished after 1989. Here the Czech Underground as a case study again proves fruitful—it addresses the inter-war period to post-WWII, as well as transition from the pre-1968 era of Czechoslovakia and includes post-1989 into the years of the economic crisis post-2008.

Taking account of specific case studies on the Czech Underground, Vaníček (1997: iv) explored notions of the playing out of civil society within the Underground as "speed[ing] up the collapse of the Czechoslovak authoritarian communist regime". Relying on interview data as a means for illuminating either political stances or instances of civil society, I draw on parts of her rigorous ethnography and oral history in developing the regime's model of music regulation and suppression. Additionally, Vaníček's dissertation draws attention to the magnitizdat distribution, which I build on in Chapter 6. Notably, Vaníček's work is one of the few who takes into account the interpersonal politics of secret police collaboration in the post-1989 era.

Tony Mitchell (1992) highlighted rock music in the Czech Underground by considering how it was symbolically used in political events immediately following 1989. Mitchell's account largely follows Ryback's work along with exploiting Ryback's

secondary sources, helping to guide an analysis that hones in on localization of Western

musical forms.

Mitchell's account tends to blur rather than clarify analysis, however. Often, and

not only in Mitchell's writings, the Eastern Bloc is portrayed as being full of gray

buildings and mass, centralized cultural institutions while, as Mitchell's argument would

have it, Western music is considered a shining cultural light. Moreover, Mitchell's

attention to such groups as the *Plastics*, who first started playing twenty-five years before

Mitchell's article was published, portray them as a static musical ensemble, never

developing beyond initial Western influences such as Frank Zappa and Captain Beefheart.

This reading, to say the least, is deeply Anglo-centric.

In parts, Mitchell explains to the reader song descriptions, such as the *Plastics*'s

"Dvacet" (using Egon Bondy's poetry), which he claims "expresses a bleakness, and a

sense of 'no future' for young people which anticipate the nihilist anger of punk, but hint

at a desire for social and cultural change" (197). In fact, "no future" hints at a form of

dispossession, which was far from the testimonies of experience in the Underground

cultural space[13] (see 4.4, Karásek's "intensively alive" description). Unfortunately there

is no ethnographic detail to back up precisely these claims of 'no future' by Mitchell,

presenting a misleading conclusion (see Chapter Four for my attention to Bondy's poetry).

Moreover, Mitchell's description is not situated within the Underground idioculture:

Bondy's work was not an expression of "no future" but rather it was a configured

resource for the group and template for action. Moving on, Mitchell similarly reads

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[13] At the same time, listening to the *Plastics*'s album 'Jak to bude po smrti' (often translated as 'Afterlife') could be considered dark and bleak to non-Underground ears. That being said, such a different listening mood one may interpret points to the necessity of grounded ethnographic research methods to understand why such a sound was *not* an indicator of "no future".

"anger and anguish" (197) into the songs of the group as well as "cries against oppression" (198). At every turn, Mitchell relates the sounds emerging from Czechoslovakia back to the West that reads political freedom and institutional opposition within every power chord and saxophone solo. Further, when considering the lack of success for Czech bands post-1989, there is an underlying market assumption of "making it" that assumes fame, or "getting heard on the world circuit" (201) rather than addressing non-market orientated forms of success (e.g., fulfillment).

It is precisely these types of readings, like Mitchell and Ryback, written primarily just after 1989, that Kepplová (2008) details as symptomatic of "Cold War logics". In her research on post-socialist club cultures in Slovakia, Kepplová considers this knowledge production:

> [Cold War logics] can be characterized by the portrayal of the 'East' as frozen in time, grey and dusty, a bloc of mainstream per se against which countercultures could rise in a heroic gesture. […] [C]ounter cultures and dissident figures testified to the idea of a monstrous system suppressing the individuality of its citizens. […]. With the help of socialism, the idea of mainstream, previously connoting bourgeois lifestyle or capitalist mass societies, was fixed onto the monolithic image of socialist society.

The Cold War logic, so prevalent in the current body of literature (in English) on rock'n'roll during communism across the Eastern Bloc, has colored analysis and understanding of music-related phenomena with a distinctly "Western" voice. The communist regimes have been treated with different rationale than the social human actors—one that is rotten or evil, which reveals the researcher's value system rather than the ethnographic subject's (even if the researcher and subject's opinions of the communist regime may be strikingly similar). This scientific assumption skews analysis

toward humanistic narratives of triumph rather than analysis that takes into consideration the symmetrical role of the regime as actor.

### 2.3.2 Dissidence in the Eastern Bloc

Literature that addresses dissident activity within the Bloc has mainly rested on intellectual leaders and their role within the doing or leading of 'civil society' during communism. For example, in his studies of independent society within communist regimes in late 1970s early 1980s, Skilling (1981; 1989) interrogates leading dissident figures and their role within oppositional politics. Similarly, writing in the late 1980s, Garton Ash (1993) takes these dissident initiatives and civil disobedience and places them within the democratic transformation of 1989 in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. Padraic Kenney's (2002) *The Carnival of Revolution* takes a slightly different approach by looking toward "unsung heroes" of youth activists across the Bloc rather than examining distinct dissident groups (as Charta 77 in the Czech case).

These studies, while certainly not exhaustive of the amount of literature on the dissidence of civil disobedience during communism, focus on the late stages of the decline of state socialism in Eastern Europe. There is a tendency to latch on to the tension-release of the revolutionary fervor with implicit tones of the triumph of democracy (and capitalism) and the committed intent of writing the reader into the binary of "communism is bad" and "revolution is good" without addressing the interpersonal complexities of the situation. Unfortunately, their stories temporally stop there and we are left with a gaping hole in the research: what happens after the fervor fizzles? These texts avoid the slippery post-communist experience and what happens to culture learned in one system and transposed to another.

Unlike political regimes, culture does not fall like a wall. Simply put, these historical studies avoid the "entanglement of humans and non-humans" (Latour 2006: 84) or the "mangle of practice" (Pickering 1995) in favor of broad approaches to movements. Therefore, neglected in these studies is how movements are built up, link by link at often tacit levels and with aesthetic materials. In other words, the level of analysis in these previous studies does not fully assert culture's active properties but instead uses it as an instrumental reflection of resistance or dissent. In reviewing this literature, what is missing from these detailed historical studies is 'how' culture worked as an active emotional and cognitive ingredient within political culture and how these are remembered and used today.

## 2.4 Conclusion: Toward an Aesthetic Ecology of Cultural Spaces

In this chapter I discussed how community activity comes into being through people enacting a cultural space. Following the work of Turner and Becker, who proposed objects as being critical in co-producing community activity, tacit learning is then a key answer to the puzzle for how to conceptualize music's power to work. Learning how to make music work, then, happens collectively, through interaction. Interaction within the built up aesthetic ecology is a site where one can learn collectively through explicit and implicit ways. Experiencing this ecology is one of a liminal 'dipping in' process that takes place over time and is afforded by aesthetic materials, which then come to anchor people 'together', as I will show.

Following on from a conceptualization of learned community activity within a cultural space, this chapter has developed 'resistance' in relation to health and well-being in the context of the Underground. This approach, as I argue, helps to avoid the "Cold War logic" (Kepplová 2008) of oppositional resistance to a regime that has colored most studies in this area. 'Togetherness' within a cultural space, then, bubbles up not just between people, but also with objects, imagery, dispositions, spaces and cooperation with actors (like a regime) wherein culture acts as an immunogen, a material for communing and rejecting.

What are the practical means of keeping up this 'togetherness'? How is the music effective? What *work* does it do? How is 'dis-ease' made right? How do aesthetics nurture political consciousness? How does engagement with aesthetic materials offer a way of making things better (e.g., more hospitable for imagination)? These are questions of ontological security that often occur at tacit levels—people just doing it because it 'feels right' or 'that's just what they do'. Bourdieu (1984: 486, 478) would describe such 'feeling right' by posing this as a matter of taste imposed by our class, wherein embodied dispositions lead to "an instinctive bodily reaction against those things which do not fit our habituses." However, as I will show, this is not only a question of taste but it is also a question of sanity and well-being that takes on aspects of relational forms of health promotion. Ontological security, then, is a matter of well-being that corresponds to being with certain people in a certain way.

Thus, an aesthetic ecology of a cultural space is useful to conceptualize music as more than just resources for cognition but as a practice for whole ecologies of living—for example, ways of being with other people, ways of feeling, how to learn, how to protect,

how to work with other people, how to know one's self individually and as a collective. By focusing on the process of mediation—such as the technologies, situations and processes, discourses, performance style and organization of aesthetic space—I attempt to reveal black box mechanisms of how music 'works' or how music is 'powerful'. That is to say, I will not be pursuing a narrative that seeks to answer rock'n'roll's assumed power for expressing freedom and defeating communist oppression. Rather, my interest is simply in how music gets into community activity, regardless of how historical events have unfolded. In turn, this question and theoretical underpinning have guided how I have collected my research and to what variables and data I sought to explore.

# CHAPTER 3: RESEARCHING CULTURAL SPACES IN AN ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

The aim of my study is to understand how music comes to be configured within a group of people, objects and places so that it can be used as an aesthetic resource for community activity. While the thesis has a focus explicitly on music, music was but one part of an assembled cultural space of the Underground. Indeed, cultural activity within the Underground was diverse: music, as described by one Undergrounder, was "only one part" (Stárek 2009b). Thus, what started off as an inquiry into a 'musical community' turned into a study of 'music in community'. Indeed, "musicians had to play, poets had to publish and artists had to exhibit" (Jirous 2006 [1975]: 22). Using respondents' claims as my starter's guide, I looked toward music's 'fit' within other cultural and social practices. This understanding helped to realign my interrogation from "what I think is going on" to "what is going on" (Wolcott 1994: 20; Glaser and Strauss 1967; Glaser 1978).

Rethinking the case as such, it turned out, required a rigorous methodology for inquiry into who was doing what, where they were doing it, when they did it, with whom and with what they were doing. Given this multi-layered nature of the case, a grounded approach (Charmaz 2006) was needed along with qualitative methods, specifically ethnographic fieldwork, in order to get at the Underground way of living and how musicking was implicated in crafting and enacting an aesthetic space. In the following I describe the range of methodologies I used during data collection and analysis.

3.1 Studying Spaces of Aesthetic Ecology

Studying music's fit with other social and cultural practices during two differing political regimes introduces many methodological obstacles. How to unpack music's use for "well-being as resistance"? Moreover, how to avoid binary distinctions that read the music as expressions of protest or oppositional politics? How to understand how aesthetics can come to shape and organize social life? How to interrogate tacit, embodied experience in the past? How, in short, do we, as Frith (1987: 272) observes, study "[…] the lumber-room of musical references we carry about with us […]" and how "[…] amidst all those sounds out there, resonating whether we like them or not, one particular combination suddenly, for no apparent reason, takes up residence in our own lives." In other words, how does music latch on to us and we to music? Concerning methods, these questions led me to consider techniques that could get at moments and situations within a historically situated context.

As I discussed in Chapter Two, my theoretical orientations concern community activity in an aesthetic space viewed in ecological perspective. In order to study how a space is enacted by a group of people over time, I needed to bring into focus several variables. Specifically, it was necessary to find out the diverse ways musical mediations and technologies were used within small group culture. For this task, ethnographic methods seemed best-suited given their ability to illuminate how people come to understand, use and craft culture in situated and patterned activity (Denzin and Lincoln: 1994). I turned to ethnographic methods as a starting point for designing a data collection process that would fit my research question.

Ethnography aims to report about people's everyday worlds. Katz (2001 [1997]: 361) explains ethnography as "committed to displaying social realities as they are lived, experienced, understood and familiar to the people studied". Within the techniques of conducting ethnographic fieldwork, interviewing is a primary means for revealing meaning creation. Ethnographic interviewing relies not on the researcher's categorization of phenomena, but rather elicits information from the interviewee in order to arrive at better understanding of the subject's worldview (Spradley 1979: 48-49). Moreover, I was not only pursuing the Underground as an object of historical study but as a lived space where people are performing themselves nowadays. Therefore, interviewing became less a manner of establishing the 'correct' oral historical record and looking for 'facts' from unmediated sources of information. By contrast, I was interested in how the telling of stories or the giving of an interview by Undergrounders was potentially the continuation of the furnishing of the space, bringing the 'then' into the 'now'. The interviews were thus a mixture of data and performance.

In a similar way, participant observation became key in situating the Underground as more than a historical research project. A valuable tool within an ethnographer's kit (Atkinson et al., 2007: 3-4), participant observation can provide insights into non-verbal behavior, movements and "grounded aesthetics of informal cultural practices" (Willis 2000: 79). Goffman (2001 [1989]: 154) details what participant observation can offer studies of aesthetic ecology:

> Participant observation is a technique of […] getting at data […] by subjecting yourself, your own body and your own personality, and your own social situation, to the set of contingencies that play upon a certain set of individuals, so that you can physically and ecologically penetrate their circle of response to their social situation […]. So that you are close to them while they are responding to what life does to them. I feel that the way

this is done is to not, of course, just listen to what they talk about, but to pick up on their minor grunts and groans as they respond to their situation.

To be able to 'capture' the visual and sonic features of these behaviors and responses in environments, audiovisual techniques were necessary within participant observation and for analytic purposes (Nastasi 1999: 2). Collecting and analyzing audiovisual data was especially important for exploring the tacit and liminal features of action as researching such situations can otherwise be problematic if only relying on interview or archival data. For example, while I was revising audiovisual material—particularly while editing a short film (three minutes) about an Underground event—the repetition of images and sound in a situated environment sensitized me to a mode of behavior ("doing it to the max" see section 4.3.2) that I had been around for years in Underground research, and had even been told about by an Undergrounder, but it had never 'sunk in' as when editing audiovisual material. Ethnographic observation evidence that was right 'under my nose' the whole fieldwork period suddenly came alive. In other words, the process of revising collected audiovisual material—on a computer screen with several editing windows open with different images simultaneously playing—contributed to solving the difficulty of analyzing aesthetic ecology where many things (gestures, sound parameters, language, place, dress, dancing) are all happening at once.

Moreover, employing devices to capture audiovisual data helped me to think about my role within the field (Grasseni 2008: 151) in two manners: firstly, using video cameras and audio recordings required logistical considerations (e.g., what to film and for how long); secondly; using these methods reconfigured me (in the eyes of participants) as a chronicler of Underground history. Both of these points I address in section 3.6. Thus, videotaping allowed me to capture how people were interacting with the environment and

allowed me to analyze later on in 'slow motion' how the space is crafted nowadays, which helped me to understand the past through sensitizing sounds, behaviors, ways of speaking and dressing. Further, using contemporary moving images led me to also consider visual sources made by Undergrounders during the 1970s and 1980s.

To examine such data, ethnographic content analysis (ECA) of Undergrounders' documents (home videos, letters, photos) allowed me to unpack historical moments of feelings (e.g., descriptions of fear and threat). Similarly, photographs and video footage from the 1970s provided a window into how patterned Underground events afforded, as DeNora (2000: 85-86) has termed, "latching on" to musical properties (e.g., movement to certain Underground musical styles) and their recurrence at contemporary Underground events. Such methods were necessary to get underneath space-furnishing activities that occurred at tacit levels. Moreover, it led me to consider how I had encountered the information: Who gave it to me? Why? Where was this document located? Why was it there and not in another research site? While content analysis focuses on a systematic study of structures of communication (e.g., keywords) within a set of documents, ECA brings into view how these documents are used. Altheide (1987: 68) states, "ethnographic content analysis is used to document and understand the communication of meaning […]. Its distinctive characteristic is the reflexive and highly interactive nature of the investigator, concepts, data collection and analysis."

ECA emerges from Plummer's (1983) *Documents of Life* where he lays out the analysis of 'real world' texts. These documents are the paper trail of social life: diaries, photos, scrapbooks or scribbled notes on the back of cards—in other words, how narratives and biographical data accumulate via documents. For the case of the

Underground, many Undergrounders documented their activities through event invitations, communal living scrapbooks, short 9mm videos, samizdat periodicals (to name a few of their documenting activities) and not to mention signing documents (both as collaborating agents with state police and as signatories of Charta 77). Therefore, ECA, as the reflexive study of such texts (Silverman 2009: 134), is useful for the studying spaces along three lines: firstly, and moving beyond just piecing together dates and events, ECA is focused around the question of how people encountered documents and how these documents came to be imbued with meaning. Linked to this focus, ECA is then concerned with how meaning is created. Secondly, ECA puts the spotlight on how and where the researcher encounters these documents. For example, are they encountered in an archive or in someone's house? Thirdly, ECA helps to understand how these documents come to underpin ways of life and how they may be implicated in providing bases for future action. For instance, one of my key informants, Čuňas (who I introduce on page 77), *handed* me a piece of samizdat[14] in 2009 and exclaimed (in a slightly self-surprised manner), "Hmm, I haven't given anyone samizdat in twenty years!". Indeed, ECA becomes crucial when considering the circulation of illegal material (such as samizdat and LPs and associated network activity, like smuggling). This example shows how moments like these with Čuňas, through an ECA perspective, concern documents 'in action'; how documents, configured as resources, come to be "narrativized" (Steedman 2001: 68) as well as narrativizing. As Hammersley and Atkinson (1983: 173) put it:

> How are documents written? How are they read? Who writes them? Who reads them? For what purpose? On what occasions? With what outcomes? What is recorded? What is omitted? What is taken for granted? What does the writer seem to take for granted about the reader(s). What do readers need to know in order to make sense of them?

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[14] Non-officially self-published written and distributed textual material.

Thus, and in relation to the question of how cultural spaces come into being, ECA places the focus on the content of what was created, who created it for whom and how created documents came to be distributed (and therefore what distribution itself comes to mean). As I will describe, this approach is invaluable for considering the 'documents of life' of the Underground as gathered by the state police (e.g., surveillance photos and maps, itemized house searches, 'counter intelligence' dossiers of Undergrounders) as well as analyzing foreign radio broadcasts, bootlegged sonic material (magnitizdat) and samizdat periodicals. ECA also complements ethnographic interviewing techniques as both help to sensitize the researcher to themes (e.g., long hair), vocabularies (e.g., appropriated English words) and behavioral styles (e.g., "rude") present in documents, in interviews and participant observation.

Furthermore, as addressed in section 2.3.1, the topic of popular music during communism has often fallen into a 'Cold War logic'. Such analyses privilege certain forms of knowledge production and maintain a reliance on the power of Western rock'n'roll and cultural material in a fight against the 'evil empire'. In order to address music's role in such a context without overly relying upon pre-assumptions, the analysis presented here is drawn from a grounded approach to collecting data. As an inductive technique, grounded theory provides a way for approaching ethnographic data collection and analysis that "[does] not force preconceived ideas or theories directly upon their data" (Charmaz 2001 [1995]: 337). An inductive approach as such helps to generate theory by a constant rethinking and testing of insights within the field rather than using phenomena (e.g., popular music) to explain theory (e.g., subculture or civil society).

In sum, the research made use of ethnographic content analysis, ethnographic interviews and participant observation in the Czech Republic from 2006-2011, (this includes having lived in the field site for two years prior to beginning the PhD in 2008). These three sources of data 'thickened up' the ecological perspective and allowed for triangulation: the archival resources could be used to corroborate interview data as well as providing a jumping off point for many interviews (see Appendix B for how personalized information was used in interviews). Similarly, data that was gathered from interviews could be followed up in the archives. Participant observation served as the frame around my analysis of community and music: spending long periods of time in the Underground heightened my awareness and "ethnographic imagination" (Willis 2000).

3.2 Entering the research field 2004-2007

Ethnography of the aesthetic ecology of cultural spaces is predicated, at least in part, on the researcher's own experiential knowledge as she or he 'gets closer' with his or her research participants (Goffman 2001 [1989]: 155). For this, immersion was necessary. Living in Prague allowed long arc relationships with Undergrounders and helped me to understand their world through participating in daily routines, learning about local, national and regional geographies, travelling with Undergrounders to Underground events and sites, taking part in leisure activities, learning slang in pubs and reading the dailies; in other words, constructing data from experience (Wolcott 1994). It is in this sense that I was able to accumulate experiential knowledge (van der Waal 2009: 24). Often, these embodied features, which Blumer (1986 [1969]: 148) has indicated as

"sensitizing", can only be acquired by a researcher living in the area for an extended period of time, similar in form to Malinowski's discovery of the revolving Kula ring exchange in his Trobriand isolation (1984 [1922]).

Importantly, I did not arrive in the Czech Republic as a researcher but rather as an expatriate. Two important methodological points follow from this: firstly, autobiographically speaking, I arrived in the country without books or a computer, only with a rucksack, trumpet and the intent of 'setting up life' in the country. In part, this is, as Goffman (2001 [1989]: 155) calls it "cutting your life to the bone", meaning, "removing oneself from [nearly] all resources." Such stripping back of many resources helped reconfigure other resources I already had (e.g., interpersonal listening skills, rapport-building techniques) and add new ones (e.g., curiosity of exploring new places). Secondly, such removal from an environment of resources (e.g. family, friends, familiarity) demands that one learns the local language. This became a central research attribute that eventually led to greater access within the Underground, not to mention access to archival materials (Sanfort 2001: 110-112). Indeed, language fluency helps to minimize "cultural distance" between researcher and subject (Manion 2001: 64). Not only did this help in my resourcefulness of conducting research in a foreign country, I had also become to be sensitized to the Czech Republic's—and the region's—past and present through a range of people, age groups and institutions.

In short, I had come to occupy an outsider position with growing knowledge of what it may be like on the inside. This outsider situation was useful for the doing of ethnography as it hinged on my genuine curiosity rather than a performance of learned methods per se (although guided by it). This genuine curiosity was noticed by Čuňas who

asked me "you are fascinated by the Underground, aren't you?", which ultimately

became my 'break' in access, discussed in section 3.2.2. In this sense, the most useful

resources I had in studying an aesthetic ecology was an amateur level enthusiasm and

knowledge coupled with fascination and curiosity.

3.2.1 Observing but not Participating

Attempting to gain access for ethnographic interviews and participation observation often

involves preliminary stages of observation; in other words, "being present but not

participating" (Feldman, Bell and Berger 2003: 101). Within these preliminary stages of

access—after a period of sensitizing and before gaining inside access—I focused on

general Underground historical data collection. My study 'officially' started with a

Fulbright scholarship (2006-2007), which entailed preliminary exploration into the

consumption of Underground cultural products nowadays and the history of community.

As for the activities of the Underground in contemporary time, I pursued venues where

Underground concerts regularly occurred in Prague (e.g., Vagon Klub, U Kaštanu),

record stores that distributed Underground albums and bookstores that sold memoirs of

Undergrounders (e.g., Maťa Press, Black Point Records). Primarily this meant following

the two ubiquitous names of the Underground: firstly, Ivan Jirous, who regularly

appeared for poetry readings and is occasionally in local magazines and newspapers;

secondly, the *Plastics*. Locating the former involved frequenting small bookstores

regularly to look for bulletins, posters, and announcements of upcoming events[15].

Locating the performances of the *Plastics* could easily be found on their website but this

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[15] It wasn't until two years later, when I visited Jirous in his home, that I realized I had lived down the street from him for nearly three years.

itself is often only updated for their more prominent, Prague-based performances. I only began to attend their smaller performances at countryside pubs and homes much later. This too was a matter of resources as concerts in the countryside often involved multiple train and bus connections that were usually followed by a five-kilometer walk to a local pub, venue or cultural house (see section 4.2.3 for parallel to concert journeys in the 1970s). At the beginning of my research, Jirous and the *Plastics* gave me a solid entry point into where I could discover more about the Underground.

At this stage of my research—before personally knowing any Undergrounders—attending these events provided a useful observational point: I did not know anyone therefore I could arrive, blend in, and depart without much interaction or revealing my 'outsider' position. Later on in my research, when I had entered further into Underground activities, many Undergrounders mentioned to me that they recognized me from this or that event. Therefore, this early stage of my ethnography—wherein I was solely observing and 'finding my way'—allowed for a more gradual, less deliberate (and less awkward) getting-to-know stage of my relationship with many Undergrounders as well as helping me to define more clearly my research site and goals. Therefore, at the beginning, my access was narrow but important when considered over a long arc of time.

In addition to following the trail of cultural consumption, I began my archival research in the private samizdat archive Libri Prohibiti. Set up in the third floor of an apartment building in the center of Prague and run by Jiří Gruntorád—an author imprisoned in the 1980s for reproducing illegal texts—Libri Prohibiti is a collection of self-published literature, periodicals and sound recordings that were illegally produced and distributed in Czechoslovakia. Therefore it was a logical starting place for someone

who had never encountered samizdat before. At the archive I was first exposed to the tremendous depth of illegal textual and sonic activities that occurred in the country from 1948-1989 and how the Underground was only one part of many other non-official groups and individuals. Helping me to sort through the audio-visual section of Libri Prohibiti, archive employee Miloš Mueller also told me anecdotes concerts and events of his teenage years in the 1980s while he brought me material or as we watched video clips together. This archival interaction ultimately left me feeling that I needed further research beyond archives, informal conversations and observation.

My preliminary research at Libri Prohibiti and visiting Underground concerts seemed to suggest something different than other communist-era bounded narratives of the Underground that I had read (cf., Ryback 1990; Mitchell 1992; Lindaur and Konrád 2001). Indeed, these descriptions had not described what I was observing when visiting events, concerts and archives: Undergrounders were not only involved in oppositional resistance during communism and moreover, the Underground itself was not relegated to the country's former regime. Rather, it is alive in a contemporary, post-communist environment. Moreover, these previous Underground studies often relied heavily on forced interpretations of 'political music' (see Mitchell's lyrical descriptions in Chapter Two), rather than a 'politics of music'. This gave me the impression that the scope, aim and presentation of the Underground, as was widely conceived in media and academia, were not (under)grounded.

This aspect became clearer to me during one interview with an Underground musician when I was asking him about the 1984 Prague performances of *This Heat* and *Einstürzende Neubauten*: "Wow, this is really nice to talk about—you know, my

childhood. It's nice you're interested in art and music, not like those careerists [motioning to an unknown group of people] who just ask about the police" (Macháček 2009a).

The repeated 'story' that the Underground seemed to have become, was further underlined whenever I introduced my research area of the Czech Underground to a person with knowledge of the region. The response that follows is usually "Oh, so you mean the *Plastic People of the Universe*. That old story? Hasn't it been told?" which in itself presents a warrant of ethnographic research into how this musical group, and the Underground in general, has been wrapped up in the collective knowledge of communism in Czechoslovakia and Eastern Europe, what has been left out and why. At the very least, talking with people who had passing knowledge of the *Plastics* allowed for points of engagement with how people had heard about the band, in what context (e.g., course seminars) and what they learned about the group. Thus, ethnographic methods were good strategies for going deeper into an aesthetic ecology and getting underneath standard *Plastic People of the Universe* narratives and binary Cold War logics.

Therefore, to go deeper, to gain an enriched understanding of what is the Underground, ethnography became key to unlocking how many in the Underground used music, how they think about the past and present, how music came to shape the way they live, what was important to them and how they kept it all together. My aim was to use ethnographic techniques so as to get underneath (but not avoid) the 'watershed' dates of the Underground (1968 Prague Spring, 1976 imprisonment of the *Plastics*, the 1989 Velvet Revolution) and hone in on the question of action's aesthetic bases.

3.2.2 Gaining Access

Often ethnographic research can depend greatly on the role of gatekeepers (Feldman, Bell and Berger 2003: 31). Gatekeepers' ability to vouch for the legitimacy of researchers in the field can help provide access to groups, places and events. I found myself in Libri Prohibiti again during July 2008, twenty-four months since I had officially started my investigation of the Underground (during my Fulbright tenure 2006-2007) and after writing a Master's Degree on the Underground at Central European University (in Budapest 2007-2008). This time at Libri Prohibiti, however, I had arranged through a third party to meet František Stárek—I didn't know much about Stárek besides that he now worked in the newly opened (2008) Archive of the State Police and had been a friend of Václav Havel since the 1970s. I was nervous until he walked in: cowboy hat, long gray hair falling from the sides, chopper sunglasses, dressed entirely in black, belly protruding and smiling widely. "Hello, my name is Francis" he said in English, his voice bellowing throughout the quiet archive. Switching back quickly to Czech, we began to talk about samizdat. At one point he called to the archive owner Jiří Gruntorád using the diminutive name of Jiří and intoning with a child-like question asking for the Underground samizdat magazine *Vokno*. I knew the magazine but not until Stárek said, "this is the magazine I helped edit" did I make the connection—he was Čuňas[16], a nickname for František Stárek.

Čuňas soon began to show me the Underground from an insider's (his) perspective. In part, his opening up to me rested on a developed rapport between us

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[16] Many Undergrounders used nicknames and often they only knew each other by these nicknames. "Čuňas" (meaning 'Little Piggy') was the name printed throughout *Vokno*—full names were rarely used in illegal publishing for clear reasons that the magazine could fall into the hands of the authorities.

(Feldman, Bell and Berger 2003: 31). Čuňas understood my interest in the Underground and he loves to tell stories about it so we ended up spending hours each day talking about the Underground from the 1960s to nowadays; after enough time spent together, he also learned how to be a teacher (Spradley 1979: 48), particularly with how he spoke Czech to me (slowly and enunciated). He invited me to events and let me know when there were other gatherings occurring that were below the radar. Now my access jumped from being discreetly present at Underground events to being invited to sit at the table with what could be considered the core 'Undergrounders' – those who were at the center of community activity and were perhaps the most influential in shaping it. Figure 1 below is a snapshot from a meeting with Jirous and Čuňas.



Figure 1 Čuňas, myself and Jirous (from left to right, Prague 2008)

For example, one time I arrived to Prague late on a Thursday night after flying from London. Dropping off my bags quickly I rushed to a pub in the so-called worker's district of Žižkov where Čuňas had told me of a poetry and music happening. Walking into the raucous bar, overflowing with long-haired men and women, the smell of bitter Czech beer filling the nostrils, Čuňas stood on top of his chair on the other side of the room and

yelled for me to come sit next to him. There I sat for much of the rest of the evening

recording my observations, asking Čuňas about this person, or that performer, making

conversation with the others at the table and listening to poet after musician perform on

the small stage. This scene repeated itself often over the next three years.

In addition to Čuňas, I also worked closely with Dr. Martin Machovec in both

ethnographic and collaborative research situations. Machovec, whose father Milan

Machovec was a prominent philosopher and 'bedroom lecturer'[17] in non-official activity

in the 1970s and 1980s, was a "disciple of Egon Bondy" (Machovec 2006). Machovec's

help in putting together the pieces of some of the Underground history has been

invaluable to my research since the beginning (2006), not only as a source of data but

also as an encouragement in investigation.

However, long-term relationships were not always necessary to gain access. For

example, my first encounter with Josef Janíček, keyboardist of the *Plastics*, was on a

tram in Prague. Likewise, I first met Pavel Zajíček, a prominent poet and founder of the

ensemble *DG-307* at an art exhibition opening in a small gallery in a Prague suburb.

Similarly, I approached folk singer Jaroslav Hutka in a quiet café one day (recognizing

him from photos). Meeting Undergrounders this way showed me that scheduling

interviews wasn't always possible or necessary. Simply bumping into people or talking at

festivals and concerts was a more natural way to get into the Underground and to avoid

standard template responses during scheduled interviews. For being able to truly tap into

the topic of community and music, I learned that how the interview was framed was vital.

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[17] The phenomenon of bedroom universities occurred in many socialist countries: intellectual ideas that were banned from the official classrooms were lectured on to keen pupils in flats and homes by professors with expertise in the area.

3.4 Doing the Research

For each method used, I employed a grounded theory approach. Thus as I collected data I simultaneously engaged in analysis, which then helped to guide my collecting strategies (e.g., what to look for, what to ask, what to explore). This cyclical process of collection and analysis was on going throughout the entirety of my fieldwork. Moreover, an ecological perspective in studying a cultural space guided my sampling of data (Charmaz 2006: 96), pushing me to travel far distances into the countryside for events, to locate and talk with a number of different Undergrounders and to pursue archival research at several different institutes and archives. Therefore, I focused not only the 'big names' of the Underground but also on a diverse sampling of different experiences in the Underground. Such a theoretical sampling led me to different classifications of participant observation sites, interview groupings and types of archives as described below.

3.4.1 Participant Observation

My research methodology changed accordingly to my level of access after meeting Čuňas. The more intimate events and gatherings to which I became privy involved heightened interpersonal and linguistic skills on my part. This was a highly informal process that relied as much on ethnographic techniques as it did on having a sense of humor, and a genuine and personal interest in Underground activities.

My participant observation includes attendance at a number of events in what is, circa 2012, being called an 'Underground Renaissance' by the Undergrounders. The

'Renaissance' ranges from festivals to poetry readings to commemoration ceremonies and small, informal gatherings in pubs and homes and frequent small festivals throughout the summer. Similarly, in recent years, there have been a number of public and private ceremonies celebrating events of which the Underground was historically implicated, such as the thirty-year anniversary of the establishment of the human rights appeals of Charta 77 (1977-2007), the forty-year anniversary of the Warsaw-pact invasion of Czechoslovakia (1968-2008), the twenty-year anniversary of the Velvet Revolution (1989-2009) and the deaths of Egon Bondy (2007), Ivan Jirous (2011) and Václav Havel (2011).

The reference to Renaissance does not imply that the Underground has only just reappeared in the past few years. Since 1989, Underground-focused record labels (cf., Globus, Black Point, Guerrilla Records) have been re-mastering and releasing previously recorded Underground material and recording new Underground bands of younger generations; in a sense, the 'Underground sound' has now become a genre. Underground samizdat has come back to life in the form of novels and memoirs by Czech publishing houses (cf., Maťa, Torst). Members of the Underground have had Česká Televize documentaries created about their lives (e.g., Ivan Jirous, Egon Bondy). Indeed, the Underground has been very active and alive since the end of communism in Czechoslovakia.

From this rather plentiful and ever-growing body of data, I needed an appropriate diversity of participant observation sites. I thus sampled different Underground events according to three categories:

1) <u>Official</u>: these being commemoration ceremonies held under the auspices of an institution, such as the Office of the Mayor of Prague, the Faculty of Philosophy at Charles University, the National Theatre in Prague, or the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes.

2) <u>Arranged</u>: concerts, festivals, poetry readings, book openings and album releases. These sites are privately coordinated events open to the public.

3) <u>Private</u>: meetings in flats, houses, pubs and driving in cars where interaction (catching up, story telling, discussion, joking) between Underground members was observed.

At these events, I paid special interest to who was there or not there, what music was played or not played and how Undergrounders interacted with each other and with non-Undergrounders. For example, Figure 2 shows a flyer from an event I attended in 2006 during my initial years of 'entering the research'. This particular event, held in a very small club, was the first time I was able to be in an Underground 'milieu'. Here, I started to be sensitized to who was still playing (see timetable of event on flyer) and who came to such events.

Initially, I designed my research observation to move from what I hypothesized as more dramaturgical-based interaction sites (e.g., official) to increasingly "backstage" (e.g., arranged and private) (Goffman 1959: 128). Consistent participant observation at various sites helped demonstrate my "commitment" to Underground activities—especially in events that were difficult to get to or sustain for long periods ("Ah, you went to [the festival] U Skaláka? That's madness" [Macháček 2009a]). For example, Figure 3 shows an announcement for an Undergrounder's Birthday Party that took place outside of Prague and involved a considerable amount of coordination to attend. Here, participant observation began on the local trains while headed toward the village (e.g., noticing an

increasing number of long-haired people the closer I came to the site) and ended early the next morning when the music ended and the party dispersed. Similarly, the timetable of performances on the flyer helped to indicate not only 'important' actors, but a patterning of how Undergrounder events were coordinated (e.g., many bands, precisely organized, rural areas, all night).



**Figure 2 Underground evening celebrating 5 years of Guerilla Records (2006)**
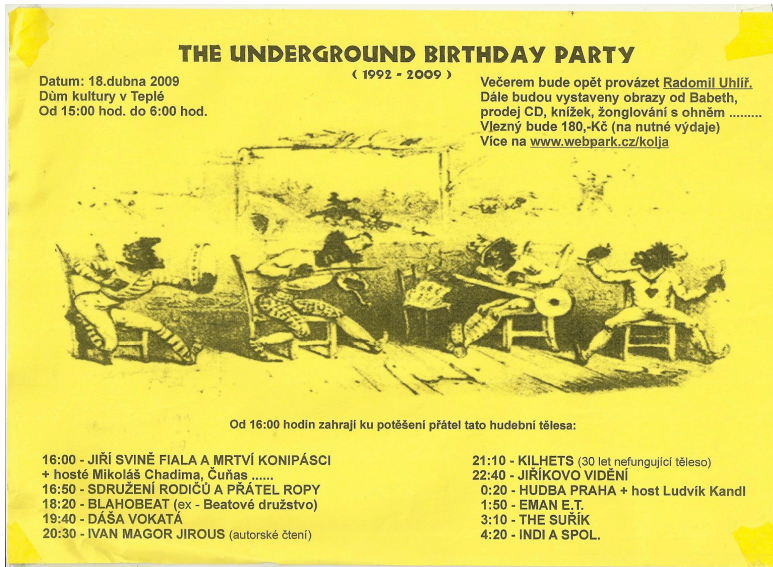
Figure 3 Announcement for 'The Underground Birthday Party' (2009)

### 3.4.2 Interviews

In order to maintain an ecological approach, I collected interview data from three sets of people I define as 'Undergrounders', 'periphery participants', and 'non-Underground artists'. 'Periphery participants' refer to those individuals who consumed Underground cultural material of samizdat and magnitizdat but did not attend Underground festivals because of geography, generational difference, lack of network links or lack of embodied Underground capital, such as long hair. The last set, 'non-Underground artists' contain Czech musicians who influenced the Czech Underground or who were involved in other non-official musicking during the 1970s–80s but not directly participate in Underground musicking practices (e.g., Milan Knížák, Mikoláš Chadima).

While conducting my formal interviews, which often took place in what can be considered Underground contexts, it was clear that I was not part of the Underground. In this case, my explicit purpose at Underground events and during interviews had to be clarified with an informal full disclosure of what I was doing: a thesis on the life of Underground, past and present (see Appendix C on how the project was presented). Almost all of the time, this was met with great interest by Undergrounders, followed by very detailed stories, musings, recollections that went far beyond my open-ended ethnographic questions.

In total, my interview sample included twelve 'Undergrounders' several of which I interviewed multiple times; ten 'periphery' participants; and five 'non-Underground artists' (interviewed in Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and the UK). While I generally followed a loose set of questions tailored to that individual in order to elicit data from the late 1960s, events in the 1970s and 1980s, these interviews often explored many other dimensions of the Underground experience that I had not intended to explore (or was aware of). Typically, interviews lasted anywhere from forty-five minutes to three hours. Nearly all were conducted in Czech (where that was their mother tongue) except for some who were fluent in English (e.g., Joe Karafiát who lived in Canada for nearly fifteen years or Pavel Zajíček who emigrated in the early 1980s and subsequently lived in New York City). Interviews were obtained often through snowball sampling as well as simply approaching individuals at concerts or in cafes, as described above. In some cases, certain people were not available to interview or had passed away. In these instances, I rely on interview material from other sources to 'stand in'.

I intended for interviews to provide the core corpus of my ethnographic work, while being buttressed by archival research and participant observation. During my fieldwork it became nearly impossible to separate the three methods as interviews regularly happened in archives or during festivals. Rarely did I set formalized interviews wherein an interviewee and I arranged a preset date and time. In these cases, arranged by email or telephone, the interviews tended to follow what can be considered more of a re-telling of the Underground story, although mixed with personal anecdotes or experiences; in these instances, I approached the data not necessarily as a 'biographizing' but as contributing to collective knowledge of the Underground.

These formal interview responses contrasted to other interviews conducted that occurred in a site related to the Underground (e.g., at a festival, concert or archive). Interview responses that were situated amongst Underground settings engaged a thicker level of ethnographic detail. The more flexible I presented myself the richer the interview generally became. Therefore, my follow up questions along with prompts were often more valuable in terms of data than a prescribed set of questions.

For example, in some of my first interviews with Čuňas, we arranged a time and meeting place and I had a set of questions, which he asked me to email to him prior to our meeting. His first response to my list of questions was that they were much too general (which I thought were too specific). Thus, when we met and I had reformulated the questions, he sat in his chair leaned forward with chin on hand—a very intensely focused listening posture, which was very different than any other time I had spent with him (where his feet were up on the desk and hands behind his head). I asked questions and he answered them but not necessarily in an exploratory or reflexive way but producing

responses that seem to fit a mold of what I wanted to hear. While the responses were concise, I realized I needed a less structured approach and one that was more improvised, although steeped in curiosity and knowledge of Underground history.

Part of this loose and improvised elicitation process relied on my use of boundary objects within the interview (cf., Lagesen 2010). Within interviews, boundary objects can act at as a 'cultural interface' between differing social worlds, which hinges on them being abstract yet concrete (Star and Griesemer 1989). Using objects—be that physical or conceptual objects—as points of reference can aid in bringing together otherwise disparate people for collaborative participation in creating an interview (Wenger 1998: 108). Boundary objects thus help to show how boundaries contain "conditions not only for separation and exclusion but also for communication […] and exchange" (Lamont and Molnar 2002: 181) and thus assist in building rapport and catalyzing communication. For example, the *Velvet Underground*, 'Easy Rider', the blues, and Buddhism emerged as boundary objects within interviews where the interviewee and I could exchange experiences of these objects, with particular regard to what age we experienced these objects.

From these boundary objects, I then followed their words to new areas of research that opened perspectives into the Underground: how Undergrounders were employed during socialism, how some met each other, who was the second wife of this person and why did she know so much about a certain topic, and so on. These open-ended responses were often not only verbal; at times I was physically brought from place to place in cars or on foot, being given a tour of Underground sites (houses, pubs, flats, inside archives).

Additionally, I used photos and videos during some interviews in order to aid in the elicitation process. Typically these were photos from their personal archive or private home videos. Often these were the most useful techniques in mapping the Underground cultural space for they not only put people together in a room at a specific time, they also helped in pointing out the continuities of embodied aesthetics from the 1970s to 2012.

At the beginning of my research, though, I wanted to use interviews as an attempt to retrieve data regarding the Underground cultural space in the 1970s and 1980s that was not present in the current academic and journalistic literature on the Underground. I hoped interviews would provide perspectives on the Underground from the Underground. My aim was to get at cultural practices as told by them that would yield data that reinforced, contradicted and expanded previously gathered information. However, once I started to conduct interviews, it became apparent that the interview responses were more complex than this aim. Instead, the interviews became useful for seeing how the interviewees used the past for narrative production in contemporary time (implying legacy building, convention construction and rehearsal of the past). In other words, the interviews were also part of the enacting, furnishing, and renewing of the space. In this sense, the interview was a research site, which relied in part on the remembering of aesthetic and social convergences in the past that afford new departures for today.

Clearly, depending on memories for recreating past events as fact contradicts scientific research. Indeed, Alan (2001: 24) has indicated many contemporary responses to alternative cultural production and participation in Czechoslovakia highlight romanticized and mythologized artistic and political intentions. However, we can take the

interview itself as a site of performing oneself, where the rehearsal of knowledge along socio-biographical lines illustrates and potentializes pathways for future conduct.

In order to get underneath the 'telling' of narratives, I employed material culture (along with boundary objects) to prompt and elicit data by using data maps (Wilson-Kovacs 2004: 69-73; 2010), graphic relational maps (Bagnoli 2009: 555-561) and music (Hara 2011: 45-48). Using these techniques help to buttress a 'documents of life' approach in data collection while also giving voice to other means of communication, besides language in the interview (Bagnoli 2009: 547). Moreover the interview site often implicated objects (e.g., photos on the walls of someone's home), places (e.g., interview in an archive) and other people (e.g., office workers, friends), which I used as types of 'found objects' for eliciting and developing interview data. For example, I arranged an interview with Joe Karafiát, guitarist for the *Plastics*, in a rock club (Vagon) in central Prague (before opening hours therefore it was quiet and empty besides bar staff and sound engineers). On the walls of the pub are hand-painted pictures of well-known Czech rock musicians mixed with other more international rock figures (e.g., Lou Reed, Alice Cooper, Frank Zappa). We started off the interview with him telling me about some of the paintings I did not recognize. Then we moved into my prepared interview topics (specifically musicking after emigrating).

From these interviews it was clear that while they were renewing the space by telling and rehearsing the past, I needed to compare systematically the interview data with other research to qualify the produced narratives. Therefore data collection in archives became an essential step in putting together the links of how the Underground space was crafted.

### 3.4.3 Archival Research

The archival research I undertook was divided amongst two different sets of archives, official and alternative. I chose these archives for four reasons: firstly, they all present different events in the same period therefore filling out a rigorous historical approach; secondly, many people working in these archives nowadays had relations, knowledge or experience in non-official cultural practices during communism; thirdly, they helped me to narrow in specifically on the Czech Underground and its placement within a wider non-official cultural space in Czechoslovakia; lastly, they helped in locating numerous perspectives (settings, situations, events, conditions) of concepts, such as 'resistance', that aided in data saturation for exhausting the possibilities of variation in a concept (Glaser and Strauss 1967: 61). Time spent in each archive varied as I returned to them consistently over the fieldwork period. This was due to the cyclical grounded process of data collection to theory generation and back to data collection (Glaser and Strauss 1967).

### 3.4.4 Official archives

Official archives used were the Open Society Archive's (OSA) Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Collection in Budapest, Hungary; the Archive of the State Police (SNB) stored in the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes in Prague, Czech Republic; the Institute for Contemporary History in Prague, Czech Republic; and the British Library's newspapers collections in London, United Kingdom. For each archive, I employed different strategies of data collection based on different purposes of the research.

<u>Open Society Archives – Budapest, Hungary</u>

I conducted archival research at the Open Society Archives[18], which houses the Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty collection, on several occasions (October 2006, March 2007, July 2007, April 2008, July 2008, November 2008, July 2009). At first, I started with very broad searches; going through all Czechoslovak fonds that held anything related to (in their fond descriptions) 'arts and culture', 'censorship', 'dissidence' and 'music'. It was necessary to sort through such large amounts of data in order to see how 'resistance' and 'dissidence' were categorized and discussed specifically in relation to Czechoslovakia and the arts.

Additionally, I gathered information from RFE/RL 'situation reports' of Czechoslovakia from1960 to 1989. These situation reports provided valuable information on 'official' life in the country, from which I could better understand aspects of daily life in Czechoslovakia that Undergrounders would refer to in interviews. This large data set allowed me to not only engage with prevalent trends in the dynamics between the regime, music and musicians, dissenters and the general cultural environment, it was more importantly a window into the Western perspective of the Cold War. From OSA's Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty collection I was able to take over five hundred photographs for analysis.

<u>Archive of the State Police – Prague, Czech Republic</u>

The other main official archive that I used was the Archive of the State Police housed in the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes (USTR[19]). At the archive, it is possible to request a search of a person's name and birth date (e.g., Jan Novák, 28 October 1918)

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[18] A private archive focused on post World War II history of East Central Europe.
[19] Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů

and then receive the person's file (if one existed), which contains surveillance taken on this person by the secret police, or in some cases, the details of their collaboration with the state police (StB[20]). A person's dossier could contain everything from hand-drawn maps of plans for surveillance, phone-bugging transcripts, an individual's background report, photos or lists of contents found in their flat from home searches.

Primarily, I focused on documents relating to police campaigns against the Underground, which come to inform part of my analysis in Chapter Five. The descriptions of the Underground, propaganda used against the Underground, StB academy dissertations about the Underground and arrest reports yielded a balance to the OSA data, namely that they provided the perspective of the regime against the Underground. Data from both archives along with research in the alternative archives (described below), allowed me to give attention to multiple constructions of a same historical account. For example, the 1974 police raid on an Underground concert in the south Bohemian town of České Budějovická (described in a circulated 1974 samizdat piece by Undergrounder Dana Němcová, described in an RFE situation report and documented in StB records, see section 5.1).

The StB's typologies (e.g., what and who was the Underground), hand drawn maps and home search inventories helped to highlight objects that were present in people's lives. For instance, the home search of one "punk youth leader" in Plzeň (Western Bohemia) in 1989 revealed that he had "type-writer, black color" along with several sheets of A4 paper and petitions in his flat. I draw on material as such (which has been available to the public since 2008) to distinguish how the government of

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[20] Státní bezpečnost (state police)

Czechoslovakia configured music, its approach to musicians, and to what extent these became manifested in political structures and StB campaigns.

One of the most productive aspects of working at the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, though, was that Čuňas was employed there. In addition to being an amateur archivist/chronicler of the Underground, he also held a research position at USTR that gave him access (and time) to StB documentation about the Underground. His security file, however, was not in the archive; it had apparently disappeared when the Soviet troops withdrew in 1990 (Stárek 2009b). I spent extended periods of time (three to four hours per day multiple times a week for six months between April 2009-September 2009) with Čuňas in the archives while he went through collections.

This made my research in the Archive of the State Police very different from other archives as my data collection relied primarily on what Čuňas wanted to show me. At times, we would be together at a microfilm machine when he would come across information regarding an Undergrounder who had been a collaborator with the StB of which he had not been aware. Other times, he would laugh at the seeming ridiculousness of the StB and their tactics. Often he made me aware of crucial information, for example hand scrawled notes on police raid that instructed, "just three will do".

Thus, some of my most 'successful' and useful participant observation and interviews happened in the Archive of the State Police, where my primary concern had been to locate documents. Furthermore, Čuňas's office in the archives served as a site for many extended interviews, which were pleasantly broken up by visitors, phone calls and lunch at the local canteen. Being in his workplace also brought me into contact with

others who would drop in, people who were otherwise difficult to reach: for example, 'Fiak' (nickname), a long-standing active homeless Underground poet and 'Binny' (nickname) "the best electrician in the early 60s" (Stárek 2009d) for replicating popular Western guitar designs and sounds (see section 4.1.1).

Furthermore, the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes also hosted research seminars on the Czech Underground, which Čuňas organized and led. These seminars were focused on StB documents concerning the history of the Czech Underground. Each seminar presented written material and photographs on different aspects of police action specifically against Undergrounders, their gatherings and their music. Between 2008 and 2012 (the period in which I wrote this thesis), four seminars have occurred, two devoted specifically to musical events leading to imprisonment of Undergrounders and police brutality against them. Figure 4 below shows the first seminar flyer. While these seminars were rich in factual display, they also presented an interesting observational site of Undergrounders who were keen to see what the state police knew about them; many were



**Figure 4 Flyer for the first seminar on the history of the Czech Underground (2008). Prague, Czech Republic at the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes.**

present at the historical events being discussed and contributed with their personal

accounts during the question and answer portion of the seminars.

Moreover, the seminar room at USTR itself was decorated with different artifacts,

such as photos, old hand-made speakers playing bootleg reel-to-reel recordings of old

Underground concerts and cases of beer for the patrons—such decorations were in striking juxtaposition to the sterile seminar room housed in the Institute for which one had to go through a metal detector and show identification to enter the



**Figure 5 Seminar room at the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes; Prague, Czech Republic.**

building. Figure 5 shows the seminar room at USTR with a portable reel-to-reel player

playing a 1978 *Plastic People of the Universe* recording through homemade speakers

from the 1970s.

Institute of Contemporary History – Prague, Czech Republic

I used the Institute for Contemporary History's (USD[21]) archives to investigate the files

and documents on the Jazz Section (discussed in Chapter Six). The Jazz Section was a

semi-official organization that helped to disseminate cassette tapes of banned music and

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[21] Ústav pro soudobé dějiny

had informal connections to the Underground (as all non-official musickers were related through networks of individuals in Czechoslovakia). Additionally, I pursued documents related to international opposition to the Jazz Section's persecution in the mid 1980s (e.g., Amnesty International petitions, letters from famous personalities to the president of Czechoslovakia). The research conducted at this archive, along with some of the holdings at OSA, helped to configure a wider non-official cultural space in Czechoslovakia of which the Underground was a part.

British Library– London, United Kingdom

I spent three days in the British Library's newspaper collections retrieving articles that were written in major Western dailies concerning the 1976 trial of the Undergrounders and the subsequent founding of Charta 77 (see section 5.4). In order to carry out the research, I first checked online databases of newspapers that covered the trial and then located the microfilm text. The purpose of locating these texts was to conceptualize how
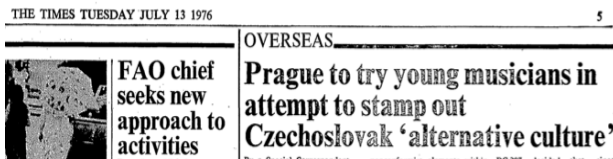


**Figure 6 Headline excerpt from 'The Times', 1976. British Library.**

Underground music was portrayed in the articles in order to aid in understanding the accrual of legacy via persecution. Figure 6 above, from 'The Times' 13 July 1976, illustrates how the Underground began to be presented outside of Czechoslovakia. Similarly, I located related articles in OSA, as shown in Figure 7 below.

Furthermore, I was also able to locate an article in *The Socialist Worker* on the 1976

Underground trial, which Martin Machovec pointed me toward, noting that Egon Bondy

had first showed him this article in the



late 1970s. Thus, locating these

newspapers articles was also locating

information that was circulating within

the country at that time, however illegally

obtained.
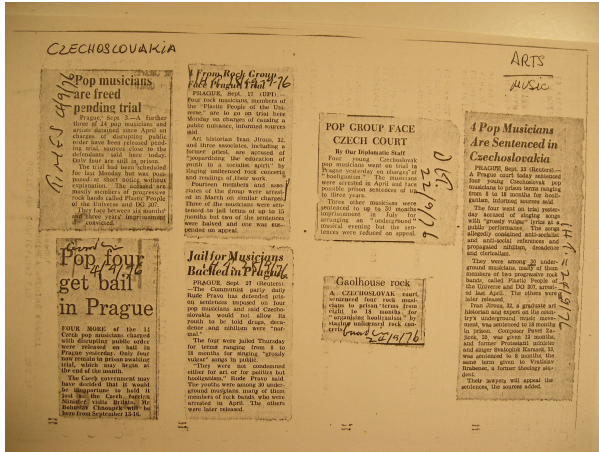
Figure 7 Newspaper clippings from 1976 trial, OSA.

Additionally, I used the British Library's main library collection to locate out-of-

print texts related to non-official musical activity in Czechoslovakia. Specifically, I was

looking for two works that became valuable for my research: Alternative musician

Mikoláš Chadima's 1992 biographical chronicle *Alternativa* (which describes in detail

aspects of the non-official cultural space and the 'alternative' musical groups in the 1970s,

addressed in Chapter Six) and the 1989 publication *Excentrici v přízemí nová vlna v

Čechách, příbeh Dušičkovy[22],* a small book that devotes journalistic attention to the

numerous New Wave groups in Czechoslovakia throughout the 1980s written by Aleš

Opekar and Josef Vlček, the latter being involved in the Jazz Section described in

Chapter Six.

3.4.5 Alternative archives

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[22] *Eccentrics on the Groundfloor. The New Wave in Bohemia, the Story of Souls*

I relied on a number of archives to locate non-official written work. As mentioned before, Libri Prohibiti in Prague provided the starting place for my research and a place to which I could continually return to fill in emergent gaps in Underground-related research. My data collection at Libri Prohibiti started with a wide sampling (my initial investigations were not only aimed at the Underground's documents but the wider non-official cultural space) and gradually focused on two key documents: firstly, a copy of the album *Egon Bondy's Happy Hearts Club Banned*. This rare album[23] includes detailed liner notes that helped me to orientate research more specifically on the Underground within the non-official space. Secondly, Libri Prohibiti contains the fourteen volumes of the aforementioned Underground samizdat magazine, *Vokno.*

In order to assess how the Underground perceived the political and cultural regime of Czechoslovakia, I employed ethnographic content analysis of the *Vokno* samizdat texts I located in Libri Prohibiti. These texts offered a kind of user's or 'cocktail guide' as to what was considered significant within the Underground during this time. It did so by presenting different settings, conditions, histories and circumstances of Underground experience, in a sense a chronicle of Underground life. More specifically, employing ECA in this context allowed me to locate different dimensions of Underground experience and how it was discussed. For example, how 'establishment' was understood in relation to music, to fear, to suppression. These categories helped to get underneath Underground framing of such phenomenon while giving rich historical detail and context as to how such categories had come to be discussed (what information was taken for granted in a particular *Vokno* article? How were bands described and

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[23] Recorded in 1974-1975 in Czechoslovakia and smuggled out of the country to be later pressed in the UK and released on a French record label, SCOPA. See section 4.4 and 6.3.1

relation to what events? How was the reader addressed in the articles?). To accomplish

this task, I had to photograph each page while in the archive[24], then skim the

photographed texts for keywords (e.g.,'esteblišment'[25] or 'magnetofone' [sic]), translate

them and build up data pools for analysis.

Moreover, researching in the archives (be that newly opened state archives or

alternative archives) also presented opportunities for locating previously un-researched or

lost material. For example, Ivan Bierhanzl, musician, Charta 77 signatory and recording

engineer in several key Underground groups (*Doktor Prostěradlo Band, Umělá Hmota,*

the *Plastics*) since the mid-1970s and current bassist in the *Plastics* and Mikoláš

Chadima's *MCH Band*, highlighted some of the 'fortune' of locating historical

documents:

> [The 1976 Second Festival of the Second Culture in the town of] Bojanovice had three
> cameramen: Čuňas (16mm), Prokeš and a friend of Prokeš. Some agent took this footage
> from Barrandov [film studio, where Prokeš worked] without any file number [for
> evidence[26]]. Maybe they sent it to [Česká Televize] for the army to make movies for
> propaganda. I [recently] found one of Čuňas movies from [the *Plastic's* 1978 concert
> 'Passion Play']…I found it in Gruntorád's library [Libri Prohibiti] in a box. […] [Another
> recording in 1975, we use a] Revox [recorder]. I'm not sure if it was 38cm—it was from
> Robin Hájek…I'm not sure if it is 38cm or 19cm speed. Now, since Robin Hájek was
> sitting on his tapes for more than 20 years, so the old editions after 1990 are like second
> editions. Last year he opened up his recordings and there are new Egon Bondy recordings.
> From original [magnetic] tape. Some high-quality recording. (2011a)

Bierhanzl's remarks indicated two points for going about my research (and for future

research): firstly, the Underground has been a well-documented phenomenon by its own

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[24] All volumes of *Vokno* have since been digitalized in pdf format however the typewritten documents
cannot be utilized with an electronic search function.

[25] Seeing the phonetic spelling in Czech one could consider how these concepts, such as 'esteblišment',
'Plastik Pipl' or 'subkultr' circulate through talk before being written down.

[26] If the police had used a file number it is possible this missing footage could have been located in the
Archive of the State Police.

members. Secondly, there is an abundance of material, which is still uncategorized, lost, or misplaced. This material can potentially reveal new dimensions and new links in the making of the Underground space.

Also in the Czech Republic, I visited the archives of "Theater on a String" in Brno. Here, I was mainly interested in the theater's productions they performed with other Moravian New Wave bands and their performances in some of Prague's early 80s clubs (*Junior Klub na Chlemnici* and *Opatov*, which are discussed in Chapter Six). Additionally, I was able to conduct an interview with Petr Oslzlý, director of the archive and dramatist concerning specific theater productions in the 1980s.

In another vein of archival investigation, I conducted research in other private archives devoted to alternative cultural movements in Poland and Hungary. The main purposes of my visits were to look into connections between parallel underground or alternative movements occurring in both countries and across the region. In Poland, I visited the Karta Center in Warsaw. My aim here was to pursue images and documents of the Czech-Polish solidarity movement that occurred in the late 1970s. Also during this research trip, I visited the archive of the "Theatre of the 8th Day" in Poznan, Poland looking into primarily their work performed illegally during martial law in Poland (13 December 1981—22 July 1983) as well as their connection with the Polish surrealist-absurdist 'happening' movement "Orange Alternative"[27]. At the same time I was able to interview the main organizer of the "Orange Alternative"—Waldemar "Major" Fydrych—who presented the only evidence of relationships with the Czech Underground and other cultural movements in the bloc (he distributed some cassette tapes of the

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[27] Major calls this aesthetic practice of the movement as "Socialist Surrealism".

**Figure 8 Orange Alternative. Myself, Karen Burke of NYPLPA and Major. Warsaw, 2008.**

*Plastics* and attended Čuňas's wedding in the early 1990s). Figure 8 shows a meeting with Major in his flat on 16 July 2008, while wearing the Orange Alternative symbol—a homemade orange dwarf's hat.

The final part of the archival research on alternative written documentation was done in Budapest at the Artpool Archive, which I visited several times from 2008-2010. Established in the early 80s, the archive-in-apartment houses a formidable collection of documents relating to the Fluxus



**Figure 9 Researching in Artpool Archives with Julia Klaniczay. Budapest, 2008.**

movement in Eastern Europe, Hungarian samizdat and music and video of the Hungarian underground during the late 1970s into the 1980s. Similar to my work in Poland, I was looking for any links to the Czech Underground as well as attaining perspective on the particularity of the Czech experience.

While the research in Poland and Hungary does not enter into my findings on the Czech Underground they do serve to underpin a wider regional knowledge of non-official activity during communism. Moreover, I have used this research for publications that

compare and contrast countries in the region (Hagen and DeNora 2011), which help to

highlight the particularities of the Czech case.

3.5 Documenting the Data

I relied on a number of techniques in order to organize and document my research.

Primarily, I used fieldnotes to record observations and points of interest during interviews

and participant observation along with a hand-held Zoom H4 field recorder[28]. Fieldnotes

can be delineated into four different types: *jottings, diary, log and notes* (Bernard 2006:

389-394). Chiefly I relied on note-taking techniques of jotting, wherein keywords would

activate a visual prompt (e.g., air guitar) or direct my attention to a certain point in the

audio recording.

> I maintained a *log* of activities I was involved in with the Underground, such as:

> "Lunch at the Chinese restaurant—no rice for Čuňas. He [told me that] ate too much in prison." 2 May 2009

> "Plastics at [Prague Klub] Vagon, [Saxophonist] Brabenec introduces [1970s Plastic People song with Egon Bondy poem as lyrics] 'Podivuhodný mandarin' with dedication to Mejla [eight years deceased Plastics' founder/bassist Milan Hlavsa]". 20 May 2009

Along with these personal logs, I attempted to place them within other events that I knew

were happening that week or month (or that had happened) in order to get a better

understanding of the rhythm of 'Underground Renaissance' events; this was beneficial in

that I quickly realized there were far more events, concerts and gatherings that were

happening than I could attend or have prior knowledge about. Additionally, when

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[28] I always had my recorder with me when I was out or in a situation where an Underground meeting might take place.

reviewing these logs, I relied on analytical memos that helped to slowly bring in theory to the data collection process (Charmaz 2006; Bryant and Charmaz 2007; Groenwald 2008).

It was not always easy to take notes during participant observation, as it is often too obtrusive a method (pulling out the notebook, writing) especially when the scene was vibrant with action (Emerson et al 1995: 19-20). At the above-mentioned 'Underground Birthday Party' (see Figure 3 page 83), a notebook in plain view for the entire evening would have been out of place (not that anyone would have minded me doing that necessarily, however it helped me to feel more comfortable and blend in more easily). In such times I would discreetly use my field recorder and annotate the recording as soon as the event was complete (e.g., "30' 23" Jirous reads poem). These recordings proved effective as they were often filled with ambient gaps in-between musical groups or discussions, revealing the collective sound of events. Mostly, these recordings primarily consist of concerts and informal commemorations of Undergrounders in pubs.

Listening to the ambient sound was fruitful but I quickly realized that I needed video footage of the Underground. Often during interviews, Undergrounders were very animated with gestures, clothing, hair, smiles and particularly when looking at photographs together. During one of my fieldwork sessions I was able to procure a video camera and shoot sixteen hours of footage over the course of five days at an Underground festival in July 2010. For this, and due to personal circumstance, I was able to collaborate with Anette Dujisin, who has worked on documentary films and has experience shooting with a camera; plus we had both attended the festival the previous year thus we were prepared for how to enter this site with a camera.

Collaborating with Anette allowed me to be "camera-free" and thus allow her to capture interviews, conversations and discussions spontaneously without any odd pause. Figure 10 shows an interview-in-progress with Mikoláš Chadima following his performance (note field recorder in my hand). Moreover, Anette's presence had added value in that she is half-Hungarian[29] and a 'camerawoman'. Often, people were very forthcoming with the camera and after three days the camera felt 'part' of the festival. For example, Anette was able to conduct one interview in Hungarian with an Undergrounder



**Figure 10 Interview with Mikoláš Chadima, Festival U Skaláka. Czech Republic 2010**

whose mother was an ethnic Hungarian from Slovakia. In turn, this allowed for me to handle the camera and focus on para-linguistic features of the interview (e.g., comportment, addressed in section 4.3.2).

Although we both had apprehensions about filming the festival—a very small, private event of approximately five hundred people—we had the permission of Čuňas and the owner of festival site (Miroslav "Skalák" Skalický), the two primary organizers of the festival. The private moments of the festival, such as the baptism of newborn in a pond, were at times uncomfortable to film, however immediately after the baptism Čuňas rushed to Anette and me and asked, "Did you get it? We're you filming?". At this point, I understood better our position here—not as 'outsiders' coming to exploit the

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[29] Many times, when introduced as Hungarian, Undergrounders would comment on how they were big fans of the Hungarian rock (e.g., *Omega*, *Locomotiv GT*).

Underground, but as part of the festival, documenting moments as such for posterity for them as much as for us; a significant moment of 'acceptance' after years of researching from the outside (Figure 2 above shows one of my first Underground events in 2006 to Figures 10 and 11, 12 [below] in 2010). Additionally, I became aware of the fact that many of individuals in the Underground were amateur archivists in some fashion, from recording audio and video themselves to collecting records and magazines, illustrating yet another dimension of collective practice in the Underground. The presence of a camera and microphones was not something new to the Underground; on the contrary, documenting and chronicling is part of it and has been since the beginning.

Further, while filming, a tape-by-tape log was made that details who, what and where of the footage in sixty minute intervals over sixteen hours of taping[30]. Plus, my fieldnotes provided descriptive events that could later be used for building analysis and theory from experience. For example, below is an excerpt from the 'film diary' that we used for keeping track of what had been filmed on each day (and on which cassette). Anette and I left the secluded gathering after three days (out of five total spent there) to drive to a nearby town to pick up more mini-DV tapes (and to eat a meal with a fork and knife, sit in a chair and use a toilet).

> We went to Jihlava today. It is about a 30-minute drive from U Skaláka. Beautiful countryside. We went to a shopping mall and had the strangest experience—as if we had entered a foreign world. Hard to describe. The air of the mall, the sounds and lights, people with hair gel. How clean everything was. What was shocking was at how much we realized we are *in* the Underground. Like we came up from somewhere to poke our head around and didn't like what we saw. We ate a nice meal and then walked around the town square for about twenty minutes. There was feeling that we had to get back and comfort when we arrived back to the festival.

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[30] Future plans concern an ethnographic documentary of the festival using this footage.

While this was the most intense and challenging five days of the entire six years of fieldwork, it was also the most 'tuned in' that I had become to how Undergrounders might respond to the world around them[31].

To digitally transform this raw data, I attempted using online data organization CAT although its limitations in piecing together content were limited. Other software access was lacking due to the University computer system's incompatibility with my hardware plus the cost of commercial software. In the end I used Nvivo9 to help 'store' my data but relied on pen, paper and more hands-on means to 'think through' the data (e.g., laying out concepts on index cards and moving them around into different categories). What was helpful with Nvivo9 is that it required and allowed me to consolidate all of my multi-media data by typing up fieldnotes, transcribing interviews, scanning documents and arranging archival photographs. In this sense, in allowed me to "get as much material down on paper as possible" (Charmaz 2001 [1995]: 338).

### 3.5.1 Research ethics

A consent form (see Appendix C) was provided for each interviewee to authorize, which was translated into Czech. The form asked if they would like to remain anonymous or have their name changed, and in what ways can the data provided be used; possibly for research, publication, teaching, or exhibition/display. If the informant wished to be anonymous but provided information that could identify them, this data was then not used. I asked each interviewee to sign the form at the end of the interview for them to decide

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[31] I attended the festival in 2009, 2010 and 2011 (each year it takes place the first weekend of July). In 2011 I went alone, however while walking with my rucksack from the nearest bus stop to U Skaláka (a distance of about four kilometers), I was picked up by van of festival-goers who were coming from a nearby village (they pulled over for me as I clearly looked that I was going to the festival).

how best their contribution may be used. In cases of anonymity, the respondent is referred to in text by pseudonym, which they chose. Additionally, in the case of visual evidence (e.g., still shots from filming, photos) and interview data, I employed oral consent when the situation called for it (e.g., if it happened that the interviews occurred spontaneously at a concert). In those cases, I outlined the same points used in the written consent form. Nearly all of the interviews relied on oral consent given the informality of the interview sites.

Before interviews, I explained the purpose of my research and how I intended to use their information in lieu of an information sheet. When interviewing individuals who were jailed, exiled, and subject to violence as a result of their political/social/cultural beliefs, it was possible that we touched on matters that cause discomfort. I had previously conducted interviews with such matters and felt confident in handling them professionally and with experience: I did not ask direct questions, nor pressured the respondent, regarding these sensitive points of personal narrative; but I did  not steer away from them when the interviewee chose to bring them up.

Material gathered in the research process was digitized and privately stored indefinitely unless the interviewee requested otherwise. The material was stored on an external, portable hard-drive that was secured with password protection.

3.6 Analyzing the Data

My data analysis followed a grounded theory approach: first, I gathered data. Secondly, I developed themes around the data from my fieldnotes, interview responses and archival

sources. From here I gathered more data while slowly introducing emerging theory (e.g., resistance as immunity). Thirdly, I began to index my data in order to reduce the amount analyzed. Fourthly, I began to code the data, as described below. Lastly, I generated categories and concepts based on my coding in order to see relationships between data. Using ethnographic methods to elicit (in interviews) and locate (in archives and participant observation) data along with a grounded approach allowed me to generate theory using the Underground *in vivo*: their concepts, their words and their interpretations.

In addition to these data analysis steps, I benefitted from a "dialectical interaction" (Hammersleyand Atkinson 1995: 246) in that I lived in the Czech Republic for four years, Hungary for one year and then the UK for three, therefore I was constantly coming and going from my umbrella research site of the Czech Republic after I had already established a solid foundation there. This gave me time to reflect, process and transform data in order to analyze. While at the beginning of my research everything seemed to be worthwhile of documentation, over time I was able to sharpen my ethnographic technique through concepts I had generated using a grounded theory procedure (Charmaz 2005: 167).

The dialectical interaction afforded themes to emerge and develop over long and short periods of time based on "chunking out" data in a systematic manner (by research visit, by archive, by interview group). In part, this constant process of collection-analysis took form in papers, publications, presentations, conferences and seminars. This allowed me to engage with the collected data, become familiar with its strengths and weaknesses, and use it to think with (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995: 210).

Analysis of my data set first involved interview and document transcriptions from

Czech to English. From here, I could then code the data based on themes that arose from the intersection of participant observation field note memos, indexed interview chunks and annotated archival documents. Coding requires the steps of "conceptualizing and reducing, elaborating and relating" the collected data (Strauss and Corbin 1998: 12), which aid in building categories of data. For example, I began to code data related to 'establishment' in Underground samizdat, interviews and, when possible, in participant observation by using indicators (e.g., direct invocation by labeling something 'establishment') (Strauss 1987: 147) and also by description; examples of codes that were used included 'suppress', 'information blockade' and 'truth' amongst many. Using these codes for the data helped to explore the properties of 'establishment': the types and kinds of establishment, the settings of establishment, reasons for rejecting establishment, how to reject it, precursors of establishment and the circumstances in which establishment comes up. Within these properties were dimensions (e.g., a property of establishment was suppression, dimensions of suppression were creativity and information), which allowed for concepts to emerge that related to self, collective, music and action.

More specifically, coding provided a procedure for examining a temporally diverse amount of data (from the 1960s to 2010s) to see relationships across discursive markers (e.g., 1989 political transformations). Codes that indicated 'establishment' were found in data in both Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic, which helped to relieve the study from a binary West-East, primarily Cold War understanding.

These concepts were then indexed and put into categories, which allowed for wider phenomena to be examined. For example, the category "community entrance" grouped together a number of relationships between what came to be core concepts, such

as 'establishment', 'dipping in', and 'actor reconfiguration', in studying liminal aesthetic bases of action. These concepts are dealt with explicitly in the following chapters.

3.7 Self-Reflexivity

While researching and spending much time in the Czech Republic and in the Underground, there was always the dilemma of maintaining a curious distance as to not fully enter into the Underground. Although my position was clear as a person researching for work on a PhD thesis, there were times when my presence at an event was questionable or difficult, specifically when filming. During these times, I often relied on the "approval" of Čuňas, who gave me the green light to record what I wanted and by also letting everyone know at the event that it was OK that I did so.



**Figure 11 Festival U Skaláka with festival-goer 'Tigr'. (2010)**



**Figure 12 Festival U Skaláka with Ivan Bierhanzl.**

Although I felt comfortable in Underground events, I did not visually fit it. Often this was because of my appearance or lack of long hair. This left me questioning my own position and if it would be better to adopt clothing, posture and style that is more close to life in the Underground.

I decided not to do so primarily as it might seem a bit suspicious if I was not 'myself'; self-expression and following one's thoughts and ideas being a central tenant within the Underground, as I had learned. Certainly being a visible outsider, though, led me to wonder if I was missing part of the story or if I could be privy to other forms of knowledge if I were to enter all the way.

Moreover, being involved in Underground research had a lasting effect in the moments between research trips and writing up. Specifically, the question that nagged at me—as a musician myself, if I had been in Czechoslovakia in the 1970s and 1980s, would I have made the journey Underground? Did I have the constitution and character to put my creative practice before security, career, family and so on? It is still a question that stays in my mind while writing, evaluating the life choices one had to make in Czechoslovakia. Even as a researcher within contemporary academia, would I have followed such a career path nowadays if university posts were politically appointed or approved? The Underground space became a model for how I began to think about life choices. This echo's Goffman's (2001 [1989]: 155) experiential approach to participant observation:

> you try to accept all the desirable and undesirable things that are a feature in their life. That "tunes up your body" and with your "tuned-up body" and with the ecological right to be close to them […], you are in a position to note their gestural, visual and bodily response to what's going on around them […] to sense what it is that they're responding to.

This also helped to reflect my own liminal position as a researcher and how I dipped in to the Underground cultural space, albeit more cognitively, bit by bit, piece by piece (as evidenced from 'outsider' in 2006 to 'part of it' in 2010). I was neither in my home country nor fully in my host country, but I was learning how one would live under certain

circumstance and how this can be a model for a way of life in any regime. This became the doing of ethnography: an understanding of someone else's lifeworld from a different socio-political position and different era.

3.8 Conclusion

A particularly difficult aspect of my research involved the question of how to investigate a historical period retrospectively. When subjective judgments of the communist regime come into play in my thesis, I attempt to do so through the words of the informants; that is, in order to strike some kind of objectivity in my own research and put aside my own knowledge socialization of communism, I had to rely on a different set of categories as put forth by informants.

In this sense, an ethnographic and grounded theoretical approach to the data was both helpful but potentially biasing. Basing any knowledge of a society solely on those who were persecuted (as is the case with the bulk of my interview data) leaves the researcher in a polemic situation wherein lines are drawn along binaries. This far over-simplifies the social context during communism and sheds light onto the narrative constructed in the post-communist era. In the end, there is no perfect way to dismantle this position: as an outsider it was just as easy to vilify communism or to not comprehend the extremities of life during communism due to lacking lived experience. Therefore one returns to grounded ethnographic research as the primary, and necessary, method of inquiry.

The inductive approach of grounded theory, alongside ethnographic data collection, led me toward a theory of resistance and community activity as having aesthetic bases that corresponded more toward well-being than overt, goal-orientated tactics of protest and social movements. I believe that although this is a very specific case study, one can abstract theoretically from this analysis to answer broader questions about music's relationship with wider sociological questions of agency and collective movements, and broad questions of suppression, change, cultural creation, self-protection ('cocooning') and dispositional shifts.

# CHAPTER 4: FURNISHING THE UNDERGROUND SPACE

This chapter sets the scene by describing the early furnishings of a non-official cultural space in 1960s Czechoslovakia. Later, as I will describe, these furnishings were then arranged into a more specific Underground aesthetic. This chapter is divided in three parts: first, I set out cultural activity within Czechoslovakia during the 1960s up to the beginning of normalization in 1970. Here, I consider what aesthetic resources were available, and how they were made available, for liminal absorption and appropriation by those who would later come to make up the Underground. Liminality here is understood as a "temporary and transient [space]" for safe experimentation and exploration in practice, one that music is well poised to serve because of its "indeterminate nature" (Bergh 2011: 373). Secondly, I describe the initial development of the normalization period in Czechoslovakia and the change in social conditions as compared to the Prague Spring. Lastly, I look to how these aesthetic resources came to be configured in the Underground cultural space from the beginning of the normalization period (1970 to 1974).

## 4.1 Building on History: Early Cultural Resources

Cultural materials from prior cultural movements not only aid in legitimatizing groups (Cohen 1985: 99) but also help in building the present through an appropriation of aesthetic forms. If, as Eyerman and Jamieson (1998: 62) assert, "culture is the seedbed of social change supplying actors with the sources of meaning and identity out of which

they collectively construct social action and interaction," how do these cultural resources come to present themselves or be made available to actors? Fine (1987: 136) has addressed this question by introducing "the triggering event". This is a moment when a cultural item first enters a group and instigates new features of group action and culture; in other words, the "spark (...) of idioculture" (Fine 1987: 136). The "triggering event" resonates with Eyerman and Jamison's (Eyerman and Jamison 1991: 59-65) concern with cultural material constituting paradigm shifts that inflect collective framing. Using music as material to gauge how an aesthetic "triggering event" may anchor collective practice, Witkin (1974) describes the seed-like moments of "holding forms":

> [Holding forms are] a set of motifs that proceed, and serve as a reference point for, lines of feeling and lines of conduct over time. Holding forms thus provide a touchstone to which actors may return as they engage in collective expressive activity. They are the templates within which agency takes shape and to which actors may refer to renew themselves as types of emotional agents. (qtd in DeNora 2000: 129)

This articulation of meaning to musical material draws Fine's "triggering event" down to an aesthetic and embodied, pre-conscious and tacit level. This helps to show how aesthetic materials, bit by bit, build up an ecology of a cultural space that underpins collective activity. While mapping a music scene concerns matters of consumption and a catalog of available aesthetic forms, I look to how aesthetic holding forms came to be available, or were presented, through triggering events. These triggering events at holding form levels, in turn, help us to understand how an embryonic cultural space in the 1960s was shaped and constituted by people 'dipping in' to aesthetic materials via musicking. It is here where tacit learning/liminality occurs and where people start to compose themselves, holding forms providing the anchor and bridge for collective action. Moreover, the process of such self-composition helps to indicate liminal states where

people transition and where it is possible to look for moments of communitas. In the next section, I consider grounded triggering events such as the circulation of rock'n'roll media, everyday make-dos and spaces of listening.

### 4.1.1 Czechoslovak BigBít in the 1960s

Although there was austere censorship, artistic and political purging following the 1948 communist coup, Czechoslovakia began a partial thaw on censorship following Stalin's death in 1953 in line with the rest of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union (Ryback 1990: 14-18). Inundated by the 1960s Czechoslovak output of music (as well as film and literature), the communist party under Antonín Novotný[32] faced both party and civil pressure to temper state censorship in the press.[33] This "thaw" of Czechoslovakia helps to understand how Czech society was itself in a liminal state, transitioning from post-Stalin era into a more liberal version of socialism (and what would become normalization).

In this liminal state of cultural 'thaw', rock'n'roll flourished. Called by its Czech name "*BigBít[34]*", there was a significant presence of bands, clubs, and fans across the country (Lindaur and Konrád 2001: 16-32). Prague played host to a number international touring acts[35], which served to contribute to the popularity and ubiquity of Western[36] music and fashion. As music journalist, author, concert organizer (in the 1980s) and *BigBít* expert Vojtěch Lindaur states, "in the late 1960s, Czech rock music was

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[32] Antonín Novotný was the first secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (Komunistická Strana Československa) 1953–1968, before Alexander Dubček.
[33] Party members who were also authors, such as Ivan Klíma, Ludvík Vaculík, Milan Kundera and Pavel Kohout as well as Václav Havel (who was not a member of the Communist Party) began to pressure the state on censorship reform.
[34] The written term sounds like the spoken English "big beat".
[35] Such as Louis Armstrong, Manfred Mann, the Beach Boys, Pete Seeger as well as a 1965 visit by Allen Ginsberg.
[36] Western here is used mainly to refer to the USA and the UK, according to an Undergrounder (Stárek 2009b).

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something like the best in all of Europe outside of Great Britain. In those days

Czechoslovakia was known as the cradle of rock music in the Eastern Bloc" (O'Connor

2006: no page number). Lindaur highlights dipping in to this growing *BigBít* scene during

the 1960s:

> I think it was in 1966 or '67 when I heard music in English for the first time. I remember vividly what it was—The House of the Rising Sun an old traditional song performed by The Animals. Everyone can probably remember the Hammond Organ that is played on this track. I was amazed by this and I think it was my first contact with rock music. […] When you only got two or three records every month you listened to it constantly. This meant that you knew every single chord and lyric on each record. Nowadays, you get 30 or 40 records a week and most of them go in one ear and out the other. (Qtd in O'Connor 2006: no page number)

Lindaur's comments show how the availability of resources, even within "the cradle of

rock music in central Europe", shaped a dimension of dipping in: repeated listening led to

absorption to where Lindaur knew his LP repertoire, as it were, 'by heart'. Furthermore,

in this climate of a culturally thawing Czechoslovakia inundated by rock'n'roll, the

educational system embraced rock'n'roll, albeit in a mild way, installing a "six-part series

on modern music that included songs by the Beatles, the Shadows, Bill Haley, and Elvis

Presley" (Ryback 1990: 59). Educational series as such, LPs, international tours and an

increased youth culture patronizing *BigBít* venues helped to circulate aesthetic forms and

materials within a space thereby making available sounds, rhythms, images and objects

during 1960s Czechoslovakia. Vladislav "Hendrix" Svoboda, who later went on to play

with the *Plastics* and *DG-307*, describes some of his teenage listening experiences in the

1960s:

> One of my mates had an auntie somewhere out there, in England I think, and she used some sort of secret route to send him a little battery-driven tape recorder, unique at that time, and on that little recorder we recorded a couple of songs from "Svobodka" [Radio Free Europe], there was a terrible amount of jamming, but we were happy as fleas. [Then

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I got a Sonet Duo recorder] I recorded everything onto tape. Then we sat on the steps in the front of the house, the recorder wasn't turned on at all, but I had that Sonet microphone stretched out, I drank 'Kofola' [Czech cola], but from a real Coca-Cola bottle. (Svoboda 2005; translation Barbara Day)

"Hendrix"'s recollection here indicates not only dipping in to radio programming (such as to 'Svobodka') but also the presence and display of Western objects. Thus this circulation of Western material could not only be *heard* in the music of many *BigBít* bands, but could also be *seen*. During an interview with Čuňas, he described some of his first encounters, visually, with Western 'alternative culture':

TH: How did you get to know about Easy Rider?

Č: Well I first saw the [Easy Rider] soundtrack, the LP. Someone brought it around, and said that they have a soundtrack to this film. Bands like Hendrix, famous bands, and everyone wanted to see the film. It was talked about a lot. Someone had some information from a Western magazine and we knew Peter Fonda was in it. There was an article that the older Fonda financed, at least to some extent, the film so that young Fonda could make films instead of doing drugs. So I went to Budapest [to see the film], but you know I was at Uni, so I couldn't go immediately like the boys from work that went straight away, taking their holiday. I had to wait for summer holiday, and then it wasn't in the main cinemas anymore. In a 'mozi' [Hungarian cinema] on the main street, [I found] a poster with all the cinemas in Budapest, there were like a hundred cinemas. I was trying to find [the film], and because I didn't know what it was called in Hungarian, I was looking for the name Peter Fonda. And then I found 'Peter Fonda' in one of the small cinemas, and it was called "Happy Motorcycle Riders" [laughs]. So I wrote down the address and went to the metro and they told me where to go and then I took a tram and a bus and there were fields…I was in the outskirts. I could tell it was showing there, because the boys there were riding their bikes and they had turned them into Harley-like bikes: they used planks of wood pretending they were "easy riders". So I bought a ticket and luckily it had Hungarian subtitles, so it was in English with the subtitles at the bottom. I spoke little English but it was ok. I understood what it was about and mainly I saw the commune. You know that was the first time I saw that in my life, the hippies. What the commune looks like. I was 18 years old. This was one of the reasons we were obsessed with West here and the music of course. It was 1970 and Plastics were only playing for a year then. I knew about them but hadn't seen them at that point. But this is what interested me when I was 18. It was my first experience with Easy Rider. The first experience with the commune. That's very interesting. And with the commune, that's maybe when I told myself 'this is it, this is what I want to be'. (Stárek 2009b)

Čuňas description of the "Harley-like" modified bikes points to another practice of

dipping in: visually modifying local resources to imitate Western styles. Modification of

available resources points to dimensions of 'dipping in' practices as forms of modeling

and imitation that involve degrees of learning. Such modification in the 1960s built upon

the late 1950's "style-hunters" (*pásek*), who commonly stylized their clothing by wearing

> wide-cuffed trousers, striped socks, and safari-styled jackets[,] purchas[ing] dull ties in
> government-run stores and paint[ing] them with bright colors or pinn[ing] American
> cigarette labels on them. (Ryback 1990: 10)

This display emerges from the circulation and intersection of sounds and images, as

described above, within what Straw (1991: 375) has called a musical-cultural space that

emphasizes such media cosmopolitanism. These mediations point to the initial aesthetic

triggers of how materials were tinkered with and adjusted. Tinkering with materials in

turn created a space that allowed for the triggering of feelings and modeling of

aspirations, as Čuňas puts it: "this is it, this is what I want to be".

Moreover, *pásek* and individuals as "Hendrix", in lieu of Western products,

transformed local objects (e.g., "dull ties", Kofola in a Coca-cola bottle) through

imitation and adjustment. This practice was similarly reflected with technology such as

Western guitar models (and their sounds), which were constructed through make-do (and

sometimes make-better) fashions. Specifically, one soundman (*zvukař*) "Binny" Lán, who

I encountered in Čuňas's office at the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes

(mentioned earlier in Chapter Three), was introduced to me as one of the best soundmen

from the 1960s (Stárek 2009b) as well as being the "most well-known" (Lindaur and

Konrád 2001: 23). Čuňas describes how Binny modified and adapted limited or

unavailable resources:

Binny was the sound engineer for the band [Hells Devils]. He is very good at electronics, you know. He made himself a reel-to-reel tape player. People were not allowed to sell [them] here. It was like...if you had a [reel-to-reel] tape recorder at home...you might as well have had a machine gun at home. Yeah, it was like espionage. Only in '54 could [reel-to-reel] tape start to be sold. […] As a sound engineer...He made the bands' equipment. Even the guitars he made himself. When something came from abroad, he copied it here. [showing me a picture] That's Binny! Here he is in '68—mániček[37]. (...) He had long hair! [handing me some magazines] Here are some magazines... he published there his [reel-to-reel] schematics. (laughs) (Stárek 2009b)

"Hendrix", *pásek* and soundmen like Binny demonstrate the material practice of making available otherwise unavailable objects through imitation and manipulation in order for an object to afford sounds and styles absent form the local scene. These dipping in activities collected and arranged resources for aesthetically negotiating a non-official reality. In other words, we see a space furnished with new resources that started to allow the beginning of non-official activity. People could dip in to a furnished space and thus 'out of' official culture allowing for the nascent development of new dispositions.

Echoing Becker's (1953: 237) modeling stage of social learning, imitation is an essential part in the practice of musical learning (Green 2008: 7), at attentive levels (such as listening to the same record over and over) or even "distracted listening" (Green 2002: 194). Particularly, listening to foreign broadcasts of "Svobodka" fostered a culture of exposure to new music where each week new sounds came over the ether allowing listeners a space to develop different forms of habitual listening attention and musical learning. Paul Wilson describes such learning in 1960s Czechoslovakia through radio listening, evidenced by "knock-off bands[38]":

One of the things that censorship [before the Prague Spring] did very badly was keep music out of the country. One of the things that was very marked in the 1960s was that

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[37] Czech long-haired youth, similar to hippie. See next section
[38] Cover bands

> although intellectuals found it very hard to get a hold of books it was very easy for kids to be right on top of things because records were brought in and the music was broadcast over Voice of America and other radio stations. So, there was a very current music scene [in Prague], with a lot of knock-off bands and a lot of fans of different groups just the way you'd find them in the West. (Qtd in Vellinger 2005: no page number)

As the above quote shows, the presence of knock-off bands highlights not necessarily a "mirroring" activity of Western rock culture but a further mediation in making available an unavailable (musical) object. These foreign broadcasts expressly afforded the opportunity for informal musical learning of new sounds through imitation. Combined with tape recorders, as "Hendrix" and Binny detail above, the possibility for repeated listening was then presented. This happened across the Bloc as well; for instance in Hungary, Nagy Feró, leader of the punk group *Beatrice*, stated how radio assisted in informal musical learning in that "[he] listened to [Radio Free Europe's Hungarian program]'Teenager Party' and copied the songs phonetically" (qtd in Sesztak 1984: 48). As Green (2002: 69-71) points out, copying recordings by ear is distinctly different from responding to notated or other written or verbal instructions and exercises, presaging how musical learning itself is an exemplar for non-official social learning and activity. Imitation and modeling, by sight and sound, thus become key practices in how musicians located aesthetic sensibilities within the non-official cultural space and crafted them accordingly to the local scene (e.g., via knock off bands).

Further, Ivan Jirous reflected on 1960s musicking in Prague, which afforded unavailable cultural material, as being "the first time [for] people who would normally not have access to art [to have] the opportunity [….]". Jirous further queries: "How else can people with similar opinions and natures get to know about each other except when

they can display what they know in a relatively public forum" (Jirous 2006 [1975]: 10).

'Hendrix' describes the happenstance meetings in these clubs in Prague in the late 1960s:

> Music F Club wasn't called that yet. We called it "Efko". Everyday from four to seven free entertainment and a concert in the evening. There were more such clubs in Prague. 'Efko' was in Smíchov, 'Plejáč' in Nové Město but that was much too far for us, and actually only for musicians, in summer we [máničky] met up on the steps [of the National Museum, a popular gathering for young people]. [After a] rumpus broke out [at 'Efko' one day I was invited] to the practice room [of the band The Primitives] on Zborovská street. And that is where I immediately saw everything, it was a rehearsal and The Primitives were playing The Doors, that was a heavenly golden year. Ivan Hajniš was there and Pepík Janíček and the manager Evžen Fiala and the drummer Ludvík Šíma and they asked me to be their roadie. (Svoboda 2005: 78-80)

Considering the relationship between learning and spaces of similarity (e.g., 'Efko' and the steps of the National Theater), Becker (1953: 240) draws attention to the learned effect of objects through social experience. This social experience in 1960s Prague music culture, as Jirous and "Hendrix" point out, guides what is positive or beneficial about the object (e.g., a place for people to meet, share opinions, enter groups, excitement, spontaneity). As an important transitional learning stage in a person's continued use and engagement of the object (rock'n'roll music), as Becker (1953) describes, the experience must be favorable. Such transitional (i.e., liminal) experiences point to space-building stages when available cultural material begins to take on resource qualities through locally crafted meaning that emerges from interaction.

Thus though a combination of Prague clubs (e.g., 'Efko'), the ether (Radio Free Europe and Voice of America), LPs from abroad (via relatives), imagery (LP covers, communes, hippies) and objects (coke bottles, tape recorders) people began musicking together by listening to *BigBít* and knock-off bands, wearing certain clothing, interacting with technology in ways that were considered favorable ("I was amazed by this", "This is

it, this is what I want to be", "heavenly golden year"). Musicking in this way allowed for people, like those described above, to aesthetically 'dip in' positively to a growing cultural space. Dipping in here helps to distinguish music scene activity where ways of dressing and listening were beginning to come together. The arranging of 'what goes with what' is a further step, along with locating and crafting, in how musicking opens up 'togetherness' in a cultural space.

### 4.1.2 Proto-Underground

Some bands stood out within this surge of 1960s' *BigBít* for the Underground as being a type of 'proto-underground'. Although I had read about the existence of a 1950's Underground (see section 4.2.5; cf., Pilař 2002), Čuňas explained how a different, musical proto-underground of mid-1960s *BigBít* existed.

> TH: The proto-underground interests me. I have heard a lot about the proto-underground in the '50s…
>
> Č: Well, in the '50s it was the literary [underground]. [Egon] Bondy, Krejcarová, etc. In the 1960s, there were musicians. *Hells Devils* is the first band that could be labeled as such proto-underground.
>
> TH: What kind of music did they play?
>
> Č: They played Bill Haley, rock'n'roll. And what is the name of the guy from Memphis?
>
> TH: Elvis?
>
> Č: Yeah, [they] played Elvis too. [showing me a picture] This is Evžen Fiala when he returned from jail. [head shaved]. Because he worked like this [as manager of The Primitives], they [StB] did a home search. Well, that's how it was, when Evžen was in jail. He immigrated to Sweden after '68. In '67 he was locked up. Because he did not work. Officially did not work.
>
> TH: Could you tell me more about Evžen Fiala?

Č: Evžen was the leader [of *Hells Devils*] then The Primitives. Binny was their sound guy. [Evžen's] dad, 'Toskany' was like their manager. He was looking for where to play, where they could rehearse, stitched suits for them. *Hells Devils* was interesting for me because they were already part of a movement (by the mid-1960s), its important. Here (in North Bohemia) there was [before *Hells Devils*] a band called "*Black Devils*", and they were from [Northern Bohemian town] Teplice. They played the same thing [rock'n'roll], yeah from the 60s…'63, yeah. [pulling out photo of a group]

TH: Did you go to any concerts?

Č: I was only 11 years old! (Laughs) I knew about them though, but I have not seen them. So that's the "*Black Devils*". Good drums... had better drums than *Hells Devils*. [makes air-drum motion that indicates heavy snare drum hitting]

TH: How did they play?

Č: Yeah, like Elvis. Played exactly the same thing. And this is another band [handing me a photo with writing on the back]

TH: Ahh…*Devils Bells*.

Č: Yeah, so it was already a movement [in the 1960s]. It simply meant that people had a social hub, it was not just that the musicians played a concert and then went home. It was how they lived!

TH: How did they live?

Č: For them it was more than music, right? This meant a community for them.

TH: For *Devils Bells*?

Č: For all those bands. That's why I see them as the proto-underground, there were more bands. (...) But they weren't interested just because there was an audience [for this music]! […] It had to be from the soul for them. That's how they had a community as well as the political hub. It was something that linked the music. And it was a sum of what they played. They played rock'n'roll and rock'n'roll was not allowed to be played here, right? It was the band that did not flinch before the Bolsheviks.

TH: And after '68?

Č: After '68 it was a little different.

TH: As for those groups?

Č: ...mostly they split up during those times. Well The Primitives, they played right. In '68. Those were good times. They could play what they wanted. Nobody messed with them. (Stárek 2009b)

Čuňas's description of a proto-underground shows not only a network of people (Fiala, Binny) but also how certain groups' musical style (Bill Haley, Elvis-era rock) was an important 'latching on' holding form for Čuňas (indicated by the paralinguistic 'heavy hitting' sensibility). The proto-underground's approach to playing music ("being together", "with soul") and their political implications ("did not flinch in front of the Bolsheviks") helped to craft *BigBít* as a resource for the Underground in the sense that it became a model for what music could be for a collective. As I will describe in Chapter Five, these cultural resources made a contrast with the official culture. As such they were didactic. Here, Čuňas attempts to highlight their difference from the mainstream *BigBít* ("wasn't only about playing music for an audience") while also illustrating how he came to sift through the non-official cultural space, finding what felt good ("better drums") and what was interesting for him ("community").

Čuňas continues on, pointing out how this proto-underground also indicated the coming together of long-hair, state suppression and rock'n'roll.

> Č: In '64 [German photojournalist] came here [to do a piece on BigBít groups from the Eastern Bloc]. The piece was titled "The Red Beatles are from Prague[39]" [with the Hells Devils photographed on Charles Bridge]. Here [in Prague] they wrote against [this article] (...), as you know, in [the magazine] *Melodie*. So it was then that the [police] campaign against long hair started. (Stárek 2009b)

This campaign against long hair was targeted against social groups in Czechoslovakia with a Western orientated youth culture, particularly the Czech "hippies" called *máničky*[40] (Little Marys). Máničky were often denigrated in the public sphere and banned

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[39] "Die Roten Beatles von Prag" from magazine *Stern*, number 37, 1965. See photograph (page 26) in "Na Počatku bylo Hells Devils" (Stárek 2011/2012: 17-27) in *Pamět a Děiíny*. Publication by the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes.
[40] Máničky is the term used between and with other *máničky*. Police referred to them as '*Vlasacti*', meaning 'hairs'.

from entering select public places, such as cafes, hotels, squares, and parks. For example, in the town of Poděbrady in Eastern Bohemia, law forbid entry for "long-hairs" to

> all restaurants of the second class, all accommodation and hotels in the city, all state spas of Poděbrady, the [main] square and [main] park, to theatre, cinema, libraries and other cultural apparatus in the city.[41]

Such municipal and state policies toward youth culture stemmed from a perceived ideological and affective threat that had similar patterns to many other Western policy-makers: rock music incited hooliganism and immorality (cf., Horváth 2007). The policy of the Czechoslovak regime constructed hooliganism around sets of practices often related and connected to popular cultural stemming from the Anglo–Saxon West. Specifically, this was based on the penal code 202 *výtržnictví*, or, "disturbing the peace", which would later come to play a role in the 1976 trial against the *Plastics* discussed in the Chapter Five. Such policies permitted public and state police to control and contain—to an extent—a person's listening to and attending popular music concerts.

Figure 13 below shows a 1966 police chart of Czechoslovakia. The chart evidences how police monitored youth groups and how they were mindful of such potential "disturbing the peace" practices following the article "The Red Beatles are from Prague". This chart highlights regional districts where long hair was present, indicated by the red shading. Such monitoring of long hair, and actions against it, would become increasingly more suppressed from the early 1970s (as described in section 4.2.2 and 5.1).

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[41] "Rada městekého narodního vybor v Poděbradech 1966". Archive of the State Police, Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, Prague, Czech Republic.
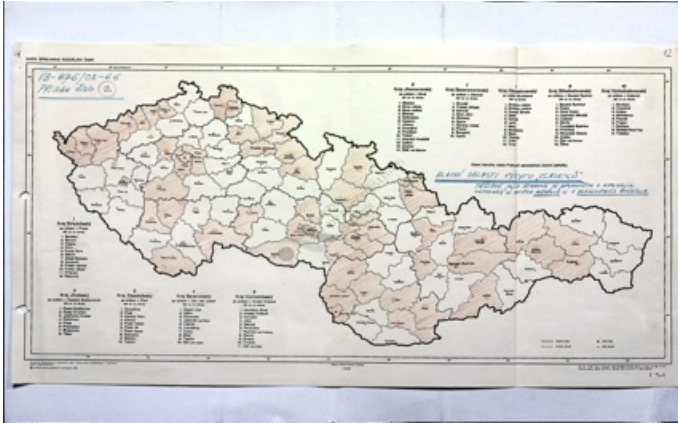
**Figure 13 Map of 'long hairs' in Czechoslovakia, 1966**

Čuňas showed me this chart in Prague in 2009, which he located in the Archive of the State Police, after I asked him since when he had worn his hair long. He then went on to show me a personal photo album, pointing out a set of almost two-identical photos from 1967. The first photo showed a group of long-haired youth, clothed in jean jackets, smiles and arms around each other, sitting in front of a fountain in a town outside of Prague— Čuňas was also in the photo but in the background. The second picture, almost the same scene but with Čuňas in the middle of the group, dressed in his long hair and jean jacket. As Čuňas explained to me, he had arrived in the town that day by himself for a concert in the evening. In the town square, he had been invited into the group as he states, "because of my long hair" (Stárek 2009d). This coming together, according to Čuňas was typical of the time and growing *máničky* culture. The meeting of long-hairs at the fountain, even if it was in a public space, evidences the emerging relationship between music, lifestyle and embodied dispositions along with the positive reinforcement of this behavior.

From this *máničky* culture, Čuňas (2009b) highlights how the proto-underground furnished the space for dipping in along with how the availability of Western cultural material allowed for a piecing together of resources in the second half of the 1960s.

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Western music—Zappa, Velvet Underground, Captain Beefheart, Fugs—cult bands and cult films like Easy Rider: these were exactly the bases from the West we were eagerly absorbing. We were translating Zappa's lyrics, what we wanted. Evžen Fiala was shooting [from a type of gun] on the stage when he played with *Hells Devils*, he was shooting, and shouting in the microphone, 'we will bring America here!' And Ginsberg's *Howl*, we read here first, published in Czech, *Zabrana*. A Czech poet translated it very well, even with the same attitude. (Stárek 2009b)

The appropriation of cultural material was filtered through music, poetry and on stage thus helping an early organization of imagination and sensibilities through the dipping in activity of "absorption". This early crafting of the cultural space involved people furnishing it (e.g., Evžen Fiala) with materials (Western music) in order to locate, produce and experience emotional stances and dispositions that were viewed as unavailable in Czechoslovakia, exemplified through the cultural travel of "we will bring America here".

Furthermore, bringing "America here" involved an 'instinctive' emotional stance. *The Primitives*, as mentioned above by "Hendrix" and Čuňas, are a further ensemble that has come to represent the proto-underground, connecting many of these early triggers that would later come to shape the Underground cultural space. Jirous has referred to them as the "fathers of the Underground" (Jirous 2006 [1975]: 12). Evžen Fiala, from *Hells Devils*, was the manager of *The Primitives*, as Čuňas noted above, while Jirous was a "member of *The Primitive's* artistic team" and the oldest member of the *Plastics*, Josef (Pepa) Janíček, was a guitarist for *The Primitives* (Reidel 2001 [1997]: 15) while Binny was the soundman and "Hendrix" the roadie. Jirous notes that *The Primitives*, who were styled upon American psychedelic music and incorporated elaborate stage performances borrowed from happenings, "marked the arrival of a new phenomenon—underground music—even though it was emotionally and instinctively, rather than consciously understood" (2006 [1975]: 11). *The Primitives* played a repertoire of covers from "Jimi

Hendrix, Eric Burdon, *The Grateful Dead*, *The Pretty Things*, *The Doors*, *The Mothers of Invention* and *The Fugs*" (Jirous 2006 [1975]: 11). Such sonic structures of English language in a Czech context were critical in the songs of many groups as "the performance of English and American rock by Czech groups was absolutely essential in the local scene [in the late 1960s]" (Jirous 2006 [1975]: 11). Here is where we begin to see the triggering event of something new (underground music) but understood "instinctively" (via sounds); in other words, the aesthetic learning of a mode of feeling. Yet while the proto-underground (which moved from early '60s rock'n'roll to late '60s Czech psychedelic music sung in English) furnished the space with Western cultural material, other aesthetic practices began to emerge during the 1960s.

### 4.1.3 Knížák and Fluxus Furnishings

In addition to elaborate stage performances of *The Primitives*, long-haired *máničky* and English-language sounds, Fluxus cultural material also furnished the space. Czechoslovakia was in stride with an international Fluxus movement[42], substantiated in part by musician and artist Milan Knížák. Today, Knížák is a public figure in Czech society (both on TV, in magazines and in politics) as the director of the National Gallery in Prague. He still wears a long ponytail and occasionally performs at smaller Underground events (e.g., "Lábus's Birthday" 2010, although he cancelled at the last minute).

As early as 1965, Knížák began experimenting with manipulated vinyl— "scratching them, burning them, painting on them, punching holes in them, cutting them

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[42] One can also make similar assertions to the literature of the 1950s being in stride with the Beat generation in the USA: *Zybytky Esposu* by Bondy, 1955; the *Howl* by Allen Ginsberg, 1956; *On the Road* by Jack Kerouac, 1957; *Kádarový dotazník* by Bondy, 1962.  (Bondy 2006 [1990]: 56)

apart and reassembling them, and then playing them back on a turntable" (Cox and

Warner 2004: 402). Knížák referred to this practice as "*destruovana hudba*" (destroyed

music). Compared to Lindaur's above description of knowing songs 'by heart' through

repeated LP listening, Knížák highlights how his limited selection of records aided

imagination:

> TH: Could you tell me about how you began to play music?
>
> MK: I grew up with music, I heard a lot later on about contemporary music like John Cage, the 2nd Viennese school, Weber and his followers…Schoenberg was too old-fashioned. Then I started to work with records in 1963 because I received a player but I had no money left for records. I played them all the time so they started to get boring. That's when I started to break records, first the speed, then I broke them with my fingers, completely changes the quality of the music—much nicer!! They were mostly pop albums I received from friends. (Knížák 2009a)

Knížák's '*destruovana hudba'* paved the way for a 'destroyed', as it were, aesthetic form

to enter the non-official cultural space. Moreover, the manner of creation—not imitating

but rather finding new forms—came to be a model for later Underground praxis, as

described below. Knížák's destroyed vinyl, along with the repeated listening to vinyl,

helps to show how the non-official cultural space was furnished by multiple approaches,

sounds and experiences, thus being able to accommodate a wide range of activities.

For example, in addition to Knížák's solo efforts, he was also the founder and

leader of the ensemble *AKTUAL*.

> MK: Concerts were part of the actions [of *AKTUAL*], first break [the records] and then we [started to] publish broken records with *AKTUAL*. '*AKTUAL'* in both visual arts and music. So we made some publications, illegal. One in 1965 was a record. We exchanged it just between friends, completely illegal, all illegal.
>
> TH: This was in Mariánské Lázně[43]?

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[43] Town in Western Bohemia where Knížák did much of his early *AKTUAL* work.

MK: No, it was in Prague. This music started in Prague. Then it just developed. (Knížák 2009a)

This group, whose members would later journey far into the Underground (e.g., Undergrounder "Londýn"), used an assortment of materials and objects as part of it's instrumentation, incorporating tools normally used for garden work to rejected pieces of metal with sing-song poetry normally recited or yelled over the rhythmic accompaniment of non-syncopated banging (Jirous 2006 [1975]: 16; Machovec 2011: 224; Knížák 2003: 21). Knížák describes the band's use of musical materials:

TH: How did Aktual begin to play?

MK: We use dirty amplifiers, untuned guitars...simple tunes with lyrics and slogans like 'I love you and Lenin'…for me it was a problem because I could not repeat it any more and no one (around me) was able to go further. I was strong and they followed me. It was out of any music scene. I wrote pop songs, but maybe they were too far out. I don't like drums too much…I always wanted a rock band without drums. Regular drums are a bit boring. I like very much making, expressing the rhythm with other instruments. (Knížák 2009a)

These often non-musical sounds and style found their way into different Underground groups later on in the 1970s to nowadays (e.g., *DG-307*, *Hever a Vaselina*, [Zajíček 2009; Stárek 2009c]), helping to set out a domain of what could be considered musical. For example, Figure 14 shows the group *Hever a Vaselina* at a concert in 2009 using such '*AKTUAL* instruments' as a barrel, crank-turn siren and cement mixer.

Part of Knížák's furnishing of the non-official space stemmed from his experience of

living in the USA from 1968-1970:

> In the US I stopped doing music because life was more interesting for me…and art in the
> States was only for artists. There was no real interest…only for artists. It was very funny
> because [in Prague] everyone knew The Fugs and when I came to the States and talked to
> Emit Williams and I talked to him about The Fugs, "No what is it?" [He said to me]. "It's
> a band. Do you know Tuli Kupferberg?" "Yeah, he's my friend." "But you know that he
> is the one with Ed Sanders who created [The Fugs]." In USA everybody loves
> mainstream. We don't like mainstream, we like people out of mainstream. That is the
> difference in mentality, which is unfortunately changing. Horrible music scene here.
> They are still following something somewhere. Everybody is singing English. (Knížák
> 2009b)

Pavel Zajíček, a founder of the Underground group *DG-307* in 1973 (with whom

"Hendrix" later 'sang' with), describes *AKTUAL* and Knížák's bridge-like aesthetic

forms to the US:

> Aktual at that time, Knížák was young, what he brought from here [Prague] was actually
> the co-connection to what was going on in the 60s in America in this experimental field.
> Therefore Aktual was partly somewhere here—I never followed Knížák's way of doing
> things in life—but I admired what made. (Zajíček 2009)

Knížák's lyrics in *AKTUAL* helped to make available sensibilities such as irony, mimicry, the grotesque, absurdity and humor as his lyrics often challenged the "scared cows" of communism (Machovec 2011: 224); for example, in his song "I Love You and Lenin". Knížák elaborated his use of Czech lyrics:

> Now we were the first band singing in Czech because we wanted people to understand. Therefore we used provocative lyrics because we wanted to talk to people. We made concerts but they were all stopped by the police. Like in the House of Pioneers. Because [the organizers of the gig] didn't know what they were doing, the director was thrown out. It was 1968. That year they didn't want to allow those second concerts. We went to the police chief, "you are the one who banned us!" "No not me!" So we had the concert and the doors were bursting but then after half of the concert everyone was gone! They couldn't stand it! They couldn't stand the music because it was so aggressive. We never had the equipment. (Knížák 2009a)

Knížák furnished the non-official cultural space with Czech lyrics, which later became an influence for the *Plastics* after a performance together in 1970 and 1971 in the Music F Club ("Efko") in Smíchov (Riedel 2001 [1997]: 17; Jirous 2006 [1975]: 16-17; Machovec 2011: 224). In other words, rather than continue copying English-sounding lyrics, the *Plastics* began to dip in to an inchoate Underground cultural space with Czech lyrics, appropriated from Egon Bondy's poems (discussed in 4.3.1).

However, Knížák always maintained a distance from the Underground. Here he describes his relationship with the Underground in the mid-1970s:

> I am open to use any kind of material…there was a legal concert of bands in '76 [in Bojanovice]…I didn't want to join, because I didn't like it. They were these…Plastic People group…it was café music. So I composed a song: "Because of togetherness, I fuck togetherness". And then I recorded it with my wife [on a tape recorder]. I made piano and was thumping into a piece of wood. She had violin, it was like a band and then the police came and they were looking for a band but there was no one there! (Knížák 2009a)

Regardless of Knížák's distancing, his Fluxus efforts and *AKTUAL* helped introduce and furnish a cultural domain of what could be considered musical (e.g., banging metal pipes).

Zajíček of *DG-307* describes his entrance into composing, not through *BigBít*, but

through 20th century American experimental music as a result of Knížák's bridging to the

USA:

> TH: How did you first begin to compose?
>
> PZ: It was from within. I don't know. I don't have any explanation. It is nothing new, it is being in the world always, but one big thing: I was inspired by something I couldn't see or hear because I couldn't, [back] then, leave. I have a great admiration for John Cage and not even in a musical way, I just loved lots besides the music. Harry Partch. John Cage. Those things were, like, not necessarily to follow it but an influence. Just to feel, "oh this is good". I heard John Cage at some point when I was young, I said—that's good. There is a necessity of silence in whatever you do. He gave it Zen touch. But what is time? How can you measure time? By seconds? The silence is the beginning of everything. If you notice here [in my flat], I don't have music on, which I think is good if people have music on, but I don't have—and it is not some radical choice. It is the way it is. You can build on silence…if you have nothing to build on then you don't build anything. It is emptiness. Whatever surrounds us before anything. There are the animals, the birds, the trees, the weather. (Zajíček 2009)

Zajíček comments show another form of dipping in (to part of the space furnished by

Knížák): he did not absorb, per se, through repeated listening or consumption but rather

in a spontaneous 'click' of resources and environment. Moreover, this 'click' of resources

had to do with already present, 'found' resources (e.g., silence exposing sound that is

there) that were made available through such space furnishings as Cage. Such a wide

understanding of what is musical would later play an important factor in community

activity of the Underground, discussed in 5.2.2.

### 4.1.4 Psychedelic Plastics: Phase I

From this time of proto-underground bands, Knížák's *AKTUAL, máničky* culture and the

Dubček's thawing Prague Spring, the *Plastics* emerged. As *The Primitives* voluntarily

disbanded in April 1969, the *Plastics* came to fill the cultural gap by assuming similar

methods of stage performance that incorporated everything from wearing togas,

embellished stage decorations and ornamental pyrotechnics (Jirous 2006 [1975]: 12).

Čuňas describes some of the early performance techniques of the *Plastics* during this

time:

> Binny did the Primitive's electrics as well. And even once the Plastics, but it was a mess. He made lights that could blink and flash to the music, you know. It was the fashion! He brought it and it was time rehearse. They [The Plastics] said "yeah, it's good, put it straight onto the stage" [imitates without checking]. And it started there and just stayed lit up (...) Color Music System! (Laughs) Nothing else like it has been done! I just lit up the sign. But those lights didn't blink at all (laughs)! (Stárek 2009b)

Paul Wilson periodizes this first phase of the group during this time of such stage

embellishments (blinking lights) and costume-wearing:

> I think that I joined the band just at the time when there was kind of transition from their first period - when they were legal and they had a license to play and were doing these big shows and a lot of songs that they had written themselves and some songs by the Velvet Underground [...]. (Qtd in Vellinger 2005: no page number)

At this point in time, the *Plastics's* musical goals were similar to other rock musicians at

the end of the 1960s in Czechoslovakia: to secure a professional performing status within

the socialist system (Machovec 2011: 222). Indeed, they won a national competition

(Beat Salon) of amateur bands (Reidel 2001 [1997]: 15) in 1969, which took place in

Music F Club. Here, in Music F Club during the Beat Salon competition, the *Plastics* first

met Ivan Jirous who was part of *The Primitive's* artistic team (Reidel 2001 [1997]: 15).

Participating and winning the Beat Salon prize led to sponsorship by one of the largest

booking agencies in Czechoslovakia at that time (Akord), which allowed them access to

state-owned instruments and equipment (Riedel 2001 [1997]: 15) as "Fender guitars,

Ludwig drums and Dynacord [microphones]." (Hrůza 1978 [1969]: 5). As a review in official press[44], "The Psychedelic Specter in New Hands", stated:

> Rock fans have already had a chance to see them this year at the Beat Salon in the Music F Club ["Efko"] and also the Cosmic Show in the Julius Fučik Park of Culture and Recreation […] these gigs won them a large number of fans […] after what now looks like the definitive break-up of the Primitives, the Plastic People have become the top Czechoslovak psychedelic band.

During this psychedelic period when the *Plastics*'s fan base burgeoned, they performed their *Universe Symphony* —a composition for one of each of the planets—at Manes[45] in 1969. It was described in the official press:[46]

> And it is over. The room slowly empties; outside it's an ordinary evening and the ordinary world that you have left three hours ago to visit another one, and now you return to your own. All that remains is the feeling of uncertainty, a feeling that always comes after an encounter with something that lies outside you. (Anon.[47] 1978 [1969]: 11)

Transformation of physical space became one of several stylistic performance devices that the *Plastics* and the Underground employed throughout the 1970s and can still be witnessed in contemporary Underground festivals. The musical experience begins to take on characteristics of "imaginative travel" or transport to another, removed psychosocial space (Fuente et al. 2012: 42), an "alternative mental world different from the world of those living in the establishment" (Jirous 1997: 248). In other words, music began to provide imaginary solutions to real problems.

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[44] Most likely this text is from the 1960s Czech music magazine "Pop Music Express" edited by Honza Hrůza who wrote the article. This quotation was taken from the booklet of the *Plastics*'s 1978 release "Egon Bondy's Happy Hearts Clubbed Banned" without any attribution to place of publishing
Translation unknown, likely to have been either Ivan Hartel or Paul Wilson.
[45] A reputable official art gallery in Prague, site of the Czechoslovak Surrealist Group's first exhibition in 1935.
[46] Of which newspaper is unclear as it was quoted in album booklet of *Egon Bondy's Happy Hearts Clubbed Banned* (1978).
[47] Quotation taken from "Egon Bondy's Happy Hearts Clubbed Banned" without any attribution to place of publishing. Translation unknown, likely to have been Hartel or Wilson. See footnote 44.

Moreover, the first phase of the *Plastics's* lyrics concerned a variety of 'magical' themes: from 16<sup>th</sup> century German magician Agrippa to Celtic myths of *The Mabinogion and the Mabinogi*, which the "common theme of these narratives [was] the relationship between the mundane and the magical worlds, the Self and the Other" (Jirous 1997: 246). These appropriations of text and imagery from diverse resources deployed through original compositions show how these early *Plastics*'s performances were not necessarily constructing a completely new cultural space of their own imagination (as we saw Knížák's efforts aimed at) but attempting to enter or craft a space that had clear continuity and relations to other imaginative spaces, which had come before or were happening contemporarily. Therefore the space was a way of placing themselves outside of local conditions. In doing so, the *Plastics* positioned themselves, via aesthetic material, not only in relation to past constructions of mythology (e.g., Agrippa, *Mabinogion*) but also with other performers of this time who were initiating similar transformations of reality through music, notably Sun Ra, Karlheinz Stockhausen, *Parliament Funkadelic*, and David Bowie's 'Ziggy Stardust'. Such musical practices foreshadow later developments in their use of music to 're-place' themselves (discussed in section 5.3). However, while these early concerts are indeed transformations of physical space and modes of perception, the physical spaces and actors participating inevitably return to the official reality and culture of communist Czechoslovakia thus the performances are a suspension of space rather than a removal from it or a rejection of the official cultural life.

While these early, reality-suspending psychedelic concerts became a point where people could come together to see and hear the *Plastics*, the crafting of the Underground cultural space also occurred via LP listening in microsocial situations, particularly to the

*Velvet Underground*. Wilson describes the significance of the *Velvet Underground* and

Andy Warhol for paving the way for social relationships:

> I know that Milan Hlavsa, who was a kind of guiding musical force behind the band [the Plastic People], was a big fan of the Velvet Underground and it was because the sound was there: this kind of dark throbbing sound that they were trying to create themselves. It was also because it was connected with Andy Warhol and that's where Ivan Jirous came in because he was an art critic and he was at that point very taken with the work of Warhol. The fact that Warhol had in effect a house band was something that attracted him. (Qtd in Vellinger 2005: no page number)

Milan Hlavsa describes his first listening experiences of the *Velvet Underground* and

locating the "dark, throbbing" sound that Wilson describes above:

> We learned about Captain Beefheart, the Fugs and Zappa from art historian Ivan Jirous, who had been the "art director" of the Primitives Group (precursors of the Plastic People), and later of the Plastics. The exposure to Velvet Underground was no less than fateful. It was some time in 1967, I was visiting a friend who was getting records from relatives abroad. The vogues of the day were Jimi Hendrix, the Rolling Stones, still the Beatles, and myself and my friend Števich were a little frustrated because it increasingly dawned on us that we were unlikely ever to attain those qualities and somehow we didn't care. We were almost decided to finish with the band we had at the time. Fortunately I visited that friend of mine then, and I played that record in his home, which I found there, and I was totally, absolutely in trance. It was exactly what I could not find in other groups, and nothing else. It was raw, clear, transparent. Of course I understand that others may be attracted by something else, but I was simply struck, and thanks to this encounter I did not throw my guitar into a dustbin. Almost no Western records were retailed in Czechoslovakia in the 1960's and 1970's, but people had friends and relatives abroad to ask for records, and these were copied on tapes and recopied endlessly. Exchanges developed later in the 1970's to swap, buy and sell vinyl records, so we weren't complete Neanderthals. The Velvet Underground stunned me so that the first numbers we as the newborn [Plastics] began to rehearse a year later were naturally [Velvet Underground]: almost all the songs from their first album, I think except the "European Son." Later, as more [Velvet Underground] albums appeared, we tried and rehearsed more of their songs and of course we also played our own numbers. As for Captain Beefheart, we heard them for the first time some time in late 1969 or early 1970, it was the Mirror Man album, and I liked it for its unsophisticated coarseness. But was something different, with more jazz elements and long ad-libs, which I didn't really enjoy, although a few years later the Plastics also had them in their stuff. Frank Zappa was quite well-known in Czechoslovakia at that time (perhaps thanks to his pervasive irony, which is the cornerstone of the Czech mentality), his album Freak Out was also excellent, but I didn't follow his later productions so keenly; I just remember Lumpy Gravy. I was more intent

on listening to Beefheart's later creations: Trout Mask Replica was excellent, and others, though none of these really appealed to me as much as Velvet Underground; I enjoyed the listening, but that's all I can say. (Qtd in Unterberger n.d.: no page number)

Hlavsa's description of the "raw, clear, transparent" sound of the *Velvet Underground*'s albums, in contrast to 'unattainable' (professional, polished) sounds of the Jimi Hendrix*, The Rolling Stones* and *The Beatles* indicate a critical holding form within the Underground cultural space: as will be addressed in forthcoming chapters, 'rawness', 'primitive', 'untuned', 'dirty', 'unsophisticated coarseness' (also all presaged above by Knížák's *AKTUAL*) become guiding aesthetic bases for articulations to social life.

Further, musical knowledge related to the *Velvet Underground* help lead the way for social interaction. For example, Undergrounder Ota "Alfréd" Michl describes his first encounter:

I know exactly the date I discovered the Underground: 7 August 1969. In a pub I met Henry Zeman, a classmate from high school who went with Paul Zeman, the drummer of Plastic People, there we would go and drink in the evening and listen to some music, they kind of forced me into the Underground, imposing their music, it was the Troggs, Rolling Stones, Kinks, Pretty Things, but it was very interesting. When he found out that I know Velvet Underground, it was my sort of my first contact. Otherwise, I knew a little about Androš [Undergrounders] even before, ever since the beginning of '69 since I was a founding member of the band the Blue Devils, we got second at Beat Salon, the Plastic People won, which is where I saw them for the first time. (Qtd in Drápal 2004: no page number)

Jirous also encountered the *Plastics* at the Beat Salon in 1969, as described above. Soon after he began to manage the group (since *The Primitives'* "definitive break-up"). Along with Jirous, his friends from the art academy began to mix with the *Plastics* at concerts, wherein we begin to see a modeling of a Warhol-*Velvet Underground* relationship: a group of artists with a 'house band'. These individuals around Jirous, particularly the artists Karel Nepraš, Jan Sagl, Zorka Saglová (Jirous's sister), Věra Jirousová (Jirous's

first wife), Olaf Hanel and Eugene Brikcius, as Machovec (2011: 224) states, "showed a deep understanding for the musical ambitions of the Plastic People." These art academy graduates had established an informal 'artists' group they called '*Křižovnická škola*' (Crusader's School) as Machovec (2006c: 21) notes:

> The *Křižovnická škola čištěného humoru bez vtipu* [The Crusaders School of Clean Humor without Jokes] [was] a loose group of artists of the 60s and early 1970s, of which Jirous was a member, named after the Prague pub "U Křižovniku", their meeting place.

Within these concerts, we witness the "art-into-pop" (Frith and Horne 1987) convergence: Knížák (already recognized Fluxus artist), Jirous (as then artistic team member of *The Primitives* and art historian) as well as Křižovnická škola artists. However, while Frith and Horne (1987) place an emphasis on the institution of the British art school for producing such a relationship between artists and pop music, within Czechoslovakia, we see a far more informal meeting of these worlds that converge in pubs and concerts. I address actor reconfiguration via such meetings in detail in the following chapter.

### 4.1.5 Summary

So far in this chapter, I have traced a broad non-official cultural space being furnished in Czechoslovakia throughout the 1960s by focusing on how musicking made available aesthetic resources. These furnishings occurred through diverse mediations: radio programming and educational series of rock'n'roll, proto-underground bands playing *BigBít* of Bill Haley and modeling a social-musical-political hub, Fluxus cultural material introducing 'broken' and 'raw' sounds, Western LPs as *The Fugs*, *Velvet Underground* and Frank Zappa circulating through import from aboard, imagery of hippies, experimental music, and Ginsberg translations. This furnished space allowed for people

to dip in to these resources, as evidenced by men growing their hair (e.g., *máničky* culture), tinkering with guitar sounds, becoming devotees of *BigBít* and psychedelic music (fans going to concerts, listening to LPs repeatedly, having knowledge of the *Velvet Underground*), "absorbing" Western cultural products, incorporating objects and fire into reality-suspending performances, learning music through imitation. Dipping in thus created clusters of people, materials and practices; in other words, an ecology.

Music, because of its non-delineation, became a significant factor as an ambiguous, indexical aesthetic base to which these clusters could orientate itself (e.g. the *Velvet Underground*) or to provide a contrast structure to other groups (e.g., not *The Rolling Stones*; not mainstream); the musical "non-meaning" provided a work space for homegrown modes of being and meaning-making ("did not flinch against the Bolsheviks") as well as new arenas of practice including emotional realities (e.g., non-familial kinship, as discussed in the following chapters). So far in the crafting of the Underground space, we have seen how the *Velvet Underground* was used as mediating device between people—Alfred 'going Underground' because of his knowledge of the group, Milan Hlavsa's and the *Plastics's* attempt to recreate the sound through imitation and Jirous's interest in the *Plastics* resonating as "being taken with" Warhol.

Moreover, in the sections above I have shown how these practices of furnishing and dipping in contributed to an "in between-ness" (i.e., liminality) of the cultural space: neither in Czechoslovakia nor in USA (Evžen Fiala declaring "we'll bring America here!"), neither in the 1960s nor in mythological places (the *Plastics's* 'Universe Symphony'), the transformation of physical space was accomplished by manipulated objects (Binny's electronic tinkering, pyrotechnics, togas), sounds (English-sounding

lyrics, rock rhythms, knock-off bands, dark and throbbing) and people (with long hair, Western fashion).

Figure 15 below visualizes the process of putting resources together through furnishing and dipping in. On the left side, we see the circulation of media, sounds, material objects and people. These materials are slowly assembled together simply through what feels natural (Hlavsa's "the *Velvet Underground* stunned me"), what goes with what (e.g., can't recreate *The Beatles*, but can imitate the *Velvet*'s sound). Furthermore, this 'what goes with what' was shown by examples of English sounding lyrics being "essential for" rock'n'roll (Jirous's description of the Prague *BigBít* scene); art school graduates mixing with musicians (Křižovnická škola "showing a deep understanding [for the *Plastics*'s musical ambitions"); everyday objects used as musical instruments (e.g., Knížák's *AKTUAL*, "I like rock without drums"); musical ensembles constituting a social hub (Čuňas's description of the proto-underground, "It was important for me"); long hair associated with fellowship (Čuňas being welcomed into a group of *máničky*).

**Figure 15 Aesthetic Assembly**



1) Tacitly Learned    2) Arranged    3) Understood
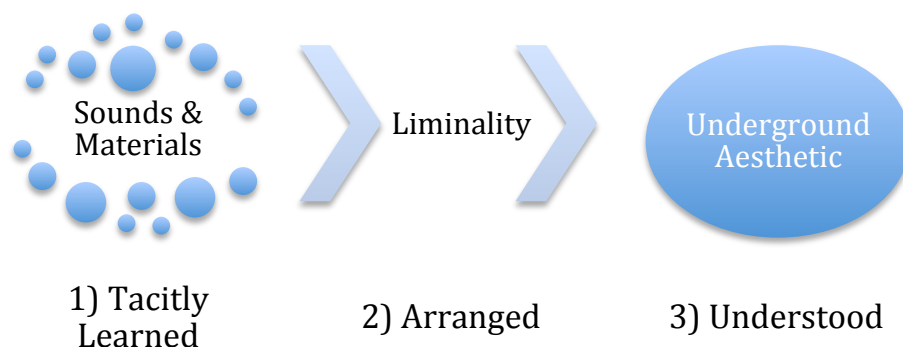
Over the following decades, these materials would come to be arranged in different ways through 1) furnishing a non-official cultural space, 2) combining these materials in new and innovative ways that make relations and conventions between them, 3) which produces an ever-clearer Underground aesthetic, as described in the following Chapters. This three-step assembly process into an aesthetic (represented by the arrows above) is the liminal stage of 'going Underground'. The arranged aesthetic material then paves the way for emergent practices and modes of being.

In the following section, I show how the post-Prague Spring regime helped to constrict these cultural resources of the non-official cultural space and thus aided in generating a clearer form of an emerging Underground aesthetic and its associated web of dispositions.

## 4.2 Czechoslovakia After the Warsaw Pact Invasion: Normalization and Music

Alexander Dubček replaced Novontý as head of the communist party on 5 January 1968 with his policy of "socialism with a human face" (Cashman 2010: 7). During the Prague Spring, the state began to relinquish its media control allowing for an increased level of autonomy in cultural production, evidenced by the decreased levels of censorship. Dubček's easing of censure was met with displeasure from Moscow, which was exhibited dramatically by the Warsaw Pact invasion in 1968, with Soviet troops occupying the country until 1990. In 1969, fellow Slovak Gustav Husák replaced Dubček as head of the communist party.

Crucial to understanding the Czechoslovak regime's policy toward popular music post-Warsaw Pact invasion of 1968 is the Moscow-approved policy of social and economic normalization installed under Husák's government. In an article in the newspaper *Rudé Právo* in 1970, Husák outlined his vision of normalization:

> A quiet life for people, upholding legality, the free development of society, favorable conditions for the development of economic activity, stability, social and existential certainty, a perspective for people so that they do not live from week to week, so that there will be no scares with supplies or the currency. It all creates conditions to live well and quietly, so that it is worth living. (Qtd in Williams 1997: 40)

After consolidating political institutional power in 1970, the Husák socialist state began the first political process of 'normalizing' Czechoslovak society, which lasted roughly until 1987[48]. "[Normalization's] aim [was] the reinstitution of the *status quo ante* and expiration of the liberalizing heresies of the Prague Spring 1968. Prominent among the measures of normalization has been the introduction of thorough censorship" (Ulč 1978: 26). Normalization was characterized not necessarily by overt political coercion but instead focused on extra-judicial socio-economic hardships, which aided in producing suppressive conditions where citizens retreated into a cultivated private sphere.

4.2.1 The Normalized Citizen

Writing in the early 1980s (therefore after the Czechoslovak population had been living under the regime's normalization policies for over a decade), dissident Milan Šimečka (1984: 144) questioned the absurdities and contradictions he saw in the country. Šimečka attributes the internal stability to the material conditions the state provided and citizens' adaption toward them—in short, increased freedoms in private life in exchange for public

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[48] Husák resigned from office in 1987.

support. Šimečka's description sheds light on a living condition within normalized Czechoslovakia by probing how the regime was able to remain stable even with these contradictions and absurdities in place:

> In this renewed order, the unsupervised private sphere is quite extensive. The State allows adapted citizens to do what they like with the money they more or less honestly acquire. They may build houses, chalets and cabins, and fit them out as they wish. They may buy cars and travel with them where they will. They may enjoy themselves as they like […]. In the privacy of their own homes, adaptees may spread gossip about political leaders, laugh at jokes, slander and insult the Republic… So long as they keep this for their private life and display their adapted faces in public, and so long as no spiteful person reports them, the State makes no attempt to save their adapted souls. The renewed order is happy to allow this safety valve since private anti-communism, like the proverbial dog's bark, will not reach celestial ears….With ferocity and impotence they avenge their public loss of face, their humiliation, their trepidation, their permanent state of fear, their own hypocrisy, and the lies they must listen and assent to, not to mention the minor acts of betrayal they have committed against themselves and often against their neighbor […]. The whole material basis of their existence binds them to their State, and any refusal could result in the loss of the only thing left to them: their private life. (Šimečka 1984: 144)

Šimečka's account of the official culture indicates how the extra-judicial conditions primed an environment where individuals could not 'be themselves', so to say, as a result of public-private tensions. In other words, adaptation within this ecology required an interruption of the self by conforming; Undergrounders and dissidents alike perceived such conforming practices as being 'bad for health'. Havel's 1975 open letter to the general secretary, *"Dear Dr. Husák"*, details how conforming to normalized official culture resulted in an unhealthy condition of public dispossession:

> Despair leads to apathy, apathy to conformity...The more completely one abandons any hope of general reform, any interest in suprapersonal goals and values, or any chance of exercising influence in an "outward" direction, the more his energy is diverted in the direction of least resistance, i.e., "inwards." People today are preoccupied far more with themselves, their families and their homes. It is there that they find rest, there that they can forget the world's folly and freely exercise their creative talents. They fill their homes with all kinds of appliances and pretty things, they try to improve their

accommodations, they try to make life pleasant for themselves, building cottages, looking after their cars, taking more interest in food and cloth and domestic comfort. In short, they turn their main attention to the material aspects of their private lives.

Clearly, this social orientation produces favorable economic results...In the interest of the smooth management of society, then, society's attention is deliberately diverted from itself, that is, from social concerns. By fixing a person's whole attention on his mere consumer interests, it is hoped to render him incapable of realizing the increasing extent to which he has been spiritually, politically and morally violated. (1991 [1975]: 58-59)

Havel most clearly distinguishes a mode of living within, as he puts it, a "post-totalitarian" society (1991 [1978]: 131) where the self has retreated to isolated, private spheres of interaction. This focus on "moral violation" and how to remedy, or immunize against, such personal infringement is extended in Chapter Five. Continuing this line of thought within his essay *"The Power of the Powerless"*, Havel (1991 [1978]: 132) uses a greengrocer as a typology of a normalized citizen, illuminating the subtle extra-judicial power of normalization policy on the citizens' thinking and feeling:

> The manager of a fruit-and-vegetable shop places in his window, among the onions and carrots, the slogan: Workers of the world unite! Why does he do this? [...] I think it can safely be assumed that the overwhelming majority of shopkeepers never think about the slogans they put in their windows, nor do they use them to express their own opinions. That poster was delivered to our greengrocer from the enterprise headquarters along with the onions and carrots. He put them all in the window simply because it has been done that way for years, because everyone does it, and because that is the way it has to be.

Here, the apparent lack of critical and independent thought of one's actions is what is gained by the state: according to Havel, normalization helped to produce conditions for individuals to disregard self-conflict (e.g., performing actions not based on belief or truth to self) in exchange for material goods, which is the essence of creatively and socially suppressive conditions within a so-called "post-totalitarian" regime. This momentum of regularity and action in consort with others around you is precisely opposite to Havel's

notion of non-political politics. Havel's non-politics envisioned a non-partisan society

governed by people's own civic duty and moral responsibility, which would appear

spontaneously and then be dissolved by citizens, as discussed further in section 5.4

(Tucker et al. 2001: 424-427; cf., Tucker 2000).

In addition to creating conditions for a population to widely retreat into the

private sphere or partake in consumer culture in exchange for civic freedoms, the

normalizing measures of Husák's regime involved regulating music and musicians. I

explore this form of suppression below in what I term 'creative constriction'.

### 4.2.2 Creative Constriction

'Creative constriction' conceptualizes the paradoxical situation where actual, or even

perceived suppression of certain aesthetic bases as a result of oppressive acts, assists in

generating a cultural space and creative response. In short, the concept refers to how

suppression can lead to expression. The level of 'creative constriction' in Czechoslovakia

can be illustrated when compared with other countries in the Bloc. For example, the

Hungarian regime's responses to rock music in the 1970s and 1980s were based around

strategies of a modified form of inclusion rather than division of official and non-official

musicians. This policy of the cultural leader of the communist party, Aczél György being

"I promote, I permit, I prohibit"[49], where many fell into the category of "permitted" (cf.,

Szemere 2001; Szőnyei 2005). Czechoslovakia's case, then, is one that is particular:

several forms of musical groups sprang up in a non-official musical world of the 1970s in

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[49] In a similar tone, there were divisions as such in Czechoslovakia, but not officially as in the Hungarian case. Instead, in Czechoslovakia there was "top floor" (official bands), "groundfloor" (bands who were trying to survive within the bureaucracy—the 'grey zone' as addressed in Chapter Six), and "Underground". (Ferenc 2008)

part thanks to normalization's constriction and its consciousness-spreading properties. These included jazz-rock musicians, alternative musicians, protest folk singers, and Underground musicians, each employing different ways and manners of intent on how to live and play within the normalization period and their degrees of rejection of the official culture. Suppression, as will be shown, is then part of the experiential conversion process of sensibility to disposition.

In normalized Czechoslovakia, the constriction of specific aesthetics occurred along two main points. Firstly, the Czechoslovak party-state focused on regulating the entire music industry infrastructure along with amateur musicking and hobby musical appreciation groups. At the center of these suppressive measures were 'requalification exams' for musicians, as discussed further in Chapter Five. These were tests taken every two years, which were required for all musicians who wanted to play publicly and officially. Additionally, Husák's government made efforts to curb the youth population's interest in Western music.[50] However, it was the exams' implementation in 1973 that served to divide the musicians along boundaries of official and non-official for the remainder of the communist era in the country.

Musician Mikoláš Chadima insists that, "it became increasingly clear that our rock scene was dividing in two directions. Official, presented, from a creative viewpoint, as dead and resigned profimusicians[51], and [non]-official, creative musicians, represented by a growing underground as well as isolated individuals" (qtd in Vaníček 1997: 61). Similarly, Jirous (2006 [1975]: 14) highlights the regime's constriction during

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[50] For example, Supraphon, the national recording label, halted or cancelled all music projects that contained too extreme of Anglo–American themes. Instead, they played and recorded brass band music.
[51] For-profit musicians

normalization resulting from the exams: "groups were forbidden to have repertoires sung in English, bands with English names were forced to change them[52] […]." Thus, one of the key aesthetics of the non-official space—English or English-sounding lyrics—were suppressed.

A second dimension of constriction was the closing of physical spaces. Jirous (2006 [1975]: 11) illustrates the importance of this period in Prague in mid-1970s Czechoslovakia for musical group formation by asking:

> How can people in Czechoslovakia today [1975] form bands with a decent chance of survival when there is no spontaneous musical milieu in which they can meet, compare notes, play together, or follow their own path while being guided by their own freely felt musical sense and above all by a feeling of kinship?

Similarly, according to Chadima, "rock'n'roll started to disappear from Prague because the clubs were being shut down one-by-one" (Ryback 1990: 141). The suppression was compounded between 1968 and 1974 as three thousand rock and jazz musicians were expelled from artistic agencies to which they needed to belong to work professionally (Ramet 1994: 59). Physical spaces as mediators of localizing Western music, as seen in the previous section, thus began to shift from clubs to increasingly private performances (see 4.4) and listening sessions (see 5.3).

By 1972, the regime had effectively installed normalization's cultural policy. While there was a concern for keeping a hold on popular music through requalification exams, noteworthy here, is the role classical music played for the regime, as is commented on in a Radio Free Europe report on cultural opposition:

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[52] For example, the band '*Blue Effect*' before the exams and the literal translation to Czech '*Modrý Efekt*' after the exams implementation.

As in the past, Czechoslovak music is a cultural asset. Czechoslovakia's musicians reap success throughout the world, and its orchestras and instrumental groups are highly respected in Europe. Music knows no ideological frontiers, and therefore the regime makes solid use of it for its foreign propaganda purposes. The culminating point of the many musical events in Czechoslovakia was the Prague Spring festival, which already is an established tradition. Well-earned attention was also paid to the Brno autumn Musical Festival in 1980. The Czech and Slovak ballets also have a good name. Kaiser drew attention to the guest performances of Italian ballet artists in Czechoslovakia, and the visits of the Amsterdam opera, the British modern ballet, and ballet groups from the United States and Japan. (Kratochvil 1980: 3)

The regime's use of classical musicians and orchestras (who were also subject to requalification exams) as a cultural export helps to clarify a facet of the presentation of the actor-nation state externally and thus as part of the face of a socialist nation. The quotation similarly points to areas of richness in the Czechoslovak official culture during this time. Even more so, as pointed out by the Ministry of culture: "Partisanship allows the musician for the first time in history not to worry about finances" (Kratochvil 1980: 3).

Similarly, the Radio Free Europe report continues to extoll the official cultural consumption possibilities within the 1970s:

It is possible to hear experimental music, as well as folk songs and country music, in the jazz clubs, and there are numerous discotheques which play Western, predominantly American, music. Some of these establishments are actually operated under the patronage of the Youth Association [SSM]. Here the young can engage in free discussion (often the main attraction), and in this respect they are no different from their Western counterparts. In practice, this means that Czechoslovak youth is in a position to provide to some extent its own antidote to the regime's propaganda. (Staff reporter 1974: 12)

The difference in descriptions of official culture by Chadima and Jirous above compared to the RFE report indicate that what the former were speaking about were specific scene closures. Thus the official culture is not to be ignored, particularly when considering populations of people who lived in the so-called 'gray zone' or who had adapted to

official life, as Šimečka described above. My point here is that while there was much criticism by dissidents and Undergrounders alike based on what they saw as "moral violation", there did exist opportunities for the "normalized citizen" to enjoy cultural life, particularly classical music.

However, while some music appreciators could take advantage of a rich official culture as a result of partisanship, opportunities for hearing psychedelic rock, or even Western cover bands were limited, if at all possible in Prague. But there were ways to get around this. Music fans were able to take advantage of a spatial, political, and social gaps: firstly, since much of the surveillance and concentration on controlling musicians was confined to Prague, a semi-secure space of performance opened outside of the capital city. Away from the panoptic gaze of institutions and police agents, musical performance began to occur increasingly in towns and villages of Czechoslovakia. Here, musicians, fans, poets, artists and like-minded individuals were able to gather and put on performances and thus hone, clarify and continue a cultural and social space that began formation in the 1960s, albeit increasingly non-officially and illegally. Secondly, the regime at this time, while focused on regulating the official musicians, also aimed at delimiting "the 'rightist opportunists of the Dubček period[53]" (Ulč 1978: 29) thus their attention was not on controlling the emerging non-official cultural space, but rather that of the official opposition and dissenters. Thirdly, the regime at this time "preferred non-participation to wrong participation of the young. A spirit of...*détente* developed" (Ulč 1978: 29) and thus allowed for youth, to attend these concerts and performances in

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[53] Most likely referring to the growing dissident movement involving former party members such as Ludvík Vaculík.

villages without the watchful regulation of the regime (until 1974's *Budějovická Masakr*, see 5.1).

### 4.2.3 Plastics without Fire: Phase II

Thus the constriction generated new performance opportunities that were based on coming together not in public arenas (e.g., Prague clubs, national competitions like the Beat Salon) but in semi-public performances. In 1970, the *Plastics* lost their official license to play (dropped by Akord booking agency) and therefore their equipment (e.g., Fender amps, Dynacord microphones) (Reidel 2001 [1997]: 16). Due to the loss of official license and club closures in the early 1970s, this burgeoning growth of semi-public performances were organized in apartments or ateliers, *hospody*[54] (pubs) and later on *baráky*[55] (farmhouses) through out the 1970s. For example, Jirous, who had studied as an art historian at Prague's Charles University, was able to obtain a license to organize art lectures, which then doubled as a site for concerts (e.g., a lecture of Andy Warhol's work was accompanied by a *Plastics*'s performance of *Velvet Underground* covers[56]).

These semi-public events set in motion a 'second phase' of the group's playing and signaled a step in community formation. Wilson helps to draw this second line of periodization within the group's history:

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[54] Other Prague pubs that served as places for Undergrounders to meet and gather were "Demínka, U paraplíček, U Glaubiců, U Malvaze, U dvou sluncŭ, U Krále Brabantského, U zpěváčkŭ, U Lojzy, Na čurandě, Na Klamovce." (Stárek and Kostúr 2010: 9)

[55] From the mid 1960s to the mid 1980s there were nearly thirty different Underground communes in Czechoslovakia as well as two outside of the country (in Austria and France as a result of forced emigration during the early 1980s). (cf., Stárek and Kostúr 2010)

[56] Bass player Milan Hlavsa's post-*Plastics* group Půlnoc later played at the Cartier Foundation in Paris for a post-mortem opening of Andy Warhol's works 15 June 1990. This coincided with the Lou Reed and John Cale reuniting the *Velvet Underground*.

I didn't join the Plastics until 1970 and there was no illusion at that point that there would be anything but an increase in censorship and an increase in pressure to conform. But, the real phase of illegality, going underground, was I think about 1972[57]. It began then. The last phase when we will still played 'openly' was when we were still playing private weddings but even that 'mask' fell off pretty quickly and from that point on it was just secret concerts out in the country. (Qtd in Vellinger 2005: no page number)

Similarly, "Hendrix" describes this 'second phase' following the Warsaw Pact invasion with increasing pressure:

I began to go to Malvazy, to the [pub U Dvou Slunci] in the Mala Strana and to Bony's and so, always something was being thought up and [the Plastic's business manager Krachtovil] broke with us because [it] wasn't show business any longer, you could risk your neck, and a multitude of snoopers and informers began to spawn and I got to know more and more new people and poets and various artists, the Křižovnická škola an Pet'ak and Koch. Magor [Jirous] dragged us to Ječná street where the Němec family lived [Jiří Němec and Dana Němcová], they had nine children and their old man gave home seminars, and Maxer the potter, he made lots of 'maxeraks' (jugs) and so we went for [beer] and it all began to close in again. Perhaps that last permitted concert by the Plastics People in Prague was in come CKD factory club and Kvasnak caught a live carp there and I helped him and Egon Bondy was there and I heard Hlavsa, Jernek, Zeman-Eman, Janíček, and the guitarist from Silk Street play for the last time and sing the Universe symphony. (Svoboda 2005: 86-88)

This mixing of musicians, artists and poets in Prague apartments is echoed by Wilson's entrance into the Underground space in 1970, again centered on the *Velvet Underground*:

I met the band through Ivan Jirous when he invited me to a party at his place and band members were there and we sat around talking about music and playing and listening to the Fugs and the Velvet Underground. And, a little while later Jirous got this crazy idea of inviting me to the band as a singer! Not that I have a great voice and I'm certainly not a great guitarist, but I could strum the guitar and I was also useful for transcribing the lyrics of Velvet Underground songs from this scratchy old tape that they had [….] (qtd in Vellinger 2005: no page number)

Wilson's description of how he was invited into the group, along with "Hendrix"'s quotation of the *Plastics'*s shift from "show business", evidences Jirous's increasingly

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[57] Wilson's placement of this date is challenged in other documentation of the group. For example, Jaroslav Reidel (1997: unmarked page) has described how "hundreds of people" were still coming to shows well into 1973. Not until after an event in 1974 (*Budějovická Masakr*) did the Underground change to invitation-only events and "put an end to this stage in the band's history."

artistic role in the group as crafting the aesthetic, even if by just putting together

musicians with common musical references such as *The Fugs* and the *Velvet*

*Underground*. Furthermore, Machovec has described this increasing role of Jirous and

Křižovnická škola artists as the "art innovation" in the *Plastics*'s otherwise "traditionally

conceived psychedelic sound" (2011: 223-224).
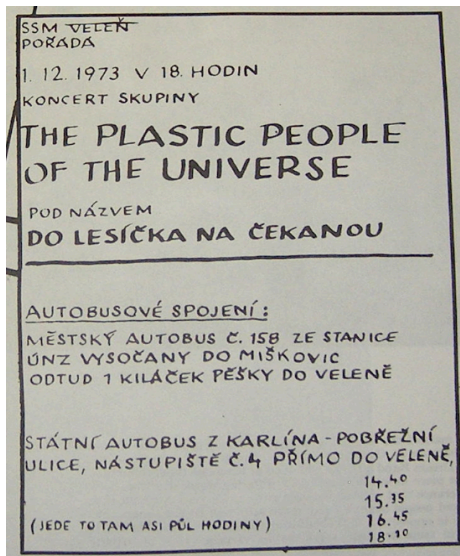


**Figure 16 Plastic People concert flyer (1973)**

During this 'second phase', the *Plastics* played what Jirous called "onomatopoeia English" (Bierhanzl 2011b), meaning only the sound of English phonemes and articulation without any semantic content. Critically, it was the sound that contributed to the "instinctive and emotionally" understood mode of being, which Čuňas echoed when describing listening to foreign

broadcasts in the 1960s: "We didn't understand what we they were saying, but we felt it!"

(Stárek 2008). Similarly Frith (1988: 120) has argued that "songs are more like plays than

poems; songs work as speech and speech acts, bearing meaning not just semantically, but

also as structure of sound that are direct signs of emotion and markers of character." In

this way, not being able to understand the given meanings within lyrical content afforded

an emotional orientation that was ambiguous enough for a diverse yet increasingly

distinct group of people to invest in, understand, and come to know it as 'underground'.

The song "My Guitar" exemplifies such "onomatopoeia English". Composed by Milan Hlavsa and performed at the 1 December 1973 concert[58] of the *Plastic People*, called "*Do Lesíčka na Čekanou*[59]", indicates how these semi-public performances were able to be organized and still accommodate a large audience during this second phase. Figure 16, above, illustrates a poster for the concert, showing a bus timetable, connections and departure point from Prague, complete with walking directions to the performance.

This same year the *Plastics* took requalification exams once again on 6 May 1973 where they received professional status, which was subsequently revoked two weeks later. The last time they took the exams during this phase of semi-public performances was on 11 November 1975 when they attempted to gain 'amateur' status. However this failed as well (Reidel 2001 [1997]: 18-19).

From these early means of 'getting around' the state's music culture during the first few years of the 1970s, an Underground event-centered organizational culture began to take shape. Such organizational measures of action helped set the "arena" of action for how to reject/how to commune and make possible Underground activity, albeit still as a core group around the *Plastics* (Jirous, Křižovnická škola associated artists and poets along with some other bands) and a more scattered audience. Police lieutenant Jiří Šimák (1984: 36) corroborates the group culture that started to take form at these concerts:

> After consolidation process [1970], the criteria became stricter for the bands to perform which led them to be 'destroyed'. These bands started to realize themselves illegally. These groups performed as the opening band or they performed during the breaks. Since

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[58] Recorded by Pavel Prokeš on a Tesla B 56 reel-to-reel recorder, recently mastered and released by Guerilla Records 2006.
[59] "To the woods to wait", referring to hunting but also to young lovers going into the forest for privacy.

they had nothing to lose, they played special shows, which were positively accepted by their supporters. In these cases, there were a lot of vulgar actions, rude behavior.

In addition to being "positive" experiences with a developing set of behaviors, these semi-public performance entailed the act of seeking out and travelling as a form of 'togetherness': with whom do you go, word-of-mouth networks of fans. In other words, the groups at these concerts were not popping in off the street into a venue; there was an enthusiasm of getting together. Indeed, the journey—a further form of liminality—became key in mild forms of isolation as protection from dis-ease. The distance it now took to travel to concerts was  "the mood that was later described as 'going to the mountains'" (Jirous 2006 [1975]: 15). As Jirous describes:

> When playing in Ledeč nad Sázavou in the winter of 1971, it was already clear to people that [The Plastics] was an important rock group that proved one could survive without making compromises. Dozens of people came to Ledeč from Prague, Karlovy Vary and other cities. The mood that was later described as "going to the mountains" began to take shape. When [bassist of The Plastic People] Milan Hlavsa saw all the people in Ledeč who hitch-hiked or travelled long distances by car, train or bus to hear the Plastic People performing, he made a memorable statement: "We couldn't just shit on these people even if we wanted to. What kind of entertainment would they have left if we would have done so?

Here we see creative constriction in action: people who had up to this point been dipping in to a cultural space were brought together during 'Phase two' concerts of the *Plastics*. This occurred, in part, through an elimination of a plethora of bands in Czechoslovakia, which had made available cultural repertoires in the 1960s, along with the closing of the physical spaces that had helped mediate those available aesthetic bases. Namely, suppressing the conditions for such widely available music performances as in the 1960s distilled the concertgoers into a clearer group of people in the 1970s.

Hlavsa's quotation nearly pinpoints the emotional realization of, and commitment to, a community. From this emotional level it is possible to see an early articulation of the Underground community being located via the suppression of certain aesthetics and non-official practices. Concerts like those described above (Warhol Homage, "*Do Lesíčka na Čekanou*", Ledeč nad Sázavou) were not yet explicitly formulated in terms of collective identity but rather these events helped configure an emotional sensibility derived from resources and situational contexts. That is, these were the aesthetic and emotional foundations upon which community activity was built, the inside of disposition formation.

By way of such governmental suppression of the conditions of performing (e.g., access to equipment, authorization to play, to write English lyrics), the Underground cultural space and its furnishings (e.g., "rawness", *AKTUAL* aesthetic domain) became clearer, in part in contrast to unattainable sounds (e.g., not *The Rolling Stones*/*The Beatles*, no professional equipment). This meant a break from the psychedelic musical past by way of aesthetic rearrangement, which in turn corresponded to a cognitive rearrangement. Jirous explained this rearrangement to Hlavsa as "bez ohňů je Underground"[60], meaning, "the Underground is without fire" (Hlavsa and Pelc 2001: 15). The Underground is thus described in contrast to the late 1960s psychedelic underground's (e.g., *The Primitives* and early the *Plastics*, phase one) stage performances that incorporated pyrotechnic props; the absence of such objects illustrates what was newly understood about 'underground' in 1970s Czechoslovakia: a group of people coming together who did not want to compromise their emerging cultural space, this

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[60] Title of a book of memoirs by Hlavsa with Jan Pelc (2001 [1992]).

space being something continuing on from the 1960s but qualitatively different when under suppression. "Hendrix" explains this coming together during the second phase:

> Other bands began to emerge—Dino founded Umělá Hmota in Podolí […], Doktor Prostěradlo Band and the Aktuals. Knížák came back form America and set it going again. He bought a house in Klíčov[61] where they practiced and there was a concert in the next village, Kočov. I got to Zajíček and Čeleda and with Mejla we began to make DG-307. (Svoboda 2005: 88)

Furthermore, the concerts above, while just a handful of the many that occurred throughout this second phase, serve as points after creative constriction where people are coming together not as part of a psychedelic music scene but a form of a communal space with an ethos. This is highlighted by Hlavsa's quotation above ("We couldn't just shit on these people"), which signaled this shift from attempting to conform to the regime's musical standards but rather to a musical commitment toward a distinct group of people.

### 4.2.4 Clusters Coming Together

Up to here, I have shown how during these early years of normalization, a second phase of the *Plastics* started. In contrast to the first phase, where they had an official license and were playing official concerts, now the *Plastics* were playing to smaller groups at organized, semi-public concerts outside of Prague. To illustrate how the non-official cultural space was not only a Prague-based phenomenon, Čuňas drew a map showing key Underground towns and villages. Additionally, Figure 17 below helps to show the geographically dispersed nature of the Underground rather than only a small community of individuals situated in the capital.

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[61] Knížák's house in Klíčov was one of first commune-houses (*baráky*) spaces associated with the Underground. (Stárek and Kostúr 2010: 14-20)
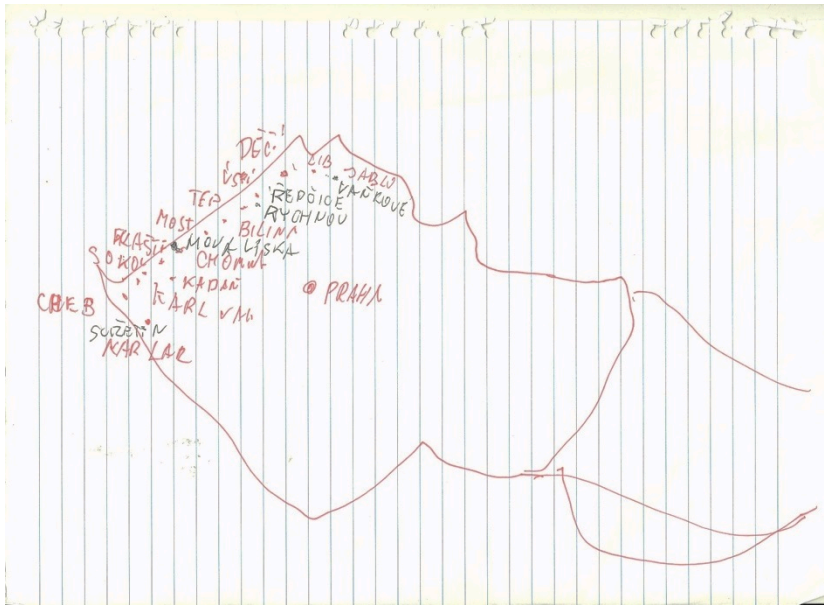
**Figure 17 Hand drawn map of Underground populated villages**

To complement this map, Čuňas then drew a Venn diagram illustration to show how

*máničky* in these towns overlapped with Undergrounders coming from Prague. The

diagram (Figure 18) below shows a mixing of groups that came to make up the

Underground: the *máničky* and the '*Androši*' (Czech slang for 'Undergrounder'), who

were indicative of Křižovnická škola artists and others who had gather around the

*Plastics* in Prague apartments during the first-to-second phases of the group (as "Hendrix"

describes above). Čuňas placed himself in the middle. According to Čuňas, "not all

máničky were Androši, not all Androši were máničky" (Stárek 2009c).
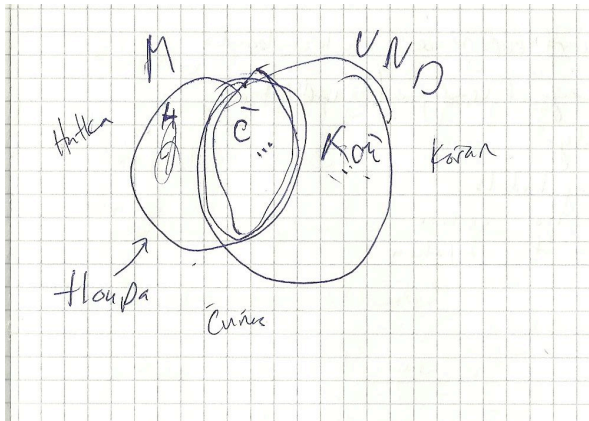
**Figure 18 Diagram of *máničky* and *Androši***

The diagram helps clarify further this particular period—early 1970s—and how the

Underground began coming together by a shared lifestyle pieced together from diverse,

available resources. As Čuňas went on to explain, between these groups, there were

"boundaries like air" (2009c), indicating to what extent these previous separate clusters

of people came to be bonded. Moreover, the diagram above helps to point out an opening

up of the Underground space by pinpointing what (*máničky*) can go with what (*Androši*)

and how suppressed aesthetic bases can aid in arranging diverse groupings.

The converging of these groups into what is the Underground was further

underlined while viewing a digitalized home video of a 1972 concert in the *Plastics'*s

rehearsal space in a Prague cellar. The video was viewed with Ivan Bierhanzl, who

explained to me the significance of the performance: "This is the first concert where

[saxophonist Vratislav] Brabenec played with the *Plastic People*. He insisted that he did

not want to play any "cover" music, only original material" (2011b). The video shows a

raucous performance in a cellar, with beer, dancing and music. There were approximately

forty people, as I could observe. As we watched I asked Bierhanzl who some of the

people were, from where he pointed out poets and sculptors or "Jirous' group" (i.e.,

Křižovnická škola) and *máničky*. "These two dancing here, it is Paul Wilson and the poet

Kořán" (Bierhanzl 2011b). Thus the video helped to show disparate groups, with

noticeably different levels of inebriation and comfort in dancing, coming together

through musicking calibrated by the private physical space of a cellar (itself being

underground).

### 4.2.5 Rough, Rude, Raw: Total Realism

Čuňas hand-drawn map above shows a concentration of 'long-hairs' in the Northwest

region. This region was one of the most industrial regions of Czechoslovakia, also being

the 'Sudetenland'. Following World War II, Edvard Beneš[62], with a presidential decree,

"deprived Germans of Czechoslovak citizenship, confiscated their property and legalized

their expulsion" (Myant 2010: 56-57). Because of this clearance, empty buildings and

houses were left behind while brown coal industry began to grow. Within a communist

government, employment was mandatory, however many long-haired Undergrounders

could often find work only as manual laborers, thus this area also served as place for

employment.

Representations of manual labor come up in Underground poetry as well as

associated sounds in Underground music (as presaged by Knížák's ensemble *AKTUAL*

using non-musical items such as saws). For example, a poem titled "*A Worker's Day*"

from an Undergrounder, Skalák, exhibits how the 'worker' routine entered Underground

aesthetics:

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[62] Second president of Czechoslovakia, 1945-1948.

At four o'clock the alarm clock jangles
And it's time to rise and shine
We want to get to the punch-clock
Before there's too big a crowd
Be the first to get to out lathes
(And go have a crap
and go have a crap)
Read the morning papers on the john
Take a look at the cultural news
Swallow a hunk of sausage
Then nip back to the lathe
Swallow a hunk of sausage
Then nip back to the lathe
The lathe's my one and only love
I love my lathe
Each day before tea break
I grind out a couple of rejects
Then with gunk
I scrub my hands
Eat a crust of bread
Have a bit of horsemeat salami
Drink four beers
To make the wheels go round
The foreman yells at me
To tell me the break's over
I love my lathe
Each day after the tea break
I grind out a couple of rejects
Then with gunk
I scrub my work-soiled hands
Punch out at two-thirty on the dot
Then grab the tram
Get outside the housing estate
Pour down a few beers
Then throw up in the lift
Of my council high-rise
And so I'm home again
Welcome me back, family
And you little buggers go out and play
Take your clothes off, old girl
No time to fuck about
After the TV news
I have to get to bed early
The alarm clock jangles at four o'clock

> And I have to get up for work.
> I feel like shitting on it…(Skalický 1978; trans Wilson)

The poem calls attention not only to an expression of lifestyle, but to how themes in the poem—what could be considered rough and coarse—came to be grouped together as an aesthetic that featured a biological realism, most notably shown above by defecation ("Have a crap", "Read the morning papers on the john"), vomiting ("throw up in the lift") and sex ("take your clothes off old girl"). This biological realism corresponded to a level of intensity in Underground activity that can be called "doing it to the max", which I will discuss in section 4.3.2. Firstly, however, I further explore the theme of biological realism by discussing the stylistic resource "Total Realism."

While researching the Underground, a commonly mentioned name along with Ivan Jirous and the *Plastics* is Egon Bondy. Specifically, his poetry came to be used by the *Plastics* in the early 1970s after they began to shift from English lyrics to Czech (Hlavsa composing music to Bondy's poems, see section 5.2.1), from emotionally understood instincts to cognitive articulation. Bondy's poetry was more than appropriation for lyrical means but is also central in situating the core building blocks of the Underground aesthetic and how, as Eyerman (2006: 16-18) puts it, this aesthetic became an experiential place to both reflect and respond to the world, as illustrated by the poem *A Worker's Day*.

In the early 1950s Bondy helped to form a group of authors, *Půlnoční autoři*[63]. Practicing an aesthetic of writing and living, the group did not practice a 'poetry of life' as the official Socialist Realism, but rather a 'poetry of embarrassment' (*trapná poezie)*

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[63] "Midnight Authors" (Machovec 2001: 159). Bohumil Hrabal, Ivo Vodseďálek and Egon Bondy were among its members.

or 'Total Realism' (*totalní realismus)* (Machovec 2006b; Bondy 2006 [1990]: 53). At that time, Socialist Realism was the driving force behind official artistic production in Czechoslovakia. Klement Gottwald[64], the First Party Secretary of the Communist Party, delivered a speech in 1948 which outlined the new role of artist in Czechoslovakia, stating that artists (and intellectuals) were no longer bound servants to capitalists and elite groups, but that they would now be "obliged to make their work accessible to all people, and to propagate communism through their work" (Svašek 1996: 34). This newly installed artistic form, Socialist Realism, followed from Stalin's depiction of the artist as "the engineer of the human soul", which sought to change the "selfish capitalist" to a "selfless socialist man" by combining "the theories of Pavlov with the dictates of Lenin" (Ryback 1990: 8).

Thus the new mandate of the official artist was informed by the Socialist Realist method, which was laid out clearly in the magazine *The Visual Arts* (*Výtvarné Umění)* as

> not wanting some kind of banality, grey, and spiritless objectivity, but on the contrary, it wants movement, color, and the reality of objects, [….] Socialist Realism does not want to renounce […] the poetry of reality, the poetry of life; it wants a true, more beautiful, more attractive poetry (Jícha 1951:1 qtd in Svašek 1996: 43).

The communist state supported the blind ardor and revolutionary zeal of Socialist Realism and identifies the beginning of regime control over aesthetics that would ensue for the next forty years until the late 1980s by forthcoming politicians and cultural policy in Czechoslovakia.

Contrary to representations within Socialist Realism, *Půlnoční autoři's* 'way of living' was based of "theft, vagabondage, begging, and anti-social activities of any kind"

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[64] President of Czechoslovakia 1948-1953

(Bondy 2006 [1990]: 55). In a lecture given in New York City in 1990 at Columbia

University, Bondy (2006 [1990]: 57) described the aesthetic way of life.

> The aesthetics of embarrassing poetry and total realism anticipated the aesthetics and artistic creativity of pop art and hyperrealism. We achieved, in theory, as well as in practice, the point when banality as an aesthetic category begins to overlap [monstrosity] as an aesthetic category—with the categories of the absurd and scurrilous standing in between. [*Půlnoční autoři*] employ the aggressiveness of the trivial, which in Czechoslovakia 1949-1953 consisted of omnipresent Stalinist fetish and slogans.[65]

Total Realism in the early 1950s attempted to take advantage of "Stalinist slogans" and

"emulate Stalinist aesthetics" in purposefully unsuccessful embarrassment (Bondy 2006

[1990]: 53-4). This intentional unsuccessful embarrassment of Total Realism was

grounded in embodied practices of vagabondage, senility, dementia, defecation,

intercourse, idiocy, and further somatic experiences in order to point out the perceived

false presentation of life that Socialist Realism depicted and, in turn, point to people's

biological experiences of the body, as a form of 'truthfulness'. Jirous (2006 [1975]: 19)

underlines Bondy's use of the body as a truth-claim:

> Bondy is a poet who deals with the most basic and profound aspects of man, from his dimensions as a social creature to his imperfect and vulnerable private biological being…there is hardly a single taboo that is not overturned in Bondy's poetry; but this is never done as an end in itself or as deliberate provocation: it is merely a simple expression of the truth of life and the position of a man in the world.

Bondy's biological imperfection is exemplified by the poem *Zápca* (Constipation), that

later came to be used by the *Plastics* in a song of the same name:

> Oh how plagued and tormented am I
> by constipation terribly kind but sly
> In my belly a hard stone turns
> in my bladder a flame burns

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[65] This literary trend can be traced further back in Czech history to Jaroslav Hašek (cf., Sayer 1998: 159) and even to the fool/jester, the 'mask of the idiot', in medieval Bohemia (Machovec 2008).

My bowels are rotting I sense
or like a lump of dung they're dense
From my lips gases exude
and thick liquids at times are spewed
Oh how plagued and tormented am I
by constipation terribly kind but sly (Riedel 1997; translation Tomin)

Here is where we begin to see two moments of how Total Realism came to furnish the Underground space: firstly, *Půlnoční autoři*'s use of the regime to gauge a way to live (e.g., rejection of official Stalinist society, or, rather what to reject) and how to use the body as a point of aesthetic knowing in doing so (e.g., embracing potentially embarrassing biological moments such as constipation), thus setting up an aesthetic model for the 1970s Underground. While *Půlnoční autoři* rejected the regime, they built upon it precisely by this aesthetic knowledge of the body and social activity of rejection. As a second aesthetic precursor, *Půlnoční autoři* distributed their work non-officially through the self-publishing of texts (samizdat) helping to establish an alternative cultural infrastructure (albeit within a small circle of friends), thus shaping an understanding of 'what it means to be creative' and therefore what it means to have aesthetic agency in the Underground.

Machovec (2006b: 10) describes literary themes of Underground written works that consist of a rough, rude and raw style, which also resonated with a recurrent collective behavior in much of my field observation of the Underground. These themes within Underground poetry and literature from the 1950s into the 1970s and 1980s include:

> Nihilistic trends; apocalyptic visions and prophetic standpoints; frequent blasphemies going hand in hand with religious similes and parables; trends, renouncing taboo of all kinds, frequent use of vulgarisms; primitivist, primitive-like verses and rhymes,

barbarisms, "anti-poetic devices"; politically explicit texts; frequent evidence of a great sense of humor, of self-irony ("black" humor); frequent expressions of a writer [or] poet belonging to the community of the doomed, despised, socially marginalized people; feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, going hand in hand with paradoxical, absurd enthusiasm; literature in the "rough style", "raw material", taking advantage of, and at the same time suffering from the relative lack of a feedback.

Total Realism in this sense provides a scaffolding device for new forms of emotional expression, showing new attitudes, stances and ways of speaking, while also helping to sensitize Undergrounders' consciousness through affective content. In an interview, poet/musician Pavel Zajíček indicated how the Underground cultural space, furnished with such 'raw' and 'primitive' material, opens up possibilities for imagination and experimentation by allowing for the 'trying out' aesthetic forms:

TH: I can't write poetry.

PZ: Everybody can write poetry. Yeah, there are schools that try to teach 'how to write', 'how to be this or that', and in my opinion it is very bad but people have to fill there time somehow. But I'm not a part of that, you know.

TH: How did you begin to write poetry?

PZ: How does…[laughing]? Someone starts to try some things and starts to feel some things about it and then life goes on. Everybody writes. The question in me is how do people try to present themselves. I think there are many great writers, many great poets. There are many shitty poets. There are many shitty writers. It's very hard; the world is changing all the time, even for your generation. It is good to keep this very primitive, do those things what you believe in. (Zajíček 2009)

Zajíček's assertion to keep things "primitive" in order to cope with a "changing world" helps to show how such aesthetic forms as Total Realism—based in 'primitiveness' and 'rawness'—can also be used as a way to 'get by' in 'hard times'; in this sense, a layer of insulation in self-protection. Furthermore, Zajíček goes onto explain how the aesthetic material of 'rawness', as was also described by Hlavsa in *Velvet Underground*'s music, helped prime collaboration in forming another core Underground band, *DG-307*:

PZ: The beginning of DG was partly based on the musician part of Milan Hlavsa and the non-musical part of me. Because everything [back] then—because nothing was discovered—was possible. Nothing was possible to live, but everything was possible to do, to realize. I was never into technical things. I was into things that were raw. Because there was just a 'rawness' that was possible. You can find 'rawness' in those things that are here now too. It is my opinion, or my searching and my hope, that music can be totally destroyed without being destroyed. To 'be', to state the music. (Zajíček 2009)

'Rawness' and 'primitiveness' were readily available aesthetic resources ("that was all that was possible") illustrated in Bondy's poetry and Zajíček's approach to creating music that allowed for other things to be possible: embracing biological realism as a form of performing universal self-truths; keeping things primitive to allow for "doing things you believe in". These aesthetic sensibilities, then, came to be linked with modes of doing the self.

Such sensibilities as 'rawness' can also be seen in visual evidence from the 1970s and 1980s as well as in contemporary Underground situations. For example, at a Bondy commemoration gathering in a pub in 2009, there were people reading Bondy's poems over a loud polyphony of thirty to forty Undergrounders. Sometimes this ended in poems being forgotten in the middle of recitation and the reciter simply walking away from the microphone without any regard from the audience. Importantly, there was no indication of any embarrassment or feedback from the audience, consistent with the early Bondy poetry from the1950s. In this we begin to get a feel of how Total Realism became a mediating aesthetic for Underground life. To take excerpts from my fieldnotes:

The UGB [Underground Birthday Party 2009, see Figure 3] is…"*hrubý*" [rude], but not in way that provokes. More like people who feel completely comfortable with each other and do what you wouldn't normally think is 'appropriate' in public. So, different set of conventions more or less. Everyone seems to be yelling, hygiene doesn't seem to be such a concern, maximum levels of inebriation are almost expected. Even on stage. Tonight some guy just walked on to stage and started yelling into the microphone (I couldn't

understand). The band kept playing. Everyone is polite though—or I guess friendly is a better word.

At the Underground gathering U Skaláka in 2010:

> Men and women kind of let it all hang out. Lots of people with shirts off or open—comfort is a priority. They don't even seem to mind being filmed [by 'outsiders'] this way. Nudity is not eye-catching but just kind of normal. I have a slight discomfort—but that is also because I'm not here to let go but to work. After a few days, things are getting dirty, even Skalák called in some locals to help clean up trash. [The trash was] mainly because of the youngsters, he said.

While it is difficult to pinpoint if Bondy's poems from the 1950s are still a guiding aesthetic of the contemporary Underground space, it was clear from my participant observation that embarrassment in the sense of physical presentation had little social consequence. In other words, there is a way of carrying oneself where everyday 'faults' are turned into positives virtues of existence, being oneself in a 'make do' way as "that was all that was possible". Here we see an aesthetic calibration of action that can best be seen through a sensitizing comment Čuňas wrote to me in an email: "You know, we Undergrounders do everything to the max."

### 4.2.6 Doing it to the Max

"Doing it to the max" corresponds to what I observed to be the highest level of intensity of aesthetically mediated activity in the incremental becoming of an Undergrounder. In other words, the further one dips in to the Underground space, the more "to the max" one goes. This was exhibited in three manners: *commitment, body, and technical*.

Firstly, "doing it to the max" has been highlighted by an Undergrounder's (Honza 2009) description of "*tvrdý*" (hard) and "*měkký*" (weak) Undergrounders: in the late 1980s post-perestroika, activity that was normally done completely in the Underground

(e.g., performances or even contact with the regime) began to mingle with official activity. Those who continued to "do it to the max" within the Underground were "*tvrdý*"; those who mixed were "*měkký*", according to Honza (2009) (see 6.1 about 'non-compromising artists). Or, for example, "*měkký*" referred to, during the second phase of the *Plastics*, people who dropped out of the *Plastics* because of suppressing conditions (e.g., Kratochivl leaving because it wasn't "show business")—in other words, people who were not committed to an Underground way of life.

Secondly, "doing it to the max" refers to technical activity such as producing as much samizdat as a possible as well as how far one would reject the regime. During an email conversation about Čuňas' work as editor of *Vokno*, I asked how many copies they would normally distribute. He replied that the maximum amount possible with the particular duplication machine they had.

Lastly, "doing it to the max" refers to the body: growing one's hair as long as possible, activity like "drink-barf-live-drink"[66], volume of voice (e.g., Čuňas bellowing inside an archive, see 3.2.2), raucousness of pub concerts and nudity. Wearing the body as such helps Undergrounders, *feel* more Underground (Acord and DeNora 2008: 229). In other words, keeping the body together through the 'doing' of the body as such was one activity that kept the community together (Mol and Law 2004: 1). This doing of the body served to differentiate the Underground from others, as Knížák (2009a) called them "a bunch of drunk idiots" and another Slovak sound artist, Michal Murian (2009), referred

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[66] From Pavel Zajíček's poem "Anti" performed 1973 at concert "Do lesíčka na čekanou" (Jirous 2006 [1975]: 20).

to the Underground as being "too dirty for me". Knížák stated his dislike of such

behavior:

> These people are getting together and then nothing for me, being together should be with dignity, a higher up feeling [not] just in a pub to be together and get drunk. In my 20s yeah, but now? These people were into special stuff, they were unimportant and wanted to be visible, very simple means I didn't want to be busted for something stupid. I wanted it for my opinions not for calling someone bald while drunk. (Knížák 2009a)

Importantly, from my participant observation, "doing it to the max" most often occurred

in psycho-geographical secure spaces such as organized events and concerts, evidencing

how the physical arrangement of a space, a group of people and music aids in collective

action (e.g., polyphonic boisterousness at events). While this was observed in

contemporary data, it also appeared in home videos from the 1970s (like the one



described above in the *Plastics*'s rehearsal space). Figure 19 shows Jirous and Čuňas during a sing-a-long at a commemoration to Milan Hlavsa's music at a pub in Prague in 2011.

Figure 19 Milan Hlavsa commemoration (Jirous, Čuňas 2011)

To underline the point above: by setting up secure boundaries of events (e.g., semi-public

events far outside Prague and away from the police, private spaces, live Underground

bands), Undergrounders were better able to "do it to the max" given the relative safety of

physical space as a result of meticulous planning. In other words, a highly organized set

up of listening allowed Undergrounders to 'let go' and be spontaneous in a (relatively)

safe environment. Such a set up of the musical experience begins to show how "effective

resistance" (Hennion 2001: 12) worked wherein Undergrounders actively configured the listening space in order to let the musicking take over and mediate action (e.g., doing it to the max).

However, it was also possible to witness such doing of the Underground body outside of an organized physical space, evidencing how aesthetics configure the body. An Undergrounder's long hair being an obvious sign of commitment wherever one would be. A further example, when returning to the Archive of the State Police in Prague after lunch with Čuňas, a colleague and I were waiting for the elevator to return to his office. His colleague pointed out to Čuňas that he had some food on his shirt. Laughing, Čuňas stuck out his hand to the colleague "Hello, I'm Piggy"[67]. Even within the site of a state institution such as the Archive of State Police, Čuňas still carried himself within this 'embarrassing' aesthetic of Total Realism as a way of 'being' himself.

### 4.2.7 Summary

Section 4.2 above has described 'Underground beginnings', roughly between the years of 1970 and 1974, shown by three points: firstly, groups coming together via suppressed aesthetic bases as shown by Čuňas's diagram in Figure 18; secondly, how aesthetic parameters of 'rough, raw, rude' and appropriated resources, such as Total Realism, began to mediate the body, action and what was considered to be aesthetic material (e.g., biological realism); and thirdly, "doing it to the max" became a way to perform the embodied aesthetic of the Underground (e.g., commitment, long hair, inebriation, doing work in the Underground). Further, I briefly considered semi-public events in two

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[67] "Ahoj, já jsem Čuňas", Čuňas means "piggy" but is also an affirmation of who he is.

manners: the organizing of such concerts was at once an adaptation to the new political

conditions while also helping to build a new ecology of places (e.g., rural areas, venues

outside of Prague, 'safe' apartments in Prague, like the Němec's on Ječná street[68]),

people (e.g., Čuňas diagram of *máničky* and *Androši*), and a more defined aesthetic ('raw'

and 'primitive' in body, behavior and music along with, as Machovec defines, "art

innovation"). In turn, this newly shaping ecology provided a condition for secure spaces

for the doing of Underground activity, which signaled a rising Underground

consciousness (seeking out concerts, committing to the space) as a distinct cultural space

for performing the self and doing the body. I return to this point of isolation in detail in

the following section by looking at the Underground's self-label of the 'Merry Ghetto'[69],

which can be considered a synonym of the Underground cultural space during

communism.

## 4.3 The Merry Ghetto and Cocooning

In a widely-circulated 1975 samizdat manifesto, "The Report on the Third Czech Musical

Revival", Jirous described how by 1973 the Underground found themselves in a "world

[that] is never going to be any different than it is now, [and that] there is no need to waste

[our] time waiting for salvation. We must learn to live in the existing world in a way that

is both merry and dignified" (Jirous 2006 [1975]: 10). Learning to live this way entailed,

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[68] Also described as a 'safe' zone by Chris Cutler, who stayed there after the Art Bears performed at the Prague Jazz Days in 1979 (see section 6.1.1) [Cutler 2010]. Němec's flat on Ječná street, as well as Knížák's Prague flat, have been referred to as "open houses", where accommodation was "publically available" (Stárek and Kostúr 2010: 10). Outside of Prague, Skalák's flat in Chomutov and Čuňas garage in Teplice were "open" (Stárek and Kostúr 2010: 10).
[69] As discussed in section 5.1, the term 'Merry Ghetto' wasn't used as a self-descriptive label until after 1974.

as much as it was possible, a self-isolation, or removal, of the Underground in order to create a "Merry Ghetto". This removal via living in the Ghetto is comparable to descriptions of the Underground based on the uncompromising and complete rejection of contact with the regime (Chadima 1992: 10) characterized by Underground singer-songwriter Svatopluk Karásek's lyric "say no to the Devil" (Pilař 2002: 71), which has come to be an Underground motto.

This distinction is elaborated in the first systematic presentation of the Ghetto outside Czechoslovakia in the 1978 album notes of the *Plastics*'s 'Egon Bondy's Happy Hearts Club Banned', a recording smuggled out of Czechoslovakia, pressed in the UK and released on the French record label SCOPA (see section 5.4 and 6.3.1 for more discussion on this release). The quotation below, taken from the liner notes highlights the communing in the Ghetto that produced a form of cultural and social immunity that begins to show how resistance became a form of protection against unwanted (polluting) material:

> The Czech musical underground is a ghetto of a particularly modern kind. It is not based on race or religion or class; it is not confined to a geographical entity like an inner city or a separate township. Its inhabitants, and its space, are defined by other criteria – by their rejection of the values of the society around them, by society's rejection of them, and by their determined affirmation of life within the ghetto. The affirmation is more important, in a sense, than the rejection because without positive virtues like mutual trust and loyalty, that without a firm commitment to an ethics that the world around you is trying to destroy, the community, the fellowship, could never survive. And this is why the ghetto must be merry–because if your culture cannot bring you joy, if there is no room in it for collective spontaneity, then it merely becomes the underbelly of the general despair that reigns in society. (Anon. 1978: 2)

Important here for the study of social categories and music is that it illustrates, among other things, that the Underground was not relegated to one particular demographic such as youth or even working class. Rather, the Ghetto was a collective of individuals

committed to a value system that involved activity such as rejecting one thing and affirming another. What (the regime) and how (through togetherness) this rejection/affirmation occurred is the site of community building activity. Zajíček distills three points from the above description, which the space made possible: spontaneity, creativity and a place to 'try things out'.

> Creating is very spontaneous otherwise I couldn't do it. To try to open what is spontaneous in man...it goes hand in hand with one's life, in my case. It is not like professional, but like 'this is me', this is a try. (Zajíček 2009)

Further, Zajíček highlights the ontological nature of 'creativity' as "hand in hand with one's life" and not to be found in the realm of "professional", indicating the rejection of (an official) value system and affirming another ("this is me" being a 'primitive' state of 'biological realism' as shown in the previous sections).

Echoing the conception of the Merry Ghetto as a diverse collective asserting a mode of being together via rejection/affirmation, Petr Cibulka, an avid cassette-taper during the 1970s and 80s, asserts:

> It wasn't a place. It was a relationship with people, with whom I felt better than with than other people. It was people who had similar values to mine, which mainly consisted of refusing that which we didn't want. It was people who distanced themselves from the official communist world through the way they lived and through their activities…through this, a certain space was created, in which relationships were totally different. (Qtd in Vaníček, 1997: 86)

Furthermore, Svatopluk Karásek (2006: 2) describes the particularities of the Ghetto and the conditions of normalization by using it as a resource for gauging life in contemporary times:

> Perhaps I should explain the Underground in contrast to the present. Present day life creates lifeless situations. Today you can have everything and don't even have to leave your house to get it. Everything works better but somehow or another life seems flat.

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Something alive, something authentic occurs only rarely. With the Underground things were different. Young people sensed the oppression of communism and looked for something that would allow them to live fully. Underground was art without fees, just for pure joy. Everybody did something or other and we performed after each other on small stages, in the great outdoors or in barns. Professors who were no longer allowed to teach gave lectures from forbidden books. It was a time that was intensely alive. […] What made it bearable was solidarity. […] We Underground people had believed that this system [communism] was installed for all time. That it would end was inconceivable to us.

Karásek underpins the above quotations by calling attention to the diversity of the Ghetto ("professors" plus Karásek himself is a Anglican pastor), the physical spaces of the Underground ("stages, great outdoors, barns") as well as rejection ("looked for something different") and affirmation ("just for pure joy" and "solidarity"). Additionally, Karásek, and similarly Zajíček above, allude to moments of 'authenticity' in self-performance ("this is me"), which I explore in the following chapter. Taken together, these three quotations weave similar lines of description of the Merry Ghetto. Primarily, they illustrate the affordance qualities of the Underground cultural space for emotional attainment (joy, merriness, spontaneity, creativity) via removal from official society that allows for an affirmation of the social relations of trust and fellowship. This is a far different picture of what suppression can do; rather than inducing a "no future" disposition (Mitchell 1992: 197), it became an "intensely alive" real-time enacted space through practices that helped to replace official ecologies with newer ones to sustain an Underground way of life.

Moreover, the above quotations help shed light on community activity and immunity. Removal and rejection were protective measures in a physical sense (against harassment) and also a way to cocoon against an official aesthetic ("that [is] trying to destroy" [Anon. 1978: 2]). By such physical and cultural removal, Undergrounders made

themselves emotionally *unavailable* to official life by resisting what they did not want. Simultaneously, this was coupled with making one's self emotionally *available* to the Underground cultural space, evidenced by "collective spontaneity", "people with whom I felt better with than other people" and "solidarity".

## 4.4 Discussion: Dipping In to Aesthetic Ecologies & Furnishing Cultural Spaces

So far, I have discussed a number of different cultural spaces and their associated musical scenes within the historical context of 1960s to early 1970s Czechoslovakia. Table 2 below illustrates these cultural space relationships.

**Figure 20 Dipping in to Aesthetic Spaces**
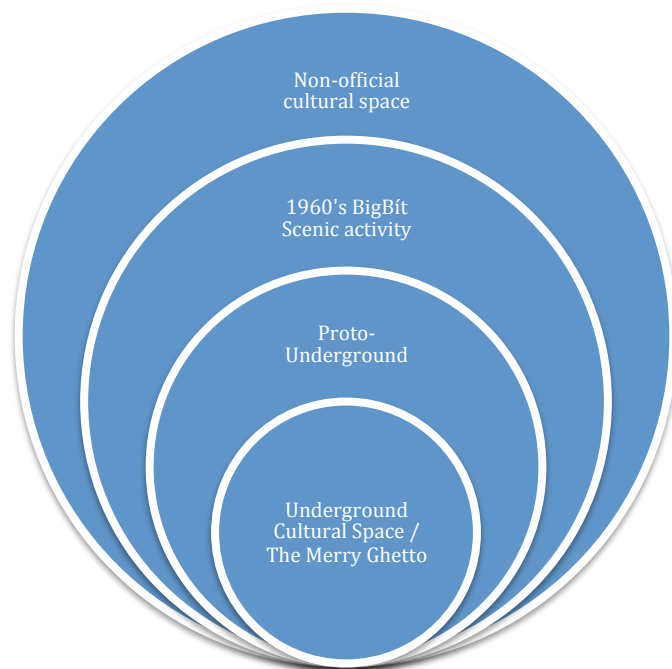


The aim of this table is to illustrate actors' engagement and enactment of these spaces through the liminal learning process of "dipping in" tacitly to mediated aesthetic forms.

Dipping in helps us sort out what we can call 'self-assembly', which comes into sharp

contrast when put next to Bourdieu's 'trajectories in fields' determined by habitus. Rather

dipping in, as a tacit micro-mechanism, shows us how aesthetic material, bit by bit,

becomes integral to agency (Witkin and DeNora 1997: 2-3). For example, as shown in

4.1.1, Vojtěch Lindaur dipped in to the aesthetic bases of the non-official cultural space

(learning LPs 'by heart'). However Lindaur remained in the broad non-official cultural

space throughout the 1970s and 1980s (I return to Lindaur in 6.1.3) and did not venture

further into Underground waters. Whereas Čuňas, who was exposed to "knock-off" bands

(*Hells Devils*) playing in Elvis and Bill Haley on the threshold of the *BigBít* scene/proto-

underground, eventually ventured further Underground. As well, in "Hendrix"'s case, he

went from listening to the radio to Prague Club "Efko" then to a more specialized corner

of the non-official space in the psychedelic concerts of *The Primitives* in the proto-

Underground. Thus the outer to inner circles of Figure 20 denote the passing of time as

well as indicating increasingly meaningful community activity the further one dipped in.

Furthermore, Figure 20 helps to show that increased communing indicates increased

immunity (i.e., resistance) toward unwanted 'pollutants' through layers of space. These

layers of insulation from the official culture act as a type of psychosocial buffer zone, or

cocoon, which becomes clearer as we move along throughout the 1970s and 1980s. I

address the buffer zone qualities of the non-official cultural space in Chapters Six and

Seven.

At the same time as people were dipping in to these spaces, they were furnishing a

clearer habitat of the specific Underground cultural space. Figure 21 shows three

simultaneous space-furnishing activities that, as we saw in Figure 15 "Aesthetic

Assembly" in section 4.1.5, move liminally from 'tacitly learned' to 'arranged', thus assembling an aesthetic that affords a matrix of action.

**Figure 21 Space Furnishing Activities**
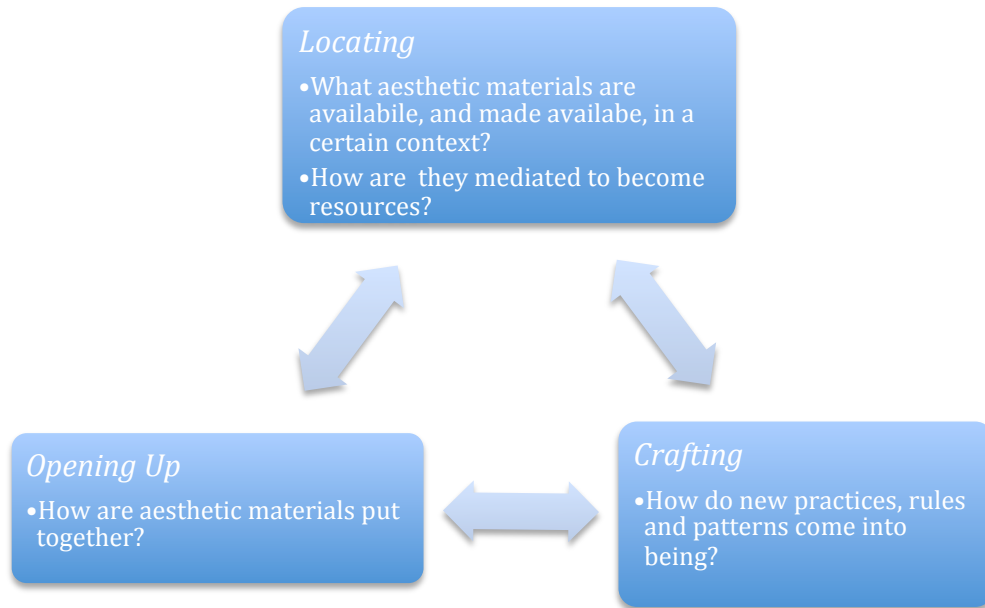
*Locating*:

One of the activities of furnishing a space has to do with what resources are available and how they are made available (i.e., how are they mediated and how does this contribute to their meaning?). As I have shown in this Chapter, there were many people and objects furnishing the non-official cultural space, for instance:

"Svobodka" and Voice of America (VoA): broadcasting rock'n'roll

Binny: making replica guitars and sounds

*Hells Devils*: showing music as social and political hub

Knížák: bringing in "actual" sounds, Czech lyrics, mimicry

*The Primitives*: playing an instinctive 'underground' sound

Křižovnická škola artists: happenings, visual art

These located resources are then put together in ways that make sense and simultaneously are sense-making for a group, which opens up a cultural space.

*Opening up*:

How do specific practices and materials get put together (or kept apart), prioritized or downplayed over time and space in ways that configure a cultural space and afford activity? All these people and objects above (e.g., VoA, Binny, Knížák) made available aesthetic materials in the non-official cultural space. To illustrate from the above sections: Hlavsa hears *Velvet Underground* 'raw' sound, which then became a model of how to play in contrast to other groups, such as *The Beatles* or *The Rolling Stones*. This 'raw' sound inflects musical praxis (how one *can* play), which the *Plastics* do by learning through imitation in *Velvet Underground* covers. As well, 'raw' acts as an aesthetic property that connects other forms of 'raw', such as Knížák's 'un-tuned' or 'dirty' rawness in *AKTUAL* music. The 'rawness', at the same time, accommodates such artistic, innovative practices that move it away from only psychedelic rock. Further, this 'rawness' was then located in Egon Bondy's 'Total Realism'. 'Raw' becomes an aesthetic orientation for groups to form (e.g., *DG-307* combines the musical and non-musical sides of Hlavsa and Zajíček, building on Knížák's *AKTUAL* sound of sing-sung lyrics recitation). How to play 'raw' then becomes increasingly associated with 'not professional' and moreover, an associated 'primitiveness' (i.e., real, bare, 'entry level') of forms of 'the self'. This opening up leads to a rising self-awareness of collective practices and empowerment through them.

*Crafting*:

This space-furnishing activity address how 'new rules' come into being through a patterning of practices related to aesthetic bases. Crafting refers to the subtle and collective ways people start to modify dimensions of a cultural space. I address this further in the following Chapter, considering the why and how of musicking and 'truth to self' within the Underground cultural space through contrast and comparison structures. Up to here, this chapter has described the crafting of the Merry Ghetto by addressing these phenomena:

> Doing (the body) to the max
> "*Tvrdý*" (hard) and "*Měkký*" (weak)
> Milan Hlavsa: "The Underground is without fires"
> Svatopluk Karásek: "Say no to the Devil"

These furnishing activities of the Underground, to the extent that they were antithetical to the regime, were also 'appropriate' aesthetic forms for rejecting that regime. In so doing they furnished a habitat that afforded immunity (and distance) from official culture through aesthetic practice. This immunity was, in other words, a form of aesthetic resistance to 'the sea of mental poverty' and the 'unhealthiness' of normalization conditions linked to 'official culture' (as described by Šimečka and Havel in section 4.2.1). Moreover, this resistance occurred in secure spaces that were furnished for habitation wherein one could feel certain emotions and adopt subject positions while simultaneously producing these habitable spaces by the doing of them. To make these links between community/immunity and communitas/resistance clearer, it is useful if we consider the etymology of immunity as 'exempt from service' (i.e., not having to honor a

law) and community in terms of something shared. From here we can see how one can be 'immune' by being communed in opposition. Music then becomes a material for communitas, in so far as it furnishes the space, which aids in rejecting that which is unwanted, or unhealthy.

4.5 Conclusion: From Music Scenes to Cultural Spaces

In this chapter, I have considered the making of a broad non-official cultural space from the beginning of *BigBít* in Czechoslovakia to the start of the normalization era. Here I observed the appropriation of Western cultural material in order to locate and experience emotional stances and dispositions that were viewed as unavailable in the official culture of Czechoslovakia. Such foreign cultural material acted as a trigger at tacit level holding forms that was developed in subsequent Underground musicking, as described in section 4.1. The opening up of the aesthetic space in the 1960s occurred through circulation of cultural material filtered and made available in various manners. Subsequently, following the constriction of the Husák regime during the early years of normalization, the opening up became more distilled; the parameters of the space became more cognitively understood.

As a result, the joining up of cultural resources mediated by/from musical and extra-musical practices began holding together an increasingly clearer network of dispositions and emotional stances. However, these furnishings within the space are not fixed and could be rearranged, reupholstered, renovated or even thrown out, which subsequently occurs within the Underground cultural space over the following four

decades (as highlighted in Chapter Six). In other words, although Western cultural material indeed provided an early constituting trigger for a non-official cultural space in the 1960s, this developed over time into a distinct and localized set of sounds and actions.

Further, the space afforded tacit level learning of how one could use such materials for constituting resistance in an antithetical relation to the official culture. Such non-musical components of the Underground space, for example the body and samizdat, all became 'appropriate' activity as mediated by aesthetic forms. Moreover, this resistance was shown to occur in secure spaces that were furnished for habitation to adopt subject positions while simultaneously producing a habitable cultural space by enacting it. Thus, the Merry Ghetto produced an environment that afforded ontological security where one could 'be oneself'. This security is ultimately a political tension in normalized Czechoslovakia. In the following chapter I address how the Merry Ghetto came to be crafted into a cultural space wherein care of the self could take place in order to resolve tension.

# CHAPTER 5: SUPPRESSING THE MERRY GHETTO

The thesis so far has discussed how people in 1960s and early 1970s Czechoslovakia began to locate, craft and open up an Underground cultural space, the Merry Ghetto. These furnishing activities—from listening to radio, dressing in certain ways, tinkering with guitars—formed a cultural matrix for action bringing together unconsciously felt sensibilities and early articulations between music and social life. They also served to create a space that offered 'immunity' from the suppressive 'official' culture of the time.

Thus the many varieties of furnishing action within the Merry Ghetto can, I have suggested, be seen as political technologies of, simultaneously, both the self and of power. In this chapter, I look further to experiences of such technologies in historical and emotional stances, labored by actors reflexively through reflection and talk, which developed mechanisms of framing and articulation work. I show how the furnishings of this emergent Underground space, coupled with their suppression, afforded further forms of community commitment and politicization that led to a rising collective consciousness as a result of these technologies. To this end I will discuss how 'the self' came to be understood in the Underground and how musical practices facilitated, accommodated and showed the Underground 'self' through contrast and comparison.

First I address how the regime, through oppressive actions, suppressed the conditions for the 'doing' of the self, then I move on to discuss commitment in the Underground in spite of this suppression, as I presaged with 'creative constriction' in section 4.2.2. Finally, I consider how the Underground cultural space shifted as a result of an unintended merging with the dissident initiative Charta 77 due to these configurations of 'truth to self'.

## 5.1 Police Action against the Underground

As I described in Chapter Four, Czechoslovakia was undergoing the Husák-led processes of normalization during the 1970s, which entailed reforms to the social liberalizing policies that led up to the Prague Spring. As a result, music and musicians' place in society was deeply regulated as evidenced by requalification exams discussed in 4.2.2 (cf., Vaněk 2010: 369-492; Lindaur and Konrád 2001: 116; Alan 2001: 23; Vaníček 1997). The rock'n'roll wave of *BigBít* witnessed during the 1960s with bands like the aforementioned *Hells Devils* and *The Primitives* was dammed up and left only a trickle of ensembles who managed or aspired to maintain official licensure.

This reconfiguration of musical culture during normalization was realized to a certain extent by different music agencies (such as the Akord booking agency) from which a musician needed to acquire a license in order to play professionally or even at an amateur level. As state-run institutions, these agencies functioned as a 'censorship mechanism' that had the ability to demarcate which musicians could perform, based on the requalification exams. These were not only exams testing musical theory but also oral tests of Marxist–Leninist political theory, the physical presentation of the performer (specifically, how long is one's hair is) and the lyrical content of the music (Vaníček 1997: 33–37). While exams existed in the 1960s to determine a musicians' ability to play music, these new requalification exams (taken every two years) also served to determine a musician's place in normalized Czechoslovak society in that one could not pass the exam if they did not have adequate knowledge of, for example, "the history of the

worker's party […] who the Minister of Culture was […] or their opinions on communism" (Vaníček 1997: 49).

Yet state intervention into controlling the perceived negative influence of rock music in the early 1970s was not only pursued through legal, bureaucratic inhibitions but also through coercive and violent police actions. While interviewing Ivan Bierhanzl, I asked him about the StB[70] officer Jiří Šimák, whose state police academy dissertation I had located in the Archive of the State Police, which concerned police actions against the Underground.

> TH: I read Jiří Šimák's dissertation and your name comes up in it for organizing concerts.
>
> IB: Šimák wrote a dissertation?
>
> TH: Did you know him?
>
> IB: I remember him of course. He was on trial and sentenced for five years [in 2006][71]. He was trying to get out of it. The last sentence was for five years in jail because of physical attack on Zina Freundová [in 1981]. During this ASANACE[72] campaign. She was a member of VONS[73]. He was one of the most aggressive StB men. Šimák interrogated me 2-3 times. He told me he was a country musician [that played in pubs]. He was very important. I would like to know if he is in jail [now]. There are two: Šimák and Dudek. Also on this trial for Zina. It [trial of StB agents] has been going on since the 90s. There are victims and witnesses. […] Really physical attack…it was in the entry way to the apartment. In was in Náměstí Míru [in Prague]. One of the most aggressive. There was another guy Dudek[74], very small…156cm max. Very strange guy. They were specialists on the Underground. (Bierhanzl 2011a)

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[70] 'Státní Bezpečnost' (StB) the state police of the government.
[71] Šimák received a four-year prison sentence in 2006.
[72] State police campaign, "*Clearing*", was aimed at forcing Charta 77 signatories out of the country through physical coercion and psychological abuse.
[73] 'Výbor na obranu nespravedlivě stíhaných' or 'The Committee for the Defense of the Unjustly Persecuted'. As their website details: "The committee was founded on April 27, 1978, by a group of Charter 77 signatories with the aim of following cases of persons facing various forms of state persecution, from police harassment to unjust prosecution in courts of law." See www.vons.cz
[74] Zbyněk Dudek, also received a four year prison sentence in 2006.

The following quotation, taken from Šimák's 1984 state police dissertation on popular music, refers to the musicking in the non-official cultural space of the 1960s and 1970s (state police campaign VOLNÁ Youth[75]) and the police action against the Underground after 1976 (state police campaign KAPELA[76]),

> [State National Security (i.e. State Police)] launched project 'KAPELA' in 1976, which has become the basic strategic concept as well as methodology for the operative development issues of 'VOLNÁ' Youth, aka "the free youth intelligence." The aim of the project was to remove the young generation spreading anti-socialist speech and reduce the 'magical' influence of music and intellectual currents in the non-socialist sphere, i.e. to achieve the disengagement of the Czechoslovak amateur music scene from the action and influence of negatively Western-oriented musical groups and their supporters. Furthermore, by using a suitable development of the agency's utmost operations [the project seeks] to prevent further influences on our young generation by various extremist pseudo-artistic musical movements. At the same time, [the agency's operations] should prevent other similar groups in Czechoslovakia, and in an appropriate way, to achieve the social isolation of disturbed persons and their gradual re-education to the principles of socialist morality and aesthetic sense of culture. (Šimák 1984: 1)

Considering the state's efforts to "re-educate" youth, a common reference point (in samizdat material, conversations, newspapers, seminars) for the regime's early crackdown on musical events is the so-called *Budějovická Masakr* (Budějovická[77] massacre). On 30 March 1974 a rock concert event was to take place in the village of Rudolf near the town of Česká Budějovice in south Bohemia. While other concerts in the countryside had gone on uninterrupted in the past, police and soldiers raided the concert site where violence ensued just before many non-official bands, including the *Plastics* and *DG-307,* were set to perform. The resulting raid ended in the police sending hundreds of youth back to Prague where their long hair was shaved; six were imprisoned. In a circulated samizdat article written in 1974, Dana Němcová describes the event:

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[75] "Free Youth"
[76] "Musical group"
[77] From south Bohemian town České Budějovice

Young people gathered from all over Czechoslovakia on March 30 at Rudolf near České Budějovice. Mainly students and young workers arrived at the officially authorized performance. They acted completely peacefully; everyone was all too well aware of the fragile position in which their favored group, the Plastic People of the Universe, was located, as well as themselves. Despite the fact that this conduct did not cause even the smallest problem, emergency police units had already arrived in the afternoon [before the concert even started], of which several hundred concert participants were then massacred [physically beaten]. They were forced to flee down a 5 km long road toward České Budějovice. Police officers chased them down in cars, beat them with batons, expelled them from the side roads and bused them to the České Budějovice railway station. There, policemen in helmets and police dogs herded concert participants into a "blood alley" [underpass between train platforms] in the railway station, where boys and girls were beaten with batons, kicked and thrown down to the ground and dogs sent on them. Maybe even worse than physical violence was the atmosphere of terror that reigned on the railway station, according to testimonies by dozens of people. A Prague physician, who witnessed these events, aptly described it as a "modern inferno." The [train] station was filled with more than one hundred concert participants and then they were put into an escort train wagon headed to Prague with the assistance of troops with machine guns. On the train they were interrogated by the police and photographed. (Němcová 1974: 3)

Similarly, Brabenec describes the audience at the 1974 concert:

Before '76 we were a little bit nervous, because before that hundreds and hundreds of people were arrested and interrogated just for being in the audience. They weren't people who were active culturally; they were just secondary school or university students. For two years before we were arrested [in 1976] we were really nervous about what could happen to us, because everybody knew where the 'bomb' of the underground music was, where the center was [The Plastic People]. (Qtd in Cameron 2003: no page number)

Figure 22 shows before and after photos of head shaving by the police[78], exhibiting a tactic of how Underground embodied practices started to become physically suppressed[79]. Moreover, the raid would signal the first experiential entry point of the emotional material of 'threat' into the Underground cultural space, as discussed further in section 5.4.1. The *Budějovická Masakr* shows us that suppressed aesthetic material—such as properties of rock'n'roll—underpin how a group comes to know themselves by transforming a sensibility into a collective experience via suppression. As it has become a common reference point even for nowadays (see below), the event helps to distinguish a 'watershed' moment for periodizing narratives, as Brabenec's quotation above also reveals.



**Figure 22 Police head shaving at** ***Budějovická Masakr*** **(1974)**

The trigger moment of the police suppression at the event is further evidenced by two related commemoration events in 2009. Figure 23[80] shows a commemorative gathering of the event at the "Pub America" near Česká Budějovice in 2011, where the concert was to take place in 1974. A second coordinated seminar was organized (in Prague) to discuss the precise police action that day (30 March 1974), which had relied in

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[78] Archive of the State Police. Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, Prague, Czech Republic.
[79] Head shaving was also an indicator of time someone had been out of prison, as Zajíček (2004: 216) notes about placing dates on photos from the 1970s: "It was a rather funny party at our table when we tried to identify the photographs [from the past]. Then at home it became clear to me that we had determined most of the dates by the length of the men's hair—depending on when they returned from the various prisons. Actually, it was not at all that funny…".
[80] Copyright Ladislav Němec MF Dnes

part on local villagers informing the police about the presence of 'long hairs' in the town.

This image has been removed from the
thesis by the author for copyright reasons.

**Figure 23 Commemoration of *Budějovická Masakr* at 'Pub America' (2011)**

Figure 24 shows the seminar in the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, titled

"*BigBít* with a Billy Club"[81].

This image has been removed from the
thesis by the author for copyright reasons.

**Figure 24 Seminar on *Budějovická Masakr* police actions, USTR (2011)**

Figure 25[82] shows the commemoration plaque now outside the pub, which reads:

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[81] "*BigBít* obuškem"
[82] Copyright Ladislav Němec MF Dnes

At this site on the 30<sup>th</sup> of March 1974 began the illegal and very brutal components of power of the totalitarian regime against those involved in an underground concert.

This image has been removed from the thesis by the author for copyright reasons.

Figure 25 Commemorative plaque at 'Pub America'

This approach of the regime toward popular music did not vary considerably throughout the normalized era of Czechoslovakia (1970~1987). Such forms of suppression—from police actions to bureaucratic procedures aimed at extinguishing popular music—helped to calibrate the politics of the cultural space wherein 'the establishment' became a suppressor of ways of living and thus came to be inextricably bound up in an actor's assembled resource repository. It was after this police raid that the "Merry Ghetto" as a concept became increasingly used by Undergrounders (Bierhanzl 2011b). Only two other performances of the *Plastic People* took place in 1974 following the so-called *Budějovická Masakr*, signaling a shift from collective scene to a distinctively closed, self-protecting Underground community.

Six months after the *Budějovická Masakr*, in September 1974, the emerging Underground organized the 'First Festival of the Second Culture' to celebrate the wedding of Arnost and Jaroslava Hannibal. The festival showed for the first time an

event specifically aimed to bring together people under the banner of 'Underground' culture. The festival was the first in a series of three festivals[83] in Czechoslovakia that were privately performed as wedding celebrations[84]. Staged through weddings, the concerts took on a shape of an invitation-only, private event. This distinguished a clear cluster of individuals collectively furnishing a cultural space. Moreover, the movement from official concerts to semi-public performances to celebratory events, (e.g., weddings) signals a shift to using music *for* what could be now called community members, rather than fans of a music scene attending concerts.

Such community feeling in these festivals, combined with police suppression, brought forth comparisons to the radical Hussite faction of Taborites[85] in 15th century Bohemia, which I address in section 5.3. At the 1974 'First Festival of the Second Culture' Jirous announced during a set break:

> Every one of us assembled here are people who do not long for worldly honors. In this sense, we are the freest people of all. Official culture wants nothing to do with us and we want nothing to do with the official culture. This is an assembly of faithful people, in the sense of how the Taborites meant it. Here we can play brass-band music, rock, kitsch, serious music—anything. ('J.V.' 1978: 26)

At the First Festival of the Second Culture, we can begin to see how rejection as resistance—"we want nothing to do with the official culture"—began to bubble up, which follows on from bureaucratic requalification exams and coercive police actions.

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[83] Those being the First (1974), Second (1976), and Third Festivals (1977) of the Second Culture. The 4th took place in France in 1984, bringing together Undergrounders who were forced to emigrate in the late 1970s/early 1980s. See footnote 152.

[84] Under Czechoslovak code, couples getting married were able to book their own form of entertainment, and thus provided a site for Underground bands to play.

[85] Jan Hus established the village of Tabor in south Bohemia in 1420 as a place of refuge from Catholic oppression. He told his followers to throw everything they own into the center of the village as they were to all share everything. This sense of communal living is said to be the underpinnings of contemporary etymology of term "bohemian".

This rejection became a form of immunity toward unwanted aesthetic pollutants ("worldly honors") within the Merry Ghetto, which I explore in the next section. Moreover, Jirous's proclamation shows how commitment, as an "assembly of faithful people", was based aesthetically in musicking in that 'we can play what we want'. In order to understand resistance and commitment in this fashion, I look to how 'the self', and what it came to mean, was revealed to Undergrounders by the regime suppression.

## 5.2 Regime as Suppressor

Texts from Underground samizdat publications developed the understanding of the communist regime through the notion of 'establishment'. In particular, the establishment was understood to be a 'suppressor' of environmental conditions for allowing 'truth to the self'. Within socio-musical studies, establishment is generally conceptualized as a form of mainstream against which subcultures have modeled themselves relationally (cf., Thornton 1995). Here, however, I focus on how the establishment suppressed (alienating people from each other and from one's self) and what was perceived (by Undergrounders) to be suppressing (the ability to be one's self as a result of conformity). By tracing the limits of how 'suppression' is talked about and reflected on in Underground culture we can see an emerging value system. That value system in turn allowed an Underground conception of the 'self' which was where 'the political' is located.

We can begin to broach the issue of 'establishment as inhibitor' via Jirous' *Report on the Third Czech Musical Revival* along with quotations from Underground musicians.

This samizdat text, written in 1975, has become a critical and ubiquitous document of the Underground and the non-official cultural space: it was circulated through samizdat channels within Czechoslovakia, it took hold in Underground cultural material through its reprinting in *Egon Bondy's Happy Hearts Club Banned,* publically read by Jirous in July 1975 in Plzeň[86], found place in the collectively written and performed *Plastics*'s song, *Dopis Magorovi*[87], reprinted recently in a collection of writings from the Underground (cf., Machovec 2006c) as well as being referred to during interviews [as "Magor's report"] (Stárek 2009a; Bierhanzl 2011a).

The text performed space-arranging work by clarifying what the Underground had become up to 1975. By this, I mean to say that Jirous' text builds on a collective frame of appreciation that has accumulated up to this point in time, clarifying these previous practices (from the 1960s proto-Underground till time of writing in 1975). Ironically, regime suppression enabled the articulation of Underground practices and thus their arrangement. This arrangement of practices, feelings, and ways of being ultimately served to advance and spread non-official culture, showing more than just a 'reaction' to the regime but an active building on constriction.

5.2.1 Establishment and 'Truth to Self'

Considering the foundations of regime inhibition in the non-official cultural space, Jirous discusses rock music post-1968 invasion in comparison to the proto-underground and

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[86] Plzeň is a city situated in Western Bohemia. In 1975 Skalák, Čuňas and Karel 'Kocour' Havelka arranged an event where Jirous read the Report, Petr Prokeš screened films, Charlie Soukup and Svata Karásek performed. Čuňas received eight months in prison for making and distributing invitations to this event during the 1976 trial of Undergrounders.

[87] *Letter to Magor*. The twenty-minute piece was written for Jirous while in prison in 1977. As Marie Benetkov speaks in the piece: "The Report On The Third Czech Musical Revival / Magor wrote in a house of glass / it was the greenhouse in the park where we used to work / Jirous rested on discarded hospital blankets / cured his hangover with bottled beer and wrote."

vibrant music culture of *BigBít* in 1960s Czechoslovakia:

> I have always felt anger towards other relatively decent rock groups when, in the early 1970s, they were trying to make an official name for themselves, when they surrendered to the demands of the establishment in exchange for the right to play publicly music, some kind of music, this making it impossible for themselves to be truly creative (2006 [1975]: 15).

Jirous's text begins to set up a "contrast structure" (Smith 1990: 32-34) between musical practices associated with the establishment and non-official culture. Similarly, this was reflected in "*tvrdý*" (hard) and "*měkký*" (weak) levels of commitment as shown in levels of 'doing it to the max'. Such contrast structures, as developed below, helped to constitute the Underground consciousness and how the Underground cultural space could, in comparison with the official culture, afford creativity and imagination. Moreover, this contrast with the establishment helped the Undergrounders to 'see themselves' more clearly in part through rejecting "the demands of the establishment". For example, Jirous's "anger (towards other relatively decent rock groups)" shows an emotional furnishing of the space; here, anger charges the listening experience, developing a sonically produced posture toward other official musicians and the establishment, via contrast.

Similarly, Drahomír Křehký pointed out in *Vokno*[88] the role and characteristic of the Czechoslovak 'establishment' as not just a phenomenon as in any country but one that helped germinate the Underground and let it grow by not co-opting Underground cultural material. Křehký muses on punk music in the UK and Czechoslovakia:

> The rejection of the values of the establishment is a common attitude of both movements, but while a nicely wrapped rejection can become a commodity in England, it becomes a crime in Czechoslovakia. The Prague musical Underground preceded punk by several

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[88] Underground samizdat magazine. See section 6.3.2.

years, [not because of] any innate characteristics of Czech thought, but rather thanks to the draconian "normalization" policy of Husák's regime—the policy that forced everyone with really normal artistic expression to hide their existence in the existence of the cracks and crevices of society. The result is that the aesthetic attitude of the Underground is, in comparison, much more stubborn and interesting than the punk attitude, which, no matter how intransigent, seems to always leave open a possibility to be devoured by a stronger wave. This is quite normal in the West, from today's rebel becomes tomorrow's manager, and in the end it does not have to be bad because it at least ensures that the official culture [in the West] is again revived through self-serving injections of energy and inventiveness. In today's Czechoslovakia, this cannot happen, which is the main reason why the official culture is dead. (Křehký 1981 [1971]: 43)

Drawing attention to the relationship between the regime and creative output in Czechoslovakia as being "thanks to" the regime sheds light on how suppression helped Undergrounders distill and develop their values and come to 'see themselves' as Underground, again through contrast, but in this case, with the West.

Further, the writer discusses "stubbornness" as an essential quality within the Underground, which has been echoed by others as "pig headed" (Brabenec qtd in Chytilová 2001: no page number), "simply played music I felt like" (Hlavsa qtd in Unterberger n.d.: no page number), as well as encapsulating emotions of "rage and humility" (Jirous 2006 [1975]: 30). Thus to here we can begin to see an arrangement of different emotions emerging from musical culture in the early 1970s that helped keep out unwanted things (conformity to official music standards/aesthetics) via stubbornness, anger, rage and humility. These emotional arrangements, then, are the emotional primers of 'rejection activity' that helps configure immunity, or resisting conformity to establishment standardization. Jirous clarifies this way of living with the establishment and posture toward official musicians:

> The establishment has no real power to prevent from playing those who reject all the advantages that follow from being professional musicians. The establishment can only put pressure on those who want to be better off than the rest. For those who want to live a

better life—not in the sense of financial security, but in terms directed toward the following of truth—the long arm of the establishment is too short (2006 [1975]: 16).

Two points follow from here: firstly, 'stubbornness' prepared the way for the rejection of establishment objects (e.g., amplifiers, microphones, licensure) that would otherwise allow one to make what would be considered "professional music" (in terms of sound quality, presentation, opportunity to play in venues, ticketing, salary). Rejecting these objects, or rather what they may symbolize and afford (financial security, success) aided in rejecting an establishment aesthetic (e.g., smooth, polished, pleasant). At the same time, this rejection of objects assisted in opening up the space for forms of 'make do' tinkering (e.g., homemade amplifiers) to be part of the Underground practices and affording an Underground mode of being. The *Plastics*'s bassist Milan Hlavsa supports Jirous's claim above, making a connection from professional musician to musical gear:

> We were definitely not frustrated by not having perfect gear, we played with what we had and tried to get the best equipment we could. Our situation was best commented by our guitar player at the time, Jiří Števich, who once quipped: "You know, McLaughlin can play all right, he had a Golden Fender next to his cradle as soon as he was born." Our feelings were nothing like frustration. (Qtd in Untenberger 1997 n.d.: no page number)

A second point distilled from Jirous' above quotation: the 'true' self is revealed by what and how the establishment suppresses (e.g., creativity) (cf. Vaníček 1997, 81-84). "True creativity", as asserted by *The Report*, is not located in official musical practices, as those practices would require an amount of personal surrender to the establishment, and therefore compromising one's true self. Hlavsa expands on how his creation process, which goes on 'inside' himself (rather than surrendering to the establishment):

> I was never one who wants to convey any kind of message to anyone or address anyone, I simply made music like I felt, what came to my mind, I usually composed music to lyrics [e.g., to Bondy's poems] and tried my best to express what went on in me when I had read the lyrics but I was definitely far from trying to mentor, or force my notions of the

universe on anyone, definitely not that. Of course I was glad to see some people enjoyed it. […]. (Qtd in Untenberger 1997 n.d.: no page number)

Using Hlavsa and the *Plastic People* as model, Jirous continues to elucidate how creativity and truthfulness to self are linked:

> The group lost its professional status, weaker individuals left and the core of the new Plastic people—around Hlavsa and Janíček—started off practically empty-handed with no equipment, only a few instruments and apparently nothing to fall back on but, still, with an absolutely clear conception, according to which it is the musicians' responsibility to play the kind of music that his conscience tells him to play and that gives him pleasure, for this is the only way that he can share his creative joy with his audience (2006 [1975]:15).

Creativity, then, is presented as something accessible only through a reflexive notion of truthfulness to one's self, and attained by playing music "according to one's convictions" (Jirous 2006 [1975: 15). In an interview with Zajíček (2009), he talked at length about creativity, not only in making music, but also how one goes about daily life in this 'truth to self' manner. How he plays from his set of convictions with joy as opposed to performing another's regime of values:

> PZ: I feel a lot with this generation who could be younger than my children. Who are open, like in everything they do. Partly it is dealing with expression. You are not being surrounded with a 'this is like this'. Things are moving. How many faces in one's life do you live?
>
> TH: Could you tell me more about your "faces"?
>
> PZ: My opinion: you are yourself—you are not me, you are yourself. And all kinds of things we can agree on or not agree on. It is a matter of trusting yourself…I've been like this all my life. It doesn't matter if I've lived somewhere else [e.g., emigrating to Sweden then USA]. I keep this trust (of self) even if it is very hard. Therefore, I'm very surprised when I meet people who do something without asking, they just do it. [Playing] is matter of joy as well. Whatever you are doing. Otherwise it is forced and one can break down.

Zajíček illustrates the Underground consciousness of 'truth to self' is linked with 'trust of self' and playing according to one's beliefs, not only in the past but also in contemporary

times. Moreover, Zajíček highlights how 'trust' is *according* to one's self ("you are yourself") and, therefore, not according to another's regime of values ("you are not me"). Further, the above quotation presents an absence of 'joy' in playing when something is forced. In other words, in terms of the discussion on establishment, one would have to 'force' the self (e.g., a square peg) into the regime's conception ("this is like this") of creativity and performance (e.g., round hole).

'Truth to self', as configured by Jirous, Hlavsa and Zajíček, has resonance with political dissident thought in East-Central Europe. 'Truth to self' draws attention to the canon of "anti-politics" and "non-political politics", principles that were put forward by leading Polish dissident Adam Michnik, Hungarian György Konrád, and the Czechs Jan Patočka and Václav Havel. The phenomenological perspective, as Tucker, et al (2000: 422) points out, is "a return to a pre-enlightenment, or even pre-Machiavellian politics founded on morality and virtue". Considering the Czech case, the dance of non-politics during communism was taken into account in its most public form in Charter 77, discussed further in section 5.4. This trend in political philosophical thought helps set up an important distinction within the *quality* of resistance: one that was not so much concerned with institutions and institutionalization as it was with personal spheres of praxis and micro publics, as the Underground illustrates. Below, I explore further this Underground consciousness of the 'self' in musicality and musical practices within personal spheres of praxis that are contrasted against the 'norm' or the official culture.

5.2.2 Playing with Spirit

Such convictions that constituted 'truth to self' were an open-ended, indexical matter that helped to accommodate many different types and practices of aesthetics. For example,

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Čuňas (2009d) stated this articulation concerning his musical group, *Hever a Vaselina* who formed in the 70s and still perform today: "People without spirit do everything perfect, in order. My band does it oppositely! We can't play but the spirit is there!". Honesty ("we can't play") and playing with spirit, then, refers to playing according to one's convictions. Moreover, *Hever*'s sound is one that emerges from Knížák's *AKTUAL* sonic domain: often, the group relies on reciting poetry, using kazoos, sirens, chopping wood on stage, stripping naked—a happening-like performance of sing-song rough rhythms and banged out metallic sounds. Thus, we see a convergence of non-virtuosity, spirit, honesty and musical material brought together through dipping in to a furnished space to exhibit one way in which 'truth to self' was conceived of musically and achieved in the Underground.

A further example of convictions helping to accommodate different types of aesthetics is the Underground group *Umělá Hmota*. The band, developing a hard and heavy rock sound, once proclaimed, "tuning up is a luxury of the bourgeoisie" (Jirous 2006 [1975: 26]). Josef Vondruška, one of the founders of *Umělá Hmota* (*UH*), discussed the influence of *AKTUAL* and *DG-307* in *Vokno*, outlining *UH*'s early musical activity as a group (1979: 26):

> UH then was totally unmusical [at that time in the early 1970s]. To me, what affected [UH's] formation was listening to "An Evening with Wild Man Fisher," which was then very popular with [poet/UH lyric writer] Dino. [...] Sounds [of UH were] created by the various whistles, rattles and other mostly non-musical instruments with Dino reciting his poems.

Similarly, the ensemble *Lesní Speváci* is another instance of how 'non-musicality' became configured in the Underground cultural space. One of *Lesní Speváci*'s members,

Josef Furman, points out how he and the group approached musical training and performance:

> If possible we don't play the instruments but we play with them, the sounds that we consider an activity that is much closer to art. Each of us has a very sensitive relationship to music but we have almost no technique. To practice a song in order to be able to play it more times seems at least as useless as if somebody was trying to paint the same painting again. (Qtd in Bitrich 2001: 73 [cited in Kouřil 1999])

*Hever a Vaselina*, *Umělá Hmota* and *Lesní Speváci* help to show how such imagery and sounds of honesty and non-virtuosity came to be configured aesthetically within the Underground space as a material that could prime a state of collective being in contrast to the norm of official culture (tuned up, everything in order). That is, 'we are not bourgeois, we don't tune up' thus 'not tuning up shows us who we are'. Similarly, 'we are not perfect' therefore 'we have spirit'. In turn, these contrast structures within the Underground space resonate with Hlavsa's comments (section 4.1.4) concerning the unobtainable sounds of *The Rolling Stones* or *The Beatles* contrasted to the 'raw and transparent' sound of the *Velvet Underground.*

Moreover, *Hever* and *Umělá Hmota* show one dimension of musical training and learning in the Merry Ghetto in that some of these Underground groups aimed at a performing a core musicality skill set (i.e., "primitive" or "destroyed"), one could say, as opposed to daily practice, rehearsal, ear training and honing of 'talent' in order *to appear* to be natural or playing in a seemingly effortless manner. Indeed, playing out of tune or banging on an empty oil drum shows more of a commitment to an Underground aesthetic and consistency of behavior than would a perfect solo that 'hits all the changes'.

To pursue this point further, I interviewed keyboardist Hanka Synková (2011) of
the contemporary (late 1980's to time of writing) Underground group *BBP Underground
Orchestra*:

> TH: Could you tell me a little bit about BBP rehearsals?
>
> HS: Well, actually, the rehearsals are maybe not what you think, like a jazz musician
> would play a song. We all kind of have to watch Otto [the group leader and composer]
> because he doesn't count time. We may start [a song] on the 'and' of 3—but with no
> count off. We just see, we kind of know how to watch him and how to start. Each person
> has their special role and we know how to play those instruments in the group.
>
> TH: Could you tell me about your special role?
>
> HS: Well, I play the keyboard and sometimes sing and Otto will, you know, come up and
> show me which notes to play. But he doesn't know what the notes are, he just knows
> what he wants to hear. […] I'm BBP Number 11. We all have a number, there have been
> 13 of us since Otto started in the group (in the 1980s)[…]. It was such an honor when I
> received my number. You have the number for life.

Hanka's explanation shows us an important point of 'irreplaceability' within

Underground groups and sounds. As a result of some Undergrounder's lack or rejection

of 'formal' musical knowledge—awareness of conventions such as a jazz or classical

musician might have, for example—the ensemble's personnel is mutually dependent on

each other's musicality (and knowing that person's musicality). Therefore not just anyone

can jump in (like a one-off jazz combo playing standards) or be replaced as is shown here

through the giving of numbers to members. This musicality is not learned in school, or

even through listening to records, but rather it is learned through a specific, habitual

group musical culture.

Yet, at the same time, some musicians *did* cross-pollinate groups, rehearse and

practice. Bierhanzl clarifies how he moved throughout ensembles in the 1970s and later:

IB: It was during this time (~1974-75] when we had this first band, Doktor Prostěradlo Band. It was something between DG and Aktual. Very few recordings. Not very interesting now. First I played in bands like Doktor Prostěradlo Band and Umělá Hmota and then I played [in the Plastic's composition] 'Passion Play', which was in 1978, then [I played] with DG in 1979 and then [the Plastic's concert/recording] 'Leading Horses' in 1981. Then Brabenec left, then Zajíček left [emigrated to Austria and Sweden, respectively]. Then it was [the Plastic's home studio album] Hovězí Porážka in 1983, but the last concert was Leading Horses in 1981.

TH: How did you start to play with the Plastics?

IB: I think it was when we were playing in Doktor Prostěradlo band, there was a singer, Bobby Unger, he was with me in Doktor Prostěradlo. Somehow the Plastics wanted more people for [Passion Play] so there were the five Plastics (drums, bass, keys, violin, sax) and then there was Laď'a Letšina, me from Doktor Prostěradlo, and the drummer Honza Brabec was also from Doktor Prostěradlo. The Plastics changed the drummer because Vožniak was in jail for a while. So then, Brabec was young and talented [took over on drums]. We were 18. So four people from Doktor Prostěradlo and Jan on percussion, he was a friend of Brabenec.

Bierhanzl's description of his musical 'career' in Merry Ghetto illustrates the variety of musicking practices the Underground cultural space accommodated: an operationalization of musicality based on "playing with spirit" mixed with social contacts ("he was friends with Brabenec") as well musicality based on "talent" (in the case of Honza Brabec). In some cases (e.g., Čuňas' "playing with spirit"*, Zajíček's "non-musical side" in the formation of *DG-307* [see section 4.2.5], UH's "unmusicality"), Underground musical groups echo inclusive features of amateur community music making where anyone, regardless of skill level, is accepted into the ensemble and not subject to auditions. Thus, from the furnishings of these musicians who had dipped into the 1960s non-official cultural space, an exemplary disposition emerged where any level, skill or type of musician could be Underground as long as they were creating honestly, or being 'true to the self', albeit non-officially. This set the stage for collective action by allowing for nearly any individual to *be* Underground (see Jirous's description of the

1978 "Third Festival of the Second Culture" in section 5.4.1). Here, music's indexical

nature is rendered habitable for non-musical action by the appropriation of out-of-tune,

ragged, with spirit, heavy, hard, raw and 'primitive' music that provided action templates

for the Merry Ghetto.

At the same time, other groups, such as the *Plastics*, developed highly arranged

personnel and compositions, such as their 1978 'Passion Play', which required a larger

ensemble to perform. Considering the variety of musical styles and sounds, it is possible

to see the Underground building up a parallel ecology of aesthetic material to the official

culture that became linked to the aforementioned emotional arrangements, such as

stubbornness and joy. This parallel ecology of aesthetic material in the Underground

cultural space contributed to an "Underground" sound. For example a 1976 premiere

performance of the *Psycho-Surrealistic Neo Dada Band* is described in *Vokno*:

> It is already [late on] the 23rd of December 1976 and the second part of the Third Festival
> of the Underground, or if you want, the Third Festival of Second Culture is starting. It's
> the premiere group of 'Psycho Surrealistic Neo Dada Band' in these times, for about 130-
> 150 people. [The group has] a medium underground direction, drawing on both UH
> [Umela Hmota] and Bile Svetlo as well as virtually all the Plastic People. […] The
> construction of these [musical]works were also typical for our Androš band- screamed-
> sung voices , half-spoken passages in the music with the accompaniment of monotonous
> rock instrumental passages. (Stárek 1979: 4)

This description is a good example of how a space came to be aesthetically furnished

with sounds ("scream-sung vocals" and "monotonous rock passages") by ensembles (*UH,*

*Bilé Světlo* and the *Plastics*) that were then dipped in to by newer bands (the premiere of

*Psycho-Surrealistic Neo Dada Band*) to continue the space. However, such dipping in to

a furnished space does not determine a sound. Another singer, known as Jim Čert[89], was

described in the same *Vokno* article:

> If I wrote that the previous band's creation essentially did not deviate in any way from
> what is currently understood by the term 'Czech underground', then you can write just
> the opposite about the next prominent singer and accordionist, 23 year-old František
> "Jim" Horáček (from Pardubice). […] Jim, a very quiet and discreet man but completely
> changes when he takes the accordian in his hands and starts to play […] a demonic figure
> and the listener is completely thrown into captivity [….] Jim confessed his love for
> freedom, song, the dream of freedom even with the "aware[ness] of terrible helplessness"
> and nothing else, he has no choice but to have anger. (Stárek 1979: 4)

Even though he had a very different sound than the heavy raw rock of the *Plastics*, *UH,*

or *Bile Světlo*, or even the heavy primitive 'aktual sound' of *Hever* or *DG-307*, Jim Čert

played with a conviction of anger and display of a "love of freedom" thus dipping in to

the Underground emotional furnishings to craft them in his own way while still

remaining 'true to the self'. Furthermore, the description above helps to show how

emotional furnishings (e.g., "anger") emerged through suppression (e.g., "terrible

helplessness") in normalized Czechoslovakia. I now turn to how these emotional

furnishings, musical praxis and 'truth to the self' were configured historically to provide

levels of commitment and actor reconfiguration.


5.3 Re-Placing the Establishment


The previous sections have examined suppressive measures by the regime toward

musicians (e.g., requalification exams, *Budějovická Masakr*) and musical practices within

the Underground. These measures of suppression revealed, via contrast structures with

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[89] Jim Čert was later revealed to be one of the biggest collaborators with the state police (cf. Vaníček 1997:
174-175).

the establishment, what was considered to be the 'truth to the self'. In other words, 'truth to the self' was playing according to one's convictions ("play what I felt inside"), playing with spirit or anger, playing with joy and not forcing creativity into someone else's conception. Considering the suppressive conditions and possible extra-judicial consequences of being one's 'self', a question of 'commitment' to a cultural space is raised. Therefore music, as material for producing knowledge, furnishes the Merry Ghetto for commitment activity.

Using music as an intervening material, I will show how the Underground was able to manage 'commitment' in order to get people 'on their side' on one hand, and on the other, reconstitute others' commitment to a continually shifting and growing cultural space. Jirous' *Report,* through its recounting of Underground events, helped to assemble a historical heterogeneous[90] network, using music as malleable and metaphoric cultural resource for the building of narrative, extra-musical understanding and redefinition of national history as a mode of transport for Undergrounders.

5.3.1 Historical Mediations and Reconfiguration

Historical furnishings were critical in mediating meaning within the Underground. Jirous's *Report* mobilized historical references in ways that presented 'models' of how to be communal. Notably present within the *Report* are references to the 15th century Hussite movement in Bohemia and its leader, Jan Hus. Describing one rural concert in 1974, Jirous (2006 [1975]: 9) remarked:

> [It] reminded us of the pilgrimages of the first Hussites in to the mountains…. As soon as we came to [the village], we said, the lords—today [1970's Czechoslovakia] the

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[90] Heterogeneous understood as both discursively heterogeneous (joining together different realities) and materially heterogeneous (assembling social, economic, political, human, non-human, natural and symbolic material). See Law, www.heterogeneities.net

establishment—would be waiting to drive us away…We dispersed, because today people who want to listen to the music they like, just as in the days of Hus people who went to the hills to listen to the words they wanted to hear, have no other recourse for the time being but to retreat from violence.

Forbidden to play by the vice-chairman of the local council, Jirous (2006 [1975]: 9) continues, addressing such establishment individuals:

He is just one of the many nameless bureaucrats who, since the beginning of the seventies, have frustrated, banned or broken up any such musical gatherings.  He is symptomatic of a time that turns its hatred and suspicion against people who desire no more than to create the type of art and environment that they must create, who stubbornly refuse to let their art be used in any other way than to celebrate those who, with the artists, wish to live in truth.

Within the *Report*, bands who had official license to play were characterized as "submerged into a commercial sea of mental poverty," and that the Underground "was understood in mythological terms of the world as an alternative mentality of people living under the establishment" (Jirous 2006 [1975]: 13)

This historical framing of the Merry Ghetto further furnished the Underground space. It presented models – through metaphors and monologues—for informal learning about how to understand the Underground. Learning how to hear music—through talk and where one would listen—became one way in which Undergrounders were able to reconfigure themselves in an alternative manner; these musical practices of listening and deliberation over music became a key interactive and shared process that produced, and is a product of, collectives.

Before writing *The Report* in 1975, Jirous regularly gave informal lectures on aspects of Czech cultural history in private gatherings at a Prague apartment (Chytilová

2001;)[91]. As Hlavsa commented: "Magor taught us to listen to classical music. Once a week or so we gather at his place. We bought some beers and he lectured to us" (qtd in Chytilová 2001: no page number). Described elsewhere as "running monologues" (Wilson 2006 [1983]: 37), the lectures discussed and explained current Czech rock'n'roll within the course of Czech musical revivals, art history, and political history and how "even in the darkest of times, the Czechs had always been able to keep the flame of culture alive" (Wilson 2006 [1983]: 37). The notion of an underground or second culture, here, is understood not only in relation to the establishment of the communist regime but more broadly as an experiential mode of culture that had existed in the Czech lands (e.g., from the Hussite period)—a persecuted alternative mode of being present throughout the country's history to which the Czech Underground belonged. The broadness of this historical articulation shows how, while the Underground took shape in relation to suppression and communism in the 1970s, it was also placing itself in an historical context taking power from this placement. This has been echoed similarly by Bondy following the 1989 democratic transformation in the country (2006 [1990]: 58): "The history of the Czech Underground is by no means at an end: it goes on despite the changes of the establishment." Here, the Underground is something that stretches back and extends forward, established through the historical connections that were part of the furnishing of the space.

Moreover, the *Plastics's* saxophonist Brabenec, when discussing in 2009 the twenty-year anniversary of Czechoslovakia's Velvet Revolution, underscores this 'unchanging' nature of the Underground's relationship with the establishment:

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[91] See memorial to Plastic's bass player at doorbell to this flat in Prague's Nové Město quarter, Ječná street.

I hate it when people talk about that year as a 'revolution' in Czechoslovakia. A revolution is supposed to change things. But what has changed? I don't consider myself any less subversive now than I was back then. I am no less a dissident in a society of shopping, shopping and shopping than I was in a society of socialism, socialism and socialism. It's all still shit, only different shit. Communist party, Nokia mobile phone party – what's the fucking difference? It doesn't matter whether the system is communist, fascist or capitalist: the creative people are the creative people and the shits are the shits. The poets remain the poets, and the politicians are fucking politicians. So you see: the Plastic People are still the Plastic People. You must remember one thing above all others about this band and our so-called revolution: none of us ever got anywhere. This is what matters most. (Qtd in Vulliamy 2009: 7)

Similarly, Brabenec expresses the irony and frustration with institutional change after 1989 when describing a court procedure in 2003:

Still I am a little bit disappointed. For example the justice system is still really primitive. [In 2003, Jirous, Karásek, Zajíček and I], the four of us who were jailed [in 1976], were up in front of the highest court in the land [to have the 1976 ruling of disorderly conduct set aside], and it was really absurd. Because they were still capable of talking for hours and hours about whether or not our lyrics were vulgar [for which they were originally charged and sentenced to prison in 1976]. (Qtd in Cameron 2003: no page number)

In this sense, Jirous, Bondy and Brabenec outline a 'moveable' establishment rather than one only fixed in the communist period. How did this immutable notion ("the poets are the poets, the shits are the shits, the politicians are the politicians") of 'Underground and Establishment' then start to be mobile? One example is Brabenec, during the 1970s, connecting the Underground with historically subjugated figures. This was accomplished through musical practices of appropriating and adapting Czech philosopher Ladislav Klima's writings to music (composed by Milan Hlavsa) for the *Plastics*'s concert/album 'Jak to bude po smrti' ('Afterlife')[92]. The 1979 concert commemorated the hundred anniversary of the "non-conformist" philosopher's birth (Reidel 2001 [1997]: 22). As Brabenec commented on his affinity with Klima: "He was a Prague drunk like us" (qtd in Chytilová 2001: no page number). Composing music in this manner was similar to

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[92] Performed at the *barák* at Nová Víska

Hlavsa's use of Bondy's 'Total Realism' poetry for the *Plastics's* songs from 1972-1976 (e.g., "I usually composed music to lyrics and tried my best to express what went on in me when I had read the lyrics" [Unterberger 1997]). Thus as in addition to contrast structures with the establishment for the Underground to 'know themselves', we can see comparison structures with other undergrounds or outsiders in a way that served to generate power for the Merry Ghetto by arranging 'togetherness' or continuity with the past.

These comparison structures in turn reconfigured modes of listening. Paul Wilson (2006 [1983]: 20) describes some of his first meetings in the 1970s with the Underground in an apartment in central Prague, consisting of copious amounts of beer and dumplings.

> [Jirous] would put on his favorite records on a battered turntable jacked into an old WWII radio…I lay back and listened to the Velvet Underground, Captain Beefheart, the Doors and the Fugs, and as I listened, I began to feel a depth in the music I hadn't felt before, as though I were hearing it for the first time with Czech ears.

Wilson's quotation shows some of the main characteristics of how this music came to be empowered as exemplary of Underground life: its meaning emerges from the intersection of sounds, talk, sound technologies and social rituals of listening as well as local objects like beer and dumplings. The intersection of these mediations—the musical experience—helps to constitute the Underground space for doing the work of putting one's self together. In the case above, the musical experience afforded Wilson a different form of comprehension or feeling for what Jirous was articulating as an otherwise Czech experience of alternative modes of being. In the context of Underground musicking via listening, the extra-musical contextualization accomplished here by "running monologues and informal lectures" achieved two goals: a reconfiguration of the musical content and a

reconfiguration of the actor's mode of listening and attention from "non-Czech" to "Czech".

For Wilson, reconfigured as someone with 'Czech Ears', the music then became a material for emotionally placing the Underground within an alternative history that might not have been otherwise clear. 'Alternative' was then featured as ways of living that were on the fringe of official society, such as the persecuted Taborites "going to the mountains", Klima as 'a Prague drunk', Bondy's vagabondage in the 1950s, and even contemporarily, as Brabenec puts it, "the poets are still the poets". The cultural space-opening work by Jirous's monologs and Brabenec's musical practices, along with the mediating context of the apartment, people and objects helped to configured the aesthetic experience of music listening by giving a 'preferred or potential' interpretation that was both historically and culturally conditioned: the Underground mode of being helped to reframe and position the Underground listeners along a continuum of suppressed, politicized and outsider culture.

These spaces of listening, as in the Prague apartment, rural settings (e.g. "barns", "the great outdoors") and wedding celebrations helped locate activity in the Merry Ghetto by providing a distinct arena for action. The arena of action, furnishing and furnished with objects, sounds and imagery, aided in paving the way for cultural practices such as "doing it to the max" or "playing with spirit" or "listening with Czech Ears". Additionally, these physical spaces became part of the way in which new connotations of music and localization of Western rock music occurred.

5.3.2 Czechoslovak Mass Media and The Underground

However, managing musical mediators in order to bring people into the cultural space was not only accomplished by the Underground. Czechoslovak mass media consistently attempted to constrict and organize the perceived negative ideological effects of music reception. Such attempts by the mass media was an important part of the "creative constriction" that further helped politicize the Underground allowing for a dissemination of the Underground space across the entire republic. StB agent and "Underground expert" Šimák (1984: 17) points out the regime's post-1968 inadequacies at restructuring popular music:

> In the 1960s, Anglo-Saxon influences came—the oozing negative tendencies began through the transmitter of 'Radio Luxemburg'. Even though we tried, despite all the attempts, we didn't succeed with a permanent positive impact— and didn't manage to create a local model of popular music [regardless of musical competitions] campaigns such as 'We Are Looking for a Song for Everyday', done through Semafor [Theater]. On the other hand, popular music influenced foreign tendencies in socialism. In the years of the crisis [Prague Spring of 1968], the major part of pop music worked as an active tool of counter-revolution (in musicians Karel Kryl, Marta Kubišová, and more).

The police report continues on to take stock of the state's campaigns and criticizes its actions from 1968-1976 for the ineffectiveness at controlling popular music. Consequently, newspaper articles scandalizing the Underground (particularly Jirous), popular shows parodying the Underground and propaganda campaigns against 'long hairs' became the biggest exposure for the Underground and later the Charta 77 signatories, where many people, instead of being turned off, were amazed that this phenomenon actually existed in the country and subsequently wanted to be a part of it.

For example, Čuňas described the effects of the Underground merging with people associated with Charta 77 (discussed below) and the ensuing media response by the regime:

TH: How did people find out about the Underground?

Č: There were people who never got to the music of Plastic People of the Universe at all in the 60s [due to lack of exposure], especially living outside of Prague. Until the year 1976 we [the Underground] weren't that known at all. Essentially it was only known to a very small group of people, like 500 people maybe, from the whole country. There were no means of communication and it was only after the year 1976, after the [trial] when [anti-Underground propaganda] was on the TV, when [Jan] said, "this is it, this is what I want to be". That was a huge advertisement, promo for us. An anti advert, which turned out to be the biggest possible way of advertising, huge like a bull…so ideal in a country under communism. It was the same with the Charta [77] too, nobody would have known or cared about the Charta if it wasn't for the articles and the anti propaganda from the side of the communists. The communists didn't get what was a counter productive advert. (Stárek 2010)

Besides the anti-Underground propaganda being a further way to distribute information, what is interesting in Čuňas's response is how the regime became a trigger, or initiator, of the Underground space. The trigger also points to the phenomenological level at which it worked: 'Jan' wanted to 'be' Underground, which contrasts to 'I like' the Underground, the former designating a state of being, a feeling or a way of life rather than only an aesthetic preference of cultural inclination.

The response also sheds light on the affordances that "a country under communism" provides when the condition is felt as being suppressive. Felt conditions, such as actions of suppression, help to actualize dispositions from belief to action (Lahire 2003: 338). In other words, if you want to "walk the walk", there must be a condition that affords that action—in this case, "a country under communism" provided such a place for action. The communist establishment created conditions (e.g., where people felt alienated from themselves) to which someone could contrast ways of living. For example, 'I don't want to be official, I want to be Underground'. Wanting 'to be' this or that is a matter of how one feels the self at tacit levels and how. For example, returning to section 4.1.1, I

described how Vojtěch Lindaur and Čuňas both dipped in to *BigBít*, however Lindaur remained in the broad non-official space while Čuňas ventured deeper. In this case, although both dipped in tacitly ('knowing by heart' or 'learning by absorption'), Čuňas's dipping in led to a liminal experience of transition, 'going Underground'. Thus both felt what was 'right for them', a form of ontological security or not 'forcing oneself' into a subject position (e.g., square peg-round hole) where one may feel dis-ease (e.g. "one may break down" as Zajíček noted above).

### 5.3.3 Summary: Crafting Underground Musicking Practices

In Chapter Four, I described how aesthetic materials were located and put together to open up the Underground cultural space. Up to this point, here, in Chapter Five, I have traced how these musicking practices came to be crafted within the space into dispositions. The examples described above (by Hlavsa, Zajíček, Čuňas, Vondruška, Synková, Bierhanzl, Brabenec, Čert, Wilson) show how musical practices (composing to lyrics, listening to records, playing with spirit, rehearsing without count offs, adapting poems as lyrics, writing and thinking about music) were linked to aesthetic phenomena (out-of-tune, rough and ragged sounds, sing-song recitation, heavy bass lines, screamed vocals, raw, unmusical) that provided models, through contrast and comparison structures, for learning dispositions (how to feel and know 'establishment', 'truth to self', 'Czech Ears', historical commitment, rejection). In these ways, music provided a technology of self and collective: 1) music became a workspace for composing the self as well as 2) providing a model for that composition while 3) mediating action for how to coordinate and organize behavior and 4) a way to perform the self.

The establishment, as shown above, was developed through contrast and comparison structures both in musical practices (appropriating and adapting poetry) and extra musical practices (monologs and lectures). The establishment was thus constructed as a mobile phenomenon, present at many different points in Bohemian history and therefore implicating other undergrounds and outsiders (Taborites, Bondy, Klima). Crucially, this assembling and framing of the relationship between establishment, 'truth to self' and music provided an entrance point that aided in setting up a pairing between the Underground and established Czechoslovak dissident opposition.

## 5.4 The Underground, Charta 77 and Dissent

Up to here, I have covered the development of the Underground from its proto-underground bases in the early 1960s to, roughly, 1976. We have seen how the Underground began to develop an ethos during this time that employed contrast and comparison structures to the establishment as well as arranging emotions (anger, stubbornness and joy) to help prime rejection for immunity and communing for ontological security. In part, these emotions and dispositions were made clearer through different forms of suppression by the regime: suppression of creativity and imagination by not allowing bands to play publically or in ways they wanted to; as well as physically suppressing concerts as shown by the *Budějovická Masakr* in 1974.

During this time period described so far, we have seen how Undergrounders have divided up this Underground history in reference to "phases" of the *Plastics*. In phase one, as described in 4.1.4, the *Plastics* had official status and were considered the 'successors'

of psychedelic music in Prague, approximately from 1968-1970. Phase two, as described

starting from section 4.2.3, saw the Underground develop through semi-public

performances to invitation-only events, usually being organized outside of Prague.

Within phase two, Underground samizdat and bands were plentiful, as evidenced so far in

this chapter. To celebrate the wedding of Ivan Jirous, the Underground organized the

'Second Festival of the Second Culture' in Bojanovice (north Bohemia) on 21 February

1976. Here, or rather after Bojanovice, is where phase three of the *Plastics* and the

Underground began, as Riedel (2001 [1997]: 20) has commented: "the Plastic People's

journey to the Underground was completed."

Although the 'Second Festival of the Second Culture' went on without any

disturbance, police raided apartments and arrested twenty-two people in Prague related to

the Underground in March 1976 (Ryback 1990: 146). In issue 12 of *Vokno* in 1986,

Jirous describes these tense days of arrests:

> I was the last one to be arrested from the first group they went after. A few people knew
> where I lived. Everyone from our band knew, but they probably didn't tell [them]. On
> March 17th, they arrested Zajíček, Mejla, Pepa, Charli, Pajka, Londýn, Kocour, Skalák
> and Čuňas. On the 18th they arrested Svata, Vrata and me. In the next days—from 20
> March to 6 April—they came for Vožniak, Kaba, Kindl, Kukal and Alfred. The last one
> to be arrested was Eman. Nobody was interested in him, which he hadn't known, so he
> was sitting at home, shaking with fear. In the end he turned himself in on April 7th so they
> took him, too. (Jirous 1987: 123)

Subsequently from this group, "Ivan Jirous was sentenced to eighteen months, Pavel

Zajíček from *DG-307* to twelve months and Vratislav Brabenec and Svatopluk Karásek

to eight months in prison[93]" after a three-day trial on 23 September 1976 (Reidel 2001

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[93] A separate trial also began at this time in Plzeň for the 1975 event. See footnote 86. (Reidel 2001 [1997]:
20).

[1997]: 20). The musicians were found guilty of *výtržnictví*, usually translated as 'hooliganism' on the basis of Article 202 of the Penal Code (Ulč 1974: 29).

During the 1976 trial of members of the Underground, former supporters of the Dubček regime[94] along with leaders of Czech cultural opposition (as Wilson describes below), protested against the Undergrounders' persecution as an assault against the human rights of all Czechoslovak citizens. From this persecution of Undergrounders, the human rights initiative Charta 77 was created in January 1977, which called on the Czechoslovak government to uphold the human rights covenant inscribed in the Helsinki Accords that it had signed in 1975[95]. The trial ultimately led to diverse groups (Underground, dissidents, 'established' cultural opposition) to coalesce loosely into an opposed front to the communist regime (Havel 1990 [1986]: 126-128).

Paul Wilson discusses this period in Prague that lead up to the creation of Charta 77 as a result of this trial:

> So, you had this whole literary scene around [Václav] Havel and Ivan Klíma and Ludvík Vaculík who were putting out samizdat and so on [during the 1970s]. Then there was a group of Catholic intellectuals who were trying to develop a kind of 'philosophical resistance', if you like, to the regime. And, there were people trying to keep Czech culture alive in very different ways. Somehow, at about 1975-76 these scenes began to 'cross-fertilize'. Havel became interested and then when these and other musicians were arrested in 1976 and put on trial, Havel took a very deep interest in this trial and actually got in to observe it. He then wrote what I would consider a seminal essay in Czech

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[94] During the late 1960s, some Czech authors saw a proliferation of international exposure as a result of the decrease in media control; for example, playwrights Pavel Kohout and Václav Havel both achieved international success for their work in theater, which increased not only their prestige and royalties, but also their social capital in the form of international contacts. As both individuals became active in the political dissidence following Dubček's reforms, these contacts would prove critical and pivotal in the steps leading to the challenge of power to the state.

[95] "The Participating States will respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion." *Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, Final Act* Helsinki 1975. http://www.osce.org/item/4046.html

Underground literature called 'The Trial' which is a reflection of Kafka [and his novel "The Trial"]. The point that was made there was that [Havel] felt that people with a high international profile like himself and Klíma and other writers were living a kind of protected existence. And, that these kids were exposing themselves to brutal repression - I won't say the most brutal but certainly brutal by the standards of the day. And it was up to writers to stop living this protected existence and start defending these people like the Plastic People and other bands, who were being repressed with no protection whatsoever. So, that sort of spirit and that observation led to the creation of Charter 77, which involved members of the Underground signing it, and people from the literary and philosophical communities all signing this document. What was significant was that the Plastic People of the Universe were the catalyst that brought these elements together. I'm not saying that there wouldn't have been a human rights movement in Czechoslovakia without the Plastics, but they became the first sort of 'cause celebre'. (Qtd in Vellinger 2005: no page number)

The involvement of different groups (literary, philosophical, Catholic intellectuals, established dissidents) with the Underground via Charta 77 thus introduced a series of actors, practices and objects into the Underground. This merging transformed the Underground into more than an internal annoyance, threat or problem for the regime, but as a representation of regime's neglect of human rights within international politics. Merging, here, is understood as indicating a blurring of groups (Underground and dissidents), spheres (public and private) and production (creative, informational).

At this moment—the 1976 trial—the Underground became news for global media. Such global media attention helps to show how the *Plastic People* later came to symbolize the entire Underground and embody near hero-like accolades from the press, other musicians (e.g., Lou Reed, Gary Lucas) and governments (e.g., Hlavsa visiting Clinton in the White House). Charta 77 and Western media (from the New York Times to Amnesty International to The Socialist Worker) entered an articulation of institutional resistance and opposition into the cultural space by linking up the political philosophy of human rights with musical practices. In part, the ubiquity of music across cultures was

the lynchpin in exposing the regime: "*How could someone be persecuted simply for playing music?*" was the implicit undertone in much of the Western press.

An analysis of the regime's popular music regulations from Charta 77's 'Document no.13[96]'(issued on 20 November 1977 and presented alongside texts as Jirous' *Report* in the album booklet 'Egon Bondy's Happy Heart's Club Banned'), illustrates how Chartaists also pointed to suppressing governmental measures as indicative of a breach in human rights and one's right to live how they want:

> Popular music is throttled and smothered not only by the way it is policed, but also by how it is administered. Musicians both amateur and professional are allowed to perform in public *only* after they have auditioned in front of a commission representing a licensing or booking agency or institution. It is general knowledge that the main criteria of such auditions are not musicianship or artistic worth or originality but 'political consciousness'--policies and propaganda. Musicians are tested for their theoretical knowledge of music, whether or not this is relevant to the type of music they play. And the Juries usually consist of people whose tastes in music are, to say the least, conservative. And even if they were not, their decisions can always be overruled by the head of the agency or institution in questions. This happened to Plastic People in 1973, when they were granted a license to play and then two weeks later had the licenses rescinded when the director of the Prague Cultural Centre decided that their music would have a 'negative social effect'. (Charta 77 1978: unmarked page)

Both the Chartaists and Underground approached the regime as a 'suppressor' of lifeworld conditions, not only to just playing music but how "policing and administration" affected people's ways of living. Thus, how the dissidents in Czechoslovakia were able to map their philosophical and existential goals upon and with the Underground is clear in

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[96] Vilém Prečan (1987: 1) describes Charta 77 documents released throughout the 1970s and 1980s: "At first the only documents the Charter sought to publish, apart from communiqués on particular issues, were general statements on human rights in Czechoslovakia agreed to by diverse signatories. As of October 1978 though, Charter 77 started publishing a series of documents containing the viewpoints of individuals or groups of authors, sometimes from outside the Charter circle that would otherwise stand no chance of being published. In so doing, the Charter helped promote a freer exchange of views and mold public opinion. Such documents are published with a brief attestation from Charter spokesmen, confirming the document's authenticity and declaring that the opinion does not necessarily represent the views of other Charter members."

that 1) there was a contempt of the regime's structuring of society 2) this was remedied

through the articulation of the value of integrity in response to the regime's structuring

and 3) culture was a means to posture integrity enacted at psycho-social and collective

levels. Moreover, this contextual understanding of culture within the conditions of a

communist political regime fostered political consciousness and praxis (based on 'moral

value') that was exportable to any sphere (home, national, public, private) where forms of

suppression occurred.

### 5.4.1 Signatures and Dissent

New practices entered the Underground as a result of the formation of Charta 77. For

example, signing the Charta (and any of its associated documents) became the primary

commitment mechanism of Charta 77[97]. This inevitably politicized the Underground

space. Bierhanzl describes how signing the Charta brought new interpersonal and

intersubjective problems for some people associated with the Underground:

> [My friend who I had recorded some concerts with]…the police took him for one year as a [secret] agent, but [asked him] nothing about recordings or Plastic People. Only for Charta [information]—they asked him for [information about] Dana Němcová and Karásek. They pressed him [because they had information on him] about some car accident. I don't know if it was true or not, he signed [the agent contract] for one year. After one year, he sent a letter to Václav Malý, who was the speaker of Charta and talked with Dana Němcová that he had signed the [secret agent] letter. It was the so-called 'de-conspiration' so then he was not active for them [Charta]. He is a bit frustrated from that. I was interrogated 3-4 times in the '80s. But no file. They didn't ask me about recordings, but probably they knew about it. Once it was like for other [not Plastic People] recordings…for this 'Hello-Fellow' recording. They asked me for people, documents of Charta because I was also a Charta signatory. (Bierhanzl 2011a)

Similarly, Brabenec explains how signing Charta 77 shifted the space:

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[97] Prečan (1987: 1) accounts over 1,200 people signed the Charta in the first ten years (1977-1986). It was available for anyone to sign.

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Our position was that we didn't want to be dissidents, and be 'on the other side of the barricades'. We were being ourselves. They were our expressions, our ideas, but we didn't want to fight openly against the Communist regime. After 1977, when I signed Charta 77, I was classified as a dissident. But the real meaning of the word 'dissident', you have to be '*dissidus*' from something. We didn't fall from the Communist Party. We didn't fall from the Young Communists. We were by ourselves. The Underground wasn't organized. We just invited a few friends to some gigs. That's it. (Qtd in Cameron 2003: no page number)

Furthermore, in a 1983 interview that appeared in the Index on Censorship, Brabenec describes the attention he received from the state police as a result of signing the Charta (part of the aforementioned *ASANACE* ["Clearing" campaign]):

Last year I was interrogated a lot and finally they beat me up, saying that I had two alternatives: emigrate or go to prison. They told me that if I wanted to become a martyr, they would be happy to oblige. During another interrogation they said I should be careful of the edge of the table, because I could quite easily break my teeth on it, which would make playing the saxophone a little difficult. They make you imagine these things…After that they would come to our flat in the middle of the night to ask what my decision was. So I applied to emigrate. I certainly did not leave in search of a better life. I very much doubt that the West can provide me with the same sort of magical atmosphere to practice and play in. (Brabenec 1983)

These new linkages to Charta 77 in the Underground cultural space served to politicize an individual's lifeworld as "non-political politics" (Skilling 1989: 163). Meaning, how someone lived according to one's convictions (e.g., "We were being ourselves") became a form of oppositional politics in itself. This oath-through-signing has later become a central node in contemporary debates over the legacy of resistance and dissent (e.g., "I was classified as a dissident") during the communist era in Czechoslovakia[98]. Moreover, Brabenec's quotation above from 2003 illustrates how 'rejection' (as an activity in the Underground cultural space) is contemporarily configured, for him, by rejecting the position of the 'hero'.

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[98] 17 November 2011, the Czech government officially recognized anti-communist resistance and, contingent upon proof (e.g., petition signature), the government will give 100,000 Czech Crown (approximately $5500) as reward/compensation.

In part, this rejection of the hero chimes with Havel's description of dissent, which is not a character of 'hero-like' uprising, but rather happening at micro-levels of 'truth to self':

> Those who are called dissidents are not some kind of professionals defending group interest, still less are they political persons presenting themselves as an alternative ruling group. On the contrary, they are ordinary people, living with ordinary worries, and differing from others only in that they say aloud what others are unable or dare not to say. The so-called dissident is simply one who acts only as he feels he must act, and who has been led, simply by the inner logic of his thinking, behavior and work without consciously striving for this or even deriving any pleasure from it, to an open clash with those in power. People who contribute to this independent society [of Czechoslovakia] cover a wide spectrum who create, disseminate, discuss, teach, sing, express, defend, etc. independently of what official institutions demand they should. (Havel 1991 [1978]: 169)

Havel, similar to Brabenec, opposes the notion of a dissident as someone who 'falls' from a political party. His definition by "inner logic" lets us understand dissent as a mode of consciousness, a function of action and reliant on an empowered and aware sense of inner logic. "Inner logic" thus resonates with ontological security and how one can achieve this emotional and mental security. Moreover, "behaving and acting according to inner logic" helps to understand Havel's concept of "living in truth". If we take "living in truth" as simply following one's inner logic, and that sometimes is political, and if we already know that music can afford modalities of thinking and being, then we can begin to see how music was a critical social force in mediating persons' actions during normalization and constituting a paradigm of thinking and being.

Thus the meeting of dissidents and Undergrounders 'fit' at emotional and cognitive levels of experience. In other words, to consider the question of 'what goes with what' when creating cultural spaces, here, 'inner logic' came to be crafted together with 'truth to self' by arranging music within their (the dissidents and the

Undergrounders') deployment and experience of truth, authenticity and integrity. This match worked as a result of a grounded, felt knowledge of the establishment-as-suppressor. A writer in *Vokno* explains the merging of these two groups with regard to the actualizing conditions of communist Czechoslovakia, referencing the 1976 trial of Undergrounders and Charta 77's subsequent formation:

> The Underground, despite heavy reprisals [from] everyone, [had a] thought-provoking climax in jail [because of the] brave musicians of Plastic People and DG-307 in 1976 […] many have already emphasized, [this trial] was one of catalysts that led to the creation of Charta 77. Imagining a similar coalition lived in the West is still quite difficult. (Křehký 1981 [1977]: 46)

In this merging of the Underground and dissidents, music offered resources to think with and generated new resources and channels for resisting the regime. This happened not necessarily by playing music differently for the Underground (e.g., if they were to start writing protest lyrics after merging with Chartaists) but rather by generating collective oppositional power through togetherness. The *Vokno* entry above, written five years after the 1976 trial, evidences how the Underground began to remake connections, informed articulations and momentary explicit political activations to their music and its meaning: imprisoned members of the *Plastics*'s "bravery" emerged not just by playing music according to one's self (as was articulated by Jirous in the early 1970s) but had now taken on a distinctly institutionally politicized bravery through imprisonment. This form of bravery was highly exportable to both the West and to Czechoslovak dissidents.

Certainly, then, there was an official rebuttal to Charta's creation. Of one many reactions the regime made, one of the most public was the text titled 'For New Creative

Acts in the Name of Socialism and Peace[99]' (the so-called 'Anti-Charta'), signed by

many of the most prominent official artists, writers and musicians in the country. The text,

while commemorating the thirty-year anniversary of the liberation of Czechoslovakia by

the Red Army, criticized the 'anti-humanitarian agents of imperialism' within the country.

Musician Michal Prokop (2007), who played professionally in Czech *BigBít* bands from

the 1960s (e.g., *Framus Five* [Lindaur and Konrád 2001: 38-39]), describes signing the

Anti-Charta:

> It wasn't until later that evening [in 1977] when I saw it on TV, when I saw exactly what
> it was I had signed and how it was being used...that I realized for the first time what a
> terrible thing I'd done. I have to admit I'm still ashamed of it to this day. When me and
> some of my friends watched it on TV that evening - and some of them are now very well
> known people in the music business—well...some of the women burst into tears. It
> certainly wasn't a very pleasant feeling I can tell you. As musicians who worked for an
> [official] agency we were always being sent to various meetings where someone would
> lecture us about something or other—we saw them as a necessary evil. Sometimes we
> went because we were being watched and had to go, otherwise they wouldn't have let us
> carry on playing. So when this thing [Anti-Charta] happened I just took it as another
> boring meeting. I had no idea we were going to be asked to sign something which would
> become so important. It wasn't until 1989—when I started signing those petitions for the
> release of Václav Havel, when I managed to find the courage inside myself, and when the
> regime collapsed, in a matter of days—that I suddenly realized that all along the worst
> thing had been the sense of fear. It was the kind of fear that made people do things that
> they probably didn't have to do. But they did them because they thought there was no
> other choice. (Qtd in Cameron 2007: no page number)

However, while Charta 77 carries the legacy of dissident resistance in the Czech Republic,

Čuňas describes how it was not as influential as other dissident initiatives in other

countries:

> Č: We were also playing with the idea of our own radio station; they [Solidarity] had one
> in Poland, an illegal radio station. We thought about it, but we didn't have the means and
> the energy, but we thought about it, fitting it inside a car, go somewhere play and then
> leave.

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[99] *Za nové tvůrčí činy ve jménu socialismu a míru*

TH: So you didn't have any stations in the end?

Č: No, there wasn't one here. No energy, money, means nor the technology. Poland had so many people and much better opposition. Millions of people signed their charter and here only one thousand. It was a different situation though; they had 'Solidarity' and a military state. Well here it would have worked after August '68, millions would have signed it then, but after '77, they were happy, at their cottages, with cars, at home hating long-haired men. (Stárek 2009d)

Regardless of the Charta 77's political effect in comparison to other countries, or even the national campaign against Charta, the merging of dissent and dissidents within the Underground cultural space served to open up new channels of resource procurement and dissemination.

### 5.4.2 New Linkages

In spite of new connections between the community of dissidents and the Underground, direct interaction between these groups was minimal, for example, when addressing such concerns as who would be the next spokesperson for the Charta 77. Instead, the merging of these groups opened up new resource channels for crafting the parallel ecology of the Underground cultural space, as Bierhanzl explains:

TH: How was the Underground relationship with Chartaists?

IB: We got some financial help from Charta. Probably from Sweden because there was the Charta fund. So we've got some money to buy tapes, but not so much. For example, it was not enough to buy a recorder, yeah, it was later in the 1980s when they bought some video cameras and recorders and so on but not during this late 70s or early 1980s. We got a lot of equipment from England. I do not know the financial sources, but one of the figures involved was Chris [Cutler[100]]. We got a mixing console, HH—everything was from HH. Then we got a bass amp.

TH: How did they get it to you?

IB: They sent it to us by mail; it was quite a strange situation. For example, the bass amp plus this big box was sent to the writer Václav Ludvík. And there is a crazy story from

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[100] Percussionist in groups *Henry Cow* and *Art Bears* who performed in Czechoslovakia in the late 1970s.

him about it. When, you know, the police asked why do you need this, he said, "well, you know, my sons are playing in the garage." [laughs]

And then the police, they made some problems—I'm not sure why—but finally he got it. It was for Mejla [Milan Hlavsa]. [laughing]

TH: Who was sending you this equipment?

IB: I think Chris Cutler, he was some kind of executive manager for this, and maybe it was paid for by the Jan Pallach Foundation or Kabin. Or the Charter Foundation. They were in touch with Chris and he was a musician and some people, some friends were coming here from the UK. So then we got two other amps for Mejla and for guitar. I think it is still being used. PPU have three amps, a mixing console, which are somewhere in Pepa's basement and Mejla's bass amp, which is not working anymore, but it was very helpful for many years. (Bierhanzl 2011a)

As Bierhanzl continues, the newly formed networks to the West via Charta contacts also allowed for the Underground to smuggle material out of the country:

There is one package missing…we made one documentary with Brabenec, his last one before he left [emigrated]. So then we sent the package to the West through some diplomat couriers—it was the same with tapes, like 'Passion Play' or 'Leading Horses'—they were sent through diplomatic couriers and embassies here [in Prague]. British, Canadian, Swiss. There were some people from Charta who were in touch with people in embassies…I brought the package to Dana Němcová at Ječná and she gave it to someone else…some secret person…but probably the StB were watching all these people.

There is a story about the cover for [the *Plastics'*s album] 'Půlnoční Mýš'. Because the painter was an agent. He brought the cover to the Canadian embassy, but secret police somehow crashed the picture because there was no chance to stop the production, only this way.

One package of films is missing. No one knows…no one remembers…who, what, when. One package was part of an archive in the US and this package went through London via Pallach Press then to Zajíček in Sweden and then he sent it Pasquet [at SCOPA Records] in Paris and then it sat in his garage. (Bierhanzl 2011a)

Yet while new channels of opposition and links were created, who had access to them was restricted. Machovec (2008: 16) asserts that Charta 77 was "dominated by the prominent dissidents, intellectuals, latent political opposition leaders pursuing their own aims…the spiritual and artistic plurality [of the Underground] was subsequently diminished within the [Charter] community." In this sense, the Underground-dissident

merging shows exercise in how size, power and organization are generated where music is only one material within a network. This newly located power was met with increasingly brutal police campaigns characterized by higher levels of police interrogation[101], forced emigration[102], internal exile, extended prison sentences[103].

To elaborate further this police attention, I look to a 1979 happening/event that was talked about in interviews, written on in Underground samizdat and also arose during archival research at the Open Society Archives. Bierhanzl describes the event opening in 1979:

> [The state police] never came to concerts, but they usually got information after. Except once, in Pavel Brunhofer's flat. On Na Plavni street [in Prague]…there is some file on it. Because this Hockey Opera—'Hello Fellow-Ave Clave'—was produced in this flat with some exhibition—[Křižovnická škola artist] Brikcius, some painters. The police got information before. They got this info from more sources—one source was [Jan], he was an agent. He was also, [describes relation via marriage in family]. [laughing] It is complicated. He was a paid agent. He got something like 500 [Czech crowns] per month. They got info about this event from him, but also from other sources. There were about 80 people in this atelier and then police came there. I think this was the only event when these people like Šimák and Dudek were at the raid. It was like, it was not a concert—an exhibition opening—with a short culture program. [They came] because many people were involved in Charta and the Underground. They took us to Betlémská [police station], all of us to the jail for one night and then interrogations. So I think this is the only event when they actually got it. (Bierhanzl 2011a)

Similarly, Undergrounder and Chartaist Dana Němcová (1979: 22-24) wrote an article in *Vokno* describing a private art exhibition in Prague on 30 March 1979[104]. Accompanied by music performed by some members of the *Plastic People*, this "assembly" was eventually broken up by the police.

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[101] Notably the state police '*ASANACE*' (Clearing) campaign.

[102] Pavel Zajíček, Svatopluk Karásek, Vratislav Brabenec, Jiří Němec, Zbynek Benýšek, Vlasta Třešňák, Eugen Brikcius, Josef Vondruška, Karel "Kocour" Havelka, Miroslav Skalický, Karel "Charlie" Soukup, Zdenek "Londýn" Vokatý (Machovec 2008: 10).

[103] For example, "Jirous was imprisoned in the years 1977-79, 1981-85 and 1988-89, and in the years 1985-87 was placed under 'protective supervision'" (Machovec 2008: 10).

[104] Five years to the day after the *Budějovická Masakr*, which Němcová also wrote about and distributed via samizdat in 1974. See section 5.1.

On March 30, 1979 after 5pm, a private opening of the exhibition of easel paintings by Eugene Brikcius took place in the flat of artist Pavel Brunhofer in Prague 1, 9 Naplavni street. [...] Then followed a scene from a Latin-English "soap musical" 'Hello Fello -Ave Clave' [sic]. Singers were Jiri Němec and Věra Jirousová. Music was played on classical instruments, which were provided by some members of the band The Plastic People - Vratislav Brabenec, Josef Janíček, Jiří Kabes, Jan Brabec and directed by Milan Hlavsa [...]

During the course of illegal personal searches there were several objects confiscated without any [legal] confirmation, for example: a cassette with a recording from the opening, two cassettes with recordings of Passion from the band Plastic People, three reel-to-reel tapes, films, typescripts, some material of Charter 77, even a personal notebook with notes and addresses. All catalogs of the exhibition were taken and labeled as "flyers". […]

The whole illegal crackdown on Pavel Brunhofer, Eugene Birkicus and their other friends and guests is of the coarsest threat against unofficial culture. This new method of treatment was a shocking experience, for many people present. The exhibition was attended by many cultural workers, who had otherwise only known of these illegal methods by the ear.
Dana Němcová
Ječná 7, Prague 2 (Němcová 1979: 22-24)

The material configuration of the event further indicates the merging between groups: illegal sound recordings, material for samizdat production (typewriter), mixed Charta 77 documents. The catalog of exhibition was even labeled as spreading socially subversive information as a "flyer". Additionally, the raid began to experientially expose more and more people to the suppression of regime. Thus the mixing of objects and people began to open up Underground space through locating and putting together new associations via experience to produce a shifting form of togetherness.

This new form of togetherness via collision with Charta 77 in turn transformed the musical experience. Jirous (1997: 387) further describes the transformation through the event of the 'Third Festival of the Second Culture' in 1978 at Havel's cottage (a convergence zone of dissidents and Undergrounders):

> The atmosphere of the Merry Ghetto, which has marked all concerts of the Czech underground since the early 1970s, was more pronounced and exhilarating than ever before. The concert took place in a barn, an ideal spiritual venue where there are no distractions and where everyone is aware of one thing: this is the point to which we have been forced back and we can retreat no further. The feeling of danger from without was made concrete by the police, who surrounded and sealed off entire grounds, though they never set foot on private property as they did on July 9th [1977] in Rychnov[105]. Here they let the concert go on without interference.

Jirous' quotation brings to the fore once again the mediation of the physical space (barn as spiritual venue) as well as observing the increased presence of fear and danger, as also indicated through the police raid described above by Bierhanzl and Němcová. Machovec (2011: 234) has commented on this atmosphere of Underground concerts as "*Diablus ex Machina*", (consistent with the Underground symbolism, "Say no to the Devil"). Such emotional materials co-produced with the police became an active part in furnishing the space post 1976.

### 5.4.3 Police Raids, Threat and Fear

In this chapter, the analysis up to now has focused on the Underground's relationship of musicking and establishment. Within these moments of understanding and operationalization of the regime as establishment, the Underground and related dissident involvements were configured by emotional states, particularly fear and/or threat. As a condition of disposition formation, fear entered the Underground after police raids mentioned above at the 1974 *Budějovická Masakr*, the Second Festival of the Second Culture in 1976, Paul Wilson's going away party at Rychnov in 1977 and the 1979 art exhibition (this is to name only a few events). The imprisonment of individuals after the

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[105] Here Jirous is referring to a farewell concert for the Canadian Paul Wilson who, in the wake of increased police pressure on the Underground following the 1976 trial, was deported. At the event, police raided the house of Jan Princ in the village Rychnov in northern Bohemia (Wilson 2006 [1983]).

'Second Festival of the Second Culture' in 1976 shows the shift in repressive regime practices toward the Underground for the remainder of communism in Czechoslovakia.

The increased feeling of fear resulting from the "*Diablus ex Machina*" police raids manifested itself in community activity. Resistance as a remedy to such fear was produced through togetherness as explained in this *Vokno* entry (my italics):

> The New Year's festival [at the communal house in Nová Víska] began in the summer of 1978, maybe a little earlier. Actually, this is not so much about New Year's Eve, or the festival at all. *More of us felt a need to be in a larger grouping*, where we spent a quantity of pleasant hours with music with lots of friends from different parts of Bohemia.
>
> Still being taken into question was: Where? When? How? Is it even possible? [to make these festivals]. Indeed, if we compare the current situation in which our place is underground, to the situation at the turn of 1975-76, we find significant differences. Many cultural events held on the premises at that time were in more or less public places like restaurant halls, clubs, where over a hundred participated…
>
> Mentioned here are the earlier years, when the situation, through all the difficulties, is clear to everyone after reading Magor's [Jirous] 'Report on the Third Musical Revival'.
>
> Quite rapidly, however, the situation changed after the March program in 1976 [at Bojanovice[106]], where there were over 20 arrests, including virtually all musicians of underground bands. Plastics and DG, a rain of [home] searches, hundreds of interrogations, seizure of apparatus, recordings, printed cultural material*, and a deliberately induced permanent atmosphere of fear, threat.* (Stárek 1979: 3)

Similar to how suppression made clearer Underground disposition, here we can see how fear was 'immunized' through togetherness ("more of us felt a need to be in a larger grouping) as a form of 'cocooning'. Here, 'fear' is not based on suspicion of the 'Other' but rather on a grounded experience of threat and danger arising from police action. The imprisonment, arrests and interrogations were triggering events that furnished the Underground space with fear. Such a furnishing, instead of disabling the Underground,

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[107] This was pointed out to me by Miroslav Skalický (Skalák) as he gave me a tour of his home, showing a picture on the wall of a concert of punk group *Energie E* at the Nová Víska barák in 1979.

configured the space, as Berezin (2002: 47) states, as a "secure space" for maintaining

social, psychological and in this case, physical security through togetherness. Svatopluk

Karásek (2004: 14), in a contemporary collection of Underground photography, noted the

emotional co-production of the space through anxiety, threat and fear.

> The special atmosphere of the meetings when nobody knew what will be, what will
> happen. A certain sense of anxiety hung in the air. A stormy police intervention was
> always very likely. Also arrests and violent dispersal were likely. In this anxiety we had
> no fear, rather the feeling of overcoming fear together dominated. Yes, the police
> repression will come—but we will meet despite of it. Nevertheless we will play and listen
> to the music we like. We have to insist otherwise they will take away from us. We lived
> freedom in bondage. It had the semblance of misery but it was glorious. Sometimes we
> acted up and made quite some racket. At other times—when for example Londýn plucked
> the guitar strings—were even, at two o'clock in the morning, so quiet that you could hear
> a pin drop […].

This 'secure space' through togetherness is similarly described by Jirous (1997: 387),

again at the 1978 "Third Festival of the Second Culture":

> The singers Jaroslav Hutka and Vlasta Třešňák made their first appearance in connection
> with the Underground. The establishment has gradually pushed them down to the so-
> called bottom of society where everything that is vital in Czech culture has gradually
> come together in a rare unity….At the conclusion of the festival, [1960s Czech pop music
> star and spokeswoman for Charta 77] Marta Kubišová, accompanied by Jaroslav Hutka
> on the guitar, sang one of Hutka's adaptations on a Moravian folk song […] sung by the
> former star of the Czech pop music scene, became the symbol of the unity that has
> developed over the past few years. A unity that consists in accepting authentic forms of
> expression, so long as behind it there is no ulterior motive and as long as it comes from a
> desire to share it with people of good will.

As the quotation indicates, the new collective had grown in the time following the

Charter 77's formation and imprisonment of Undergrounders—new spaces within the

Underground were made habitable by combining new musical forms (and musicians)

with an emotional furnishing within the articulation of 'truth to self' ("authentic forms of

expression") through musical practices.

### 5.4.3 Summary

In this section, I considered the merging of the dissident group Charta 77 and the Underground. Rather than struggling over limited resources within a field, music and individuals co-produced a cultural space that generated resources. Indeed, such a response to the regime in itself reveals more cultural resources. This merging of groups highlights that even more than a channel of political opposition, new practices of togetherness emerged as result of increased levels of police coercion and fear. This fear was configured in a way to solidify how and why to reject the regime, indicating resistance not necessarily through opposition to something but through communing helping to 'immunize' threat from the establishment.

### 5.5 Conclusion: From Suppression to Commitment

This chapter has aimed to explore how dispositions take shape, adapt and attune to conditions and technologies of power and self that helped Undergrounders live in (and become conscious of) a 'truth to the self'. I first looked to how members of the Underground understood the communist regime as 'establishment' by examining a widely distributed samizdat text and considering its mediating effects on Underground consciousness. This was done in order to be able to take note of how dispositions within a cultural space are formed through reflection and emotional posturing in relation to music. At the center of the Underground conception of 'establishment' is a series of state organs, structures and actions that suppress one's ability to be 'truthful to one's self'.

Additionally, I have tried to describe how these constraints of establishment came to reveal political moments by operationalizing, from Undergrounders' own perspective, 'the political' as a state of 'truthfulness'. In turn, such operationalization allowed for a merging with dissident circles in Czechoslovakia after 1976, thus politicizing the Underground cultural space. This 'non-political politics' emerged through their everyday experiences within micro-publics and contact with the establishment and thus problematicizes 'the political' and how the Underground used music as a 'problem-solving' mechanism and mediator for their conception of 'truth to self'. Music and sound, as aesthetic material used to furnish the space together with poetry, literature and visual art, provided a paradigm-constituting device, crafted in the space to take on phenomenological resolution qualities as it provides, in the words of Frith, a "real experience of what an ideal could be" (1998 [1996]: 274).

# CHAPTER 6: CONVERGING ON GENERATION

In the previous chapters, I have addressed how the communist regime took repressive steps toward limiting non-official musicking through cultural policy. By the end of the 1970s in Czechoslovakia the regime increased such methods by using suppressive police measures such as raiding concerts, imprisonment and forced exile. At the same time, the beginning of the 1980s saw shifts across the country along with centers (both municipal and regional) of musical activities. Accordingly, Czech mass media published articles deploring New Wave bands and TV spots scandalizing long-hair, rock music and drug use. However, as I have shown in the previous two chapters, a heterogeneous mix of sounds, discourses, images, values, and norms had been located and crafted by the beginning of 80s creating a matrix for action.

This chapter aims to engage in the broader parallel non-official culture that emerged in Czechoslovak late socialism and to move the time line of my study forward to address some of the characteristics of the Merry Ghetto in the 1980s. In particular I look to sites of resource generation within the growing non-official cultural space. In order to do so, I draw on Reid's (2010: 14) concept of "convergence zones": sites of aesthetic display, transculturation and learning. Reid's investigation of convergence and contact zones at the 1958 Brussels Expo regarding the American and Soviet Pavilion draws attention to configuring mediators and forms of appropriation and bricolage within such zones, wherein "multiple connections and cross-fertilizations" are constituted by and through interaction. Employed here, convergence zones help to show how different cultural spaces may come to "cross-fertilize" each other.

Convergence zones thus help to reveal mechanisms of how individuals in the 1980s dipped in to different cultural spaces that were furnished throughout the 1970s. In turn this 'dipping in' during the 1980s blurs official and non-official boundaries, as I will show below. In doing so, I aim to problematize 'generation' by examining it not necessarily in terms of an age gap (although this is certainly a factor) but rather in how new arenas of being and thinking emerged in the 1980s from cultural resources that were crafted in the 1970s. What I mean here is the revolving, cyclical practices of building a cultural space: 1) furnishing a cultural space (e.g., the *Velvet Underground* 'raw' sound circulating through LPs during the 1960s); 2) people dipping in to the furnishing (e.g., Hlavsa "entranced" by sound, starts to imitate); 3) this dipping in (e.g., by Hlavsa) becomes crafted and thus makes a new furnishing in the space (e.g., the *Plastics's* repertoire, way of life); 4) people dip in to this new furnishing to generate new areas of the space, which subsequently continue the revolving set of practices. I begin to explore 'generation' in this light of convergence zones between cultural spaces by first introducing another core of musicians and musicking practices during 1970s Czechoslovakia, the Alternatives.

## 6.1 The Gray Zone, Alternative Musicians and Prague Jazz Days

Differing from the isolated and politicized Underground Ghetto, 'Alternative' musicians were an integral part of the 1970s Czechoslovak music culture. Alternatives could be described as those musicians who would have opted to play legally if they could have done so without "compromising their art" (Vaníček 1997: 104; cf. Chadima 1992: 10).

This musical style, mainly exhibited by musicians such as Mikoláš Chadima and Pavel Richter and their various musical incarnations of groups such as *Extempore*, *Klihets*, and *Švehlík* (Vaněk 2010: 265-272; Lindaur and Konrád 2001 93-97), were musicians who were not playing outside official jurisdiction in the 1970s—as Underground groups like the *Plastics, Hever, UH* and *DG-307*—but instead were allowed to play in the so-called 'gray-zone'. In an article in the New Republic in 1986, Czech exile and author Josef Škrovecký (1986: 27) aimed to draw attention to suppression of the officially recognized Jazz Section in Czechoslovakia by describing the gray zone as

> merely the conspiracy of normal people who stand between the fanaticism of the orthodox and the cynicism of the pragmatic on the one side, and the abnormal moral courage of the dissidents on the other. The overt solidarity of these men and women is with Caesar, but their covert sympathies belong to God. They hang portraits of the Big Brother over their desks, but right under their eyes they read Orwell and listen to Charlie Parker. They have no organization, unless human decency is an organizing principal. All ministries, all offices, all schools, all factories are infiltrated by them, and the [official] Musician's Union was no exception. They are the Gray Zone, which makes really existing socialism livable—in fact, which makes it work.

From the early 70s, while Underground groups were playing private concerts (wedding celebrations, Festivals of the Second Culture) and rejecting any contact with official culture, the Jazz Section were organizing official, public festivals such as the Prague Jazz Days (PJD) which drew large audiences and had inclinations to the styles of Chadima and Richter (Wanek 2009; Lindaur and Konrád 2001: 106). These semi-official groups were able to locate a performance channel through the state-recognized organization the Jazz Section as well as sponsorship by smaller trade unions (Alan 2001: 27).

Jazz had managed to find a spot within the musical landscape in the 1970s. Drawing in part on the rich legacy of jazz in the country reaching back to the 1st Republic (1918-1938), this music was more tolerated than the newest trend in popular music (be

that rock, punk, new wave). As Škrovecký (1984: 27) continues:

> A well-entrenched Leninist state can tolerate nuisances; thus jazz in Czechoslovakia was under fire only until Elvis Presley and his gyrations reached first the proletarian dance halls, then the upper-New Class ballrooms. At that point the ideological gunmen switched to the electric guitar.

Amongst their activities, the Jazz Section published their "*polosamizdat*" (partial samizdat) bulletin *Jazz Petit* (Pilař 2002: 72), held jam sessions, disseminated music semi-legally, and organized concerts and festivals (Srp 1994; Kouřil 1999).

In this climate of state prohibition of 'vulgar' lyrics via requalification exams, the musical form of 'jazz rock' started to emerge in 1970s Czechoslovakia, as elsewhere in the world. As a musical strategy, Alternative musicians Chadima and Richter were able to manipulate bureaucratic structures of the state through this musical form: they could play at official festivals sponsored and organized by the Jazz Section because, in part, there were no lyrics to censor and it still fit within a 'jazz' genre. Wicke and Shepherd (1993: 32) describe similar situation in East Germany:

> From a practical point of view, success for rock musicians (as opposed to popularity) rested not so much on audience reaction as it did on the ability of rock musicians to understand and manipulate the bureaucratic procedures within which they were inevitably placed.

Since jazz was officially allowed, many groups started to move in and out of this genre so they could have an opportunity to perform publically.

Thus, as a result of maneuvering within the regime's musical industry structures, Chadima's groups were able to perform regularly throughout the 1970s. Richter also formed bands that would frequently play at PJD (such as *Amalgam*). One of Chadima's groups, *Extempore*, first used musical ideas and imagery of punk in a performance in 1979, signaling one of many entry points of punk rhythms, tonalities and sensibilities into

Czechoslovak music, although this is disputed contemporarily as Undergrounders claim that the first punk concert in Czechoslovakia took place in one of their *baráky*[107]. Another of Chadima's groups, *Kilhets*, sought to explore further by using prepared guitars and homemade instruments that were exchanged between the three central improvising musicians—Chadima, Petr Krečan, Mirek Simaček. The *Kilhets* were intent on remaining anonymous as best as they could, donning masks, robes, hoods during performances (Chadima 2009).

Chadima (1985: 23-24) lays out three periods of Alternative musicians in the 1970s: the 1st 1972-1976, which is characterized by musicians finding the alternative sound, something in between the official and Underground—the band *Elektrobus* first finding success in this sound, which also drew heavily on Zappa-like rhythms, textures, and sonorities. During this first periodization, according to Chadima (1985), musicians were attempting to "use music to negotiate the post-occupation shock and in memory of the good times before 1968 in hopes that it returns" (Chadima: 1985: 23); the 2nd period 1977-1979, here Alternative musical groups began merging with the Jazz Section and PJD, which increased their popularity. The StB also began to take notice of the musicians and started following some; the 3rd period, Chadima continues, is characterized by the "professional death" of Alternative musicians resulting from increased pressure and coercion from the state police. This occurred primarily in November 1981, when state police agent František Trojan set in motion Trojan's Prohibition (Škrovecký 1986: 29)—a ban that included thirty-six categories and names of many groups in the Czechoslovak Alternative scene, such as saxophonist/guitarist Mikoláš Chadima's *Extempore* and

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[107] This was pointed out to me by Miroslav Skalický (Skalák) as he gave me a tour of his home, showing a picture on the wall of a concert of punk group *Energie E* at the Nová Víska barák in 1979.

*Švehlík*. In addition, the ban also prohibited the Prague branch of the musician's union to no longer sponsor amateur-level performing groups.

### 6.1.1 Converging on Prague Jazz Days

Prior to the aforementioned Trojan's Prohibition of 1981, PJD and the Alternative groups' public performances helped to set up an important convergence zone in that they afforded a public musical experience where one could be exposed to, and begin to explore, new musical territories, reconstitute dispositions, or witness completely new sounds that served to generate new modes of being and knowing. Bierhanzl explains performances at the beginning of the 1980s:

> TH: So there were no Underground concerts in the 1980s?
>
> IB: In the 80s, punk was starting, it was a new thing. A lot of these bands playing officially, and the Jazz Section. Šimák was also working on them too. So for them [the police] it was a never-ending story—Underground was over but the Jazz Section was still going. There was much more impact on people because there were many more people involved and they were producing books, bulletins, magazines. And also Chris Culter was here playing with Art Bears in Lucerna [Prague concert hall]. For us, it was miraculous.
>
> TH: How come?
>
> IB: Because it was an English band, very good music, and during a time when they were helping us. He was staying in Ječná [Jiří and Dana Němcová's flat]! (Bierhanzl 2011a)

Compared to the private musical gatherings of the Underground during the 1970s, PJD helped initiate a wide (and young) audience who would come to make up many New Wave bands that appeared soon after. These audience members went on to be notable musicians not only during the 1980s but also at the time of writing.

Jan Macháček guitarist for the *Plastics* on the 1985 album 'Půlnoční Mýš' and later on with Prague New Wave pub-rock band, *Garáž*, considered the importance of hearing Alternative groups at PJD:

> I started going [to PJD] in high school and I was amazed that none of these bands had
> nothing to do with jazz. Kihlets, Jakub [JJ] Nehuda, Psí Vojáci, I was there and I was 14.
> It was amazing. (Macháček 2009a)

Another musician, who began playing in the late 1970s and throughout 1980s, was

Miroslav Wanek, founding member of the punk group *F.P.B* from the northern Czech

town of Teplice (see Čuňas's map in section 4.2.4, Figure 17) and later *Už Jsme Doma*.

Wanek (2009) discussed the process of engagement implied in attending PJD:

> The major festival I joined in that time was PJD in 1979. I fortunately caught the last two
> of them. This was initiation for me. I remember this moment really: I used to play with
> this hard rock band Electron, it was a band like many others— not too discothèque but
> hard rock—all cover songs. So I played in that band and I joined that festival and I saw
> Psí Vojáci, Pavel Richter—Kilhets—Henry Cow, or Artbears at that time—and many,
> many others. For me, I never heard anything like that. From Teplice [Northern
> Bohemia]—nothing. And for me it was like a miracle—it opened a big window and I
> joined it immediately. I left Electron immediately and started F.P.B several months later.
> (Wanek 2009)

Both Wanek and Macháček echo each other: the musical experience of PJD not only

provided new listening opportunities but also transport to an alternative space. PJD as a

site of contact for the converging musical materials—both local (Alternatives) and abroad

(Henry Cow) (Lindaur and Konrád 2001: 98)—provided resources to begin, enhance,

elaborate, and constitute non-official courses of learning ('it opened a big window and I

joined'). This process of learning included the highly reflexive configuration of a social

psychological and emotional mode (DeNora 2000: 47–49), in other words, they heard

music they remembered as resonating with them ('it was a miracle', 'it was amazing').

For one of my respondents, Wanek, it made possible a new form of creativity (writing his

own songs) and social agency (confidence in starting a new musical group). For another,

Macháček, it was transformative in that many of his future collaborations built on his

musical experiences at PJD. The fact that both are still performing regularly today

illustrates this even more so and helps to see how narratives of the past continue to generate musicking sensibilities in contemporary time. The convergence zone at PJD supplied the conditions and provided the resources for both to appropriate as resources for future action during the 1980s.

However, only the legacy of PJD survived on into the 1980s. At the ninth PJD in 1979, one of the section's members and festival coordinator, music critic Josef Vlček, used the opportunity to distribute via the ninth PJD festival newsletter a twenty one-point list of musical challenges for Czechoslovak musicians. Included in these points, amongst many, were critiques of music's subordination to political and ideological systems, a call for musicians to use tape cassettes and provoke audiences with their ideas, and an assertion that state musical tests are not *sine qua non* to be an artist.

The tenth PJD went on in 1980 with relative ease but the eleventh was not held until 1990. What ensued following Vlček's challenges, the popularity of the PJD, and the expansion of the Jazz Section membership led to a drawn-out criminal investigation by the state police and eventual liquidation and dissolution of the Section by 1985 and it's leaders thrown in prison (Bugge 2008: 293).

6.1.2 The John Lennon Wall

Yet with such state suppression being exercised, moments of collective effervescence came together via musical materials. Many of the new features of the 1980s non-official space all converged on one *lieu de mémoire*, a site that acted as a 'container' of memories (Nora 1989). This occurred through commemoration practices surrounding John Lennon's death and more precisely, coming together at a spontaneous, unprecedented

public demonstration in the center of Prague in 1985. Here, the 1960s non-official cultural space re-entered the 1980s in a new political context, new forms of political activism were tried out and the 1968 occupation began to inflect the space in public display. Using descriptions from two different samizdat sources, I describe the protest march in order to illustrate the coming together of public displays of protest and the blurring of musical streams (although not a specifically Underground event, per se, the Underground participated by publishing and distributing accounts of the march in *Vokno*).

*Lennonová Zed'* (The Lennon Wall) is situated in the center of Prague, tucked away on a quiet street of the Malá Strana quarter. The Lennon Wall started as a spontaneous commemoration of the musician on the day of his murder and continued annually (although people congregated there other than the date of his death). It was a space where people could scrawl their thoughts of peace and music and champion the Englishman: "You were not a god nor a king—you were one of us"; "If you have love, you have all"; "Get Back John!". An outline of a tombstone adorned the wall with the simple epitaph "For John Winston Lennon", with candles, photos and flowers always in constant rotation.

By 4pm on 8 December 1985, five years after the death of Lennon, these curvilinear streets of Malá Strana began to fill in anticipation of a commemoration to the former Beatle. Black letters of "When will there be peace, John?" were spray-painted below a portrait of the musician (Anon. 1986: 10). People lay flowers and sang Beatles melodies and lyrics as police watched. One young man shouted for gathers to contribute to a petition. "Stand up and sign your autographs!" he shouted and then proceeded to read the text of the peace declaration: "I declare, as part of the youth of Czechoslovakia, that I

disagree with the deployment of any number of nuclear weapons on both sides of Europe"
(Anon. 1986: 11).

By 5.30pm, more than six hundred people had gathered, when at this time the
police began to call for everyone to disperse. Many went to nearby Charles Bridge and
nearly one hundred others remained at the Wall. On the bridge, the group began to gather
momentum and started to head to Old Town Square, shouting 'We want peace, we want
freedom' and singing more songs of the Beatles. "To Hus!" they shouted, signaling the
movement of the crowd to the statue of 15th century Czech martyr Jan Hus, which
inhabits the center of the square. More singing continued, but now also songs of folk
artist Jaromír Nohavica and Karel Kryl, the former being a folk singer who left the
country for West Germany in late 60s and famously penned the song, '*Bratříčku zavírej
vrátka*'[108] which describes the events of invasion of Czechoslovakia in August '68
through two brothers listening to their parents in the living room (as discussed in Chapter
Seven).

The crowd continued through old town, passing at the bottom of the central
square Václavské náměstí, arriving at Národní Třída (which four years later in 1989
would be the site of aggression between students and police), chanting more slogans such
as "Long live peace" and "Flowers in place of weapons". Nearing the end of the
pedestrian zone, they walked down the middle of the street. Amongst the chants for peace,
marchers also shouted "Gone with the Red pests!" and "Gone with the SS"—not the first
time the state police of the communist regime were put in the same category as the Nazi
SS. Singing of Kryl, Lennon and Nohavica continued, along with Seeger's "Where have

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[108] "Little brother, close the gate"

all the flowers gone," part of the repertoire of the amateur musicking 'tramping'
phenomenon.

The crowd then continued to the National Theatre, across the bridge 1st of May
[now Most Legií], up Hellichová and up Karmelistká street and to the Prague Castle
where it was stopped at 9pm. Then, the marchers began to sing the national anthem. A
walk that would normally take about forty-five minutes to cover by foot took over four
hours—only stopping when the uniformed police started taking numbers of identity cards,
dispersing the crowd, patrolling and erasing the Wall.

During this time of the march, it is important to note that another concert was
happening. On the opposite side of the river from the John Lennon Wall, there was a
"cultural-police action" (Stárek 1987: 3). Predicting the protest march and intending to
drain people away from it, the city put on a concert in front of the National Library
featuring some very popular bands[109] from that time in order to coincided with the exact
time of the 'Lennoniadu' [Lennon March] (Stárek 1987: 3). The official concert, titled
'Give Peace a Chance', however was offering a much different peace, in the name of
communism, than the one across the river (Stárek 1987: 3).

From this description of the 1985 Lennon protest march, five main points follow:
1) we can see how Lennon, from the outset, acted as a 'mutual musician' in that a large
and diverse crowd all gathered to commemorate his death peacefully. In a sense, Lennon
as a symbol was diverse enough for many people to invest in without exclusion therefore
affording many to participate non-exclusively. 2) Lennon's music that was sung, bound

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[109] *Stromboli* (ex-members of Alternative group *Zikuart*), *C and K Vocal*, and *Marsysas*.

up in the sheer energy of the moment, performed a 'musical wedge': musicking—from simple commemorative lyrics and singing—got underneath people's actions just enough for inertia to snowball into a four-hour musical protest march throughout the city. The event helps to illustrate a further aspect of the non-official cultural space in the 1980s that is not necessarily 'Alternative', 'Underground' 'Jazz' or 'New Wave' but any sort of amateur music enthusiasts who had dipped in to the non-official cultural space (evidenced here by collective singing). 3) This public demonstration returns to the early non-official triggering device (1960s rock'n'roll) to collective action in the 1980s, illustrating a presence of the past and reconfiguration of symbolic resources (from '68-associated Karel Kryl songs as well as putting together 'Red Pests' with the 'SS'). Considering the crafting together of Nazi and communist state apparatus of suppression, this points toward a qualitative, collective feeling of suppression rather than protest based on explicit political ideologies. 4) In the march, one could be 'swept up' in the musicking taking place regardless of any musical skills (singing in tune, playing in time) illustrating how core musicality helped to underpin and pave the way for political moments of protest. 5) The shift from Lennon's songs to Kryl's songs via singing highlights how the non-official cultural space gets into action: it allowed the individual and collective opportunities for learning of the past (e.g., Kryl's songs, Soviet occupation), the present (anniversary of Lennon's death) and future action (i.e., in demands for peace). This last point helps to illustrate a widening change where activism (in the form of petition signing) started to enter in public sphere action.

### 6.1.3 Assembling the New Wave from the Past

Connections and networks as such arising from convergence zones and mutual musicians thus played an important role in the formation of 80s' musical groups. These musicians of the 1980s recorded in bedrooms, lived far outside Prague, grew up in the urban sprawl (panel houses) of the city and consumed cassette bootlegs, exhibiting characteristics that departed from 1960s and 70s non-official cultural space (Lindaur and Konrád 2001: 120). Venues popped up in basements of university dormitories[110], amateur bands were playing at municipal cultural centers[111], and new clubs were opened[112]. Combined with new technology and distribution of cassette tapes, these bands and their music were able to emerge, spread and grow.

*Garáž*, mentioned above, was one particular band whose sound and personnel serve as a convergence and departure from the 70s to the 80s. Forming in 1980 with aspirations of being a punk band, the group's bassist Ivo Pospíšil was a musician from the Underground group *DG-307*. After early change-ups in their musical roster, the group incorporated *Plastics*'s leader, Milan (Mejla) Hlavsa who had also been a member of *DG-307* with Pospíšil (Lindaur and Konrád 2001: 107). Furthermore, Pospíšil shared a job delivering school lunches in Prague (district 3) with guitarist/keyboardist Pepa Janíček of the *Plastics* (Macháček, 2009a). Critically, this led to involvement of frontman Tony Ducháček. Macháček (2009a), describes these connections between *Garáž* and the *Plastics*:

> Tony was like an independent guy, stylish jeans and shoes…his mother was some kind of communist in Prague 3 so she could arrange a visa for him to go to West Berlin. He was inspired by Lou Reed, pre-punk late 70s, so he was never too into Underground or

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[110] Klub 007 (still operating today)

[111] Opatov Culture House

[112] Junior Klub Na Chlemnici (now Palác Akropolis)

experiments. He was like this cool guy so he would sing Lou Reed at work and Ivo heard this and thought that Tony was good looking and could sing. With Garáž we had the chance to play on a stage so I wasn't hesitating. So it was more like a light rock 'n'roll…The Plastics were heavy and dark and Garáž was lazy and people were dancing. Mejla was writing for Garáž..Mejla sort of at that time was alone and he was pushed by [other members of The Plastics] to make classical experimental rock'n'roll but he also had some pure rock'n'roll songs...like Lou Reed and David Bowie material. So he wrote simple things for Garáž and more complex for The Plastics. (Macháček 2009a)

Paramount here are the cultural affiliations, knowledge and capital that Ducháček possessed, which allowed him—regardless of his family's politics—to join up and merge musical trails with other like-minded musicians, an indication that the non-official cultural space was actively being generated through forms of inclusion as a result of shared sensibilities of musicians (e.g., Ducháček could sing like Lou Reed). Moreover, besides creative intentions of playing "pure rock'n'roll", there was the chance for members such as Hlavsa to play publically on stage, which he had not done in over a decade. *Garáž* helped bring members musicians, such as Hlavsa, back in front of audiences, albeit having to perform with a mask, indicating the blurring of the Ghetto into semi-public arenas.

A particular site where *Garáž* often performed was at the Junior Klub Na Chlemnici[113], which allowed bands to play more or less once per month and served to be one of the homes of the burgeoning Czechoslovak New Wave (Lindaur and Konrád 2001: 119; Alan 2001: 28). Some groups employed the simple but effective strategy of changing their name every week (usually only in the headline of the daily newspaper rather than a permanent name change) that allowed them to perform more often but also escape, to a certain degree, consistent police harassment police. *Garáž* were able to play

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[113] Nowadays, Palác Akropolis

almost every Saturday night at the Junior Klub. Macháček (2009b) describes the scene at Junior Klub, which opened in 1982:

> It was absolutely a basic place for everything…it was quite often for Garáž that we would play at 5 and again at 8 and the price was 18kč. It was sold out. It was similar for other bands, too. All these [Prague New Wave] bands were tolerated here…Jasná Páka [later Hudba Praha]…Nahoru po schodišti dolů, Psí Vojáci, sometimes groups playing Velvet Underground covers.  Plus all this independent theater, like HA Theater [from Brno], Theatre on a String [from Brno]…when they came to Prague, they would always perform here. (Macháček 2009b)

In addition to these Prague New Wave groups, foreign groups, such as *This Heat*, also performed in the Junior Klub, adding to the flux of mediators associated with the site. At the same time as Junior Klub was gaining momentum and putting on shows, the cultural center Opatov in southern Prague began to organize concerts for New Wave and foreign groups[114] by Jazz Section member Vojtěch Lindaur (who's *BigBít* LP listening was described in 4.1). Not as attractive as the Žižkov-based Junior Klub, Opatov was a "very ugly communist" building (Macháček 2009b) however it was equipped as a full venue (dressing rooms, private bar, kitchenette). Under the direction of Lindaur, Opatov began to be a central performance space from 1984-85 for bands from Brno (such as *Z Kopce*), Alternative groups who were otherwise banned (Richter playing with Oldřich Janota) and Underground bands from the 'Second Generation' (e.g., Jachým Topol's *Národní Třída*, see section 6.3).

This period not only signaled new directions musically in the non-official cultural space, but also in new geographic regions. Brno, Moravia, an afternoon's journey by car or train from Prague, became a convergence zone where some musicians from Prague— such as Chadima—could go to escape the more suffocating atmosphere of the police in

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[114] Lindaur later lost his position after he booked Nico to perform at Opatov (Lindaur and Konrád 2001).

the capital city (Smrček qtd in Alan 2001: 29; Lindaur and Konrád 2001: 108). This more relaxed atmosphere, combined with interest from music organizers in Brno and south Moravia, allowed for a variety of concerts, festivals and bands to emerge from the region. For example, in lieu of the cancelled eleventh Prague Jazz Days, there was a festival in the town of Veseli nad Moravou featuring the Alternative groups *Extempore*, *Švehlík*, and *Zikurat*.

During the time of the Prague New Wave, Brno contributed its own sound to the non-official cultural space of the country. Between 1982-1984, the 'Brno Scene' thrived among young students at college. Bands such as *Ještě Jsme se Nedohodoli, Z Kopce, Odvážní Bobříci*, and *Pro Pocit Jistoty* populated this scene offering their fans many collective concerts and something different than the sounds coming from Prague, sometimes characterized as being more strange, experimental, and neurotic than the 'hipper' Prague scene (Ferenc 2008). Chadima described the Brno bands in a samizdat article: "They play original music and their texts deserve recognition, not only for their openness and directness with which to describe the world of real socialism but also for their poetic quality" (1985: 24).

Brno's materializing New Wave scene was not unnoticed by the police, though. In June 1983, police began to assert pressure on groups and fans. Radio Free Europe reported on the cancelled concert outside Brno:

> young people […] fell victim to the party's new restrictions on the arts, implemented this year to exercise tighter ideological control over a disaffected younger generation. A number of young rock fans were arrested and imprisoned near Brno […], when their protest against the last-minute cancellation of a concert developed into an impromptu unofficial peace demonstration. About 25 young people were prosecuted and 4 were sentenced to prison because of the incident, which only became known in the West in October. (Winter 1984: 2)

Last-minute cancellations, a tactic employed by the regime at numerous events and concerts since 1968—reminiscent of the 1974 *Budějovická Masakr.*

By 1983 there was a coordinated media attack on the New Wave, accomplished through old methods such as concert cancellations and slandering through media channels (Vaněk 2010: 333-337; Lindaur and Konrád 2001: 112). The news weekly *Tribuna* published an article in 1983 harpooning the New Wave called "New Wool, Old Content", which argues on the basis of both political ideology and a cultural ideology of what is Czechoslovak and what isn't. Although the author went by Jan Krýzl, two middle-aged party bureaucrats apparently wrote the article (Vaněk 2010: 346; Lindaur and Konrád 2001: 112). In parts, it read:

> Primitive texts associated with the primitive music, outrageous clothes, provocative behavior, obscene gestures, the rejection of everything normal, hair dyed green, blue to pink, tattoo crosses, painting color bands on the face...Music is changing, but the life philosophy that "new" wave rock propagates remains the same. In the new guise of youth is presented old content…expressions of nihilism and cynicism, deep non-cultured and ideological approaches, which are entirely foreign to socialist society. Should be characterized musicality, attractive musical ideas, and text should be based on the rhythm of the Czech and Slovak languages.

The article was reprinted in the daily *Rudé Pravo*, however it received a twenty-page rebuttal by the Jazz Section's Josef Vlček defending the New Wave bands (Lindaur and Konrád 2001: 112). The article, continuing with the regime's ideological line of exclusion and slandering served only to spread the New Wave interest in youth populations, similar results to media attacks against *máničky* in the 60s and Undergrounders in the 70s (cf., Vaněk 2010). Moreover, the article has come to take on symbolic significance in the telling of Czechoslovak non-official musical culture. It enters academic texts (cf., Vaněk 2002, 2010), pop music history publications (Lindaur

and Konrád 2001), appears on television documentaries (Česká Televise's *BigBít* serial) as well as having a place in the Czech Pop Museum. Thus, how this music history has come to be periodized and benchmarked is as much about the groups, styles and collectives as it is about the regime actions against it. Nowadays, the article is often employed to situate how 'out-of-touch' the regime had grown during this period.

## 6.2 Emerging of the "Second Generation" of the Underground

As a result of such regime and media actions, the New Wave in Czechoslovakia swelled in surges, with bands reforming and disbanding[115], changing their names and negotiating new changes in the cultural and socio-political terrain[116]. At the same time, Underground groups ceased to perform because of police pressure and in some cases, forcibly suggested emigration (Brabenec 1983: 31, see section 5.4.1). Similarly, PJD was shut down and the Jazz Section just beginning their lengthy trial. The Alternative musicians and groups were being disbanded and some members emigrating. Musicians who had been ear/eye witnesses to PJD (e.g. Macháček and Wanek) or had had the opportunity to attend Underground performances in the Ghetto (e.g., Topol, see below) began to fill this gap.

### 6.3.1 Starting from The Underground: the Second Generation

The demographic growing up in 1980s Czechoslovakia, are self-described as being born into system of absurdity such as life during Czechoslovak normalization. As

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[115] For example, *F.P.B.* regrouping to form *Už Jsme Doma* or members of the *Plastics* forming *Půlnoc*.
[116] For example, the group *Plyn* changing their name to *Dybbuk*, *Psí Vojáci* to *P.V.O*, *The Plastic People of the Universe* to *P.P.U.*

Czechoslovak music historian Aleš Opekar[117] (2005) accounts, "this generation understood the futility of hope in a change of totalitarian social system and finding your inner freedom". Even with a new age and era of musicians, futility in social mobility was present, which similarly underpinned the Merry Ghetto. However, samizdat editor, poet and author Jachým Topol stated the difference of the 80s generation to that of the '68ers as

> those who were not thrown into the world of the banned but were simply born into it […] Above all we were the first generation of authors since 1948 not to have known any sort of life but what the Communists call Socialism [sic]. We were stokers, window-cleaners, night watchmen and drawers of disability pensions just like our fathers and grandfathers and we resembled them in biological and spiritual terms, but with one important difference: we had never known anything else. We were stuck forever in the underworld we had entered as teenagers. None of us knew anything of literary glory and the thought of our books on a bookshop counter was absurd and laughable. (2006 [1990]: 72-73)

Topol's quotation highlights the experiential knowledge of growing up in normalization. In regard to the Ghetto, the first generation of Undergrounders in the 1970s started as music or literary professionals[118], the second did not—they started *from* the Underground. Starting from such a point, as Topol describes, provided conditions for generating new forms of knowing.

Jachým Topol, and younger brother Filip, were some of the few from the younger 80s generation who were witness to the isolated Underground Ghetto of the 1970s and consequently began working from the Underground cultural space from a very early age. Filip, leader of the piano-fronted trio *Psí Vojáci* often using Jachým's poetry as lyrics, started to perform as a young teenager (thirteen years old) in such private and closed

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[117] See Opekar and Vlček's 'Excentrici v přízemí' (1989) for further, descriptions and history of Czechoslovak New Wave. See also Vaněk (2002), *Ostrůvky svobody*
[118] E.g. the *Plastics*, from 1968-1971 had professional status.

settings as performances at Havel's cottage (Hradeček) and Underground communes

(*baráky*) that were scattered across the country (cf., Stárek and Kostúr 2011). One of

Filip's first performances with his group *Psí Vojáci* was at Hradeček in 1978, opening up

for the *Plastics*. Indeed, Havel's cottage—along with many other Underground *baráky*—

served in itself as a convergence zone post-1976 for milieu of sounds and people, that

"brought people together in rare unity" (Jirous 1997: 387). Bierhanzl describes how *Psi*

*Vojáci* fit into this new landscape of musical ensembles:

> TH: Before your work with the Agon Orchestra, you were also organizing concerts. Could you tell me about the concert you organized for Psi Vojáci in Velatrusy?
>
> IB: Yeah, in the castle. I was like the 'first' manager of Psi Vojáci in the very beginning [laughing]
>
> TH: How did you know them?
>
> IB: They were a little bit younger than me, but you know Prague is not a big city so I probably met them sometime. I was always interested in young bands because Plastics were over, DG was over and there was a new generation coming through and trying to play somehow. So we organized some semi-public concerts in pubs and this Velatrusy it was in a basement. I think the father of the guitar player, Krůta, his father was the gardener of the castle gardens so we organized a concert down there. (Bierhanzl 2011a)

In addition to these early private performances in the Underground, *Psí Vojáci* also

performed publically at PJD in 1979 opening for Chadima's *Extempore*, signaling the

increasing amount of convergences between Underground and Alternative streams in, as

Bierhanzl describes "semi-public" venues.

During this time, *Psí Vojáci*'s distinctive sound was described in Underground

samizdat as "smudged piano, wild drums, and cool bass" (Novák[119] (Topol) 1985: 38),

sonically departing from the early psychedelic rock music of the *Plastics*, the destroyed

music of *DG-307* or *Hever a Vaselina*, or the satirical folk of Underground singer-

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[119] Written by Filip Topol however published under pseudonym Jan Novák (equivalent to "John Doe" in the English language).

songwriters as Charlie Soukup. However Jirous (Jirous 1986b: 41), before having first heard them at the concert described above by Bierhanzl, wrote an article in *Vokno* on the band's potential impact and significance within the Underground and for its legacy:

> I listened to Psí Vojáci on magnetofone and felt like I was at one of their concerts. I said about them: for their generation they will have significance as The Plastics had for theirs…The first, and quite unmistakable difference in the musical expression of other Czech Underground groups [is] the major merit of Filip's piano. There are differences in the intentions, but the poetry is filled with the same urgency [as first generation Undergrounders]…The hysteria of Zajíček's texts, Bondy's poems, or Brabenec's litanies, and in [the song] 'Dopis Magorovi' from The Plastic People, I heard the same cry.

Jirous' text illustrates how *Psí Vojáci* was a convergence of past Underground aesthetic resources that generated new furnishings both materially (piano) and symbolically (intentions and urgency). In this sense, we begin to see how authenticity played out in the 'second generation': *Psí Vojáci* subscribed to certain genre rules that had accumulated within the Underground (e.g., "filled with the same urgency", "I heard the same cry") while also challenging via new sounds (e.g., piano and "different intention") and symbols (Frith 1998 [1996]: 71). Because of such authentic innovations, the Topol brothers, along with many others, are often described as the 'Second Generation' of the Underground. In this light, the 'birth' of the second generation shows how the Ghetto had became an "agency sustaining habitat" (DeNora 2000: 129): while the musical material of the Topols was different than other Underground music, it was still connected to the same places, events and people and thus served to innovate and extend the Merry Ghetto.

### 6.3.1 Radotín High School

For individuals as Jachým and Filip Topol, being born into the "absurd system" is only part of the question, the other part being which family one was born into. As part of the

extra-judicial punishments during the normalization era, dissidents (e.g., Charta 77 signatories) were not only putting themselves at risk but also their whole family, friends, and network of contacts. This meant the possibility of excluding children of dissident families from education and work opportunities as a result of the 'counter social' activities of their parents. As a result of these measures by the government, many sons and daughters of dissidents were not allowed to attend schools *within* Prague. Logically, they started to look elsewhere.

The city of Prague began expanding rapidly in the mid-1970s. Cheap housing (*paneláky,* 'Panel Houses') along with the opening of the first metro lines (1974) allowed for the city to geographically encroach on other municipal lines. In the case of one village—Radotín—Prague expanded right around it. Importantly, this village maintained its local government with jurisdiction from Prague and therefore turned into a semi-autonomous municipality within the Prague city limits—a perfect place to study for people who were otherwise not allowed to study in Prague.

Radotín school, then, became a place for youngsters of dissidents to go to school without having to be shipped off to the villages outside Prague (one can reach Radotín by a short train ride). At this school, these sons and daughters met, shared and talked about music and poetry, formed bands and went to the pub. Macháček, who earlier described his experience at PJD, remembers attending school in Radotín:

> There was a courtyard at the high school and at the courtyard there was a cemetery, at one corner by the cemetery there was a place to go smoke, hidden behind a house. Our class was in the basement so when you would open the window to the courtyard you would see all these 17-18 year old longhaired people. So obviously that affected me a lot…but not only smoking but also exchanging books of poetry. And in this smoking

courtyard, there was a little hippie atmosphere or punk atmosphere...or whatever...all these independent people were smoking heavily (laughs). (Macháček 2009b)

Radotín's atmosphere, in other words, provided an ambient culture soaked in converging non-official practices (Brown et al. 1989: 34). Here, ways of speaking, what to read (or what not to read), what to listen to and how to talk about it, could not only be picked up by youngsters but also engaged with in practice—knowing 'what is non-official' became something embodied and situated.

Macháček, while in class with the younger Filip Topol, also became close with Jachým, who was encouraging "more bands and more poetry" (Macháček 2009a). In between and after classes, he recalls, they would go to the pub—this particular pub was situated above the police station in Radotín. Very near Radotín, is the Prague suburb of Zbraslav where the *Plastics* drummer Jan [Honza] Brabec lived. Zbraslav also lacked a police station, therefore Brabec, who was interrogated frequently, was often in Radotín at the police station and would come and sit at the pub where he knew Filip from Underground concerts (e.g., Hradeček performance 1978 of 'Passion Play'). Radotín served as a specific municipal convergence zone that brought actors into contact with each other through musicking in order to generate a network that grew throughout the 1980s.

6.3.2 Musicking in the 80s' Ghetto

Macháček is one musician who often moved fluidly between many musical currents in the 80s. While spending days post-Radotín at the Underground-centric pub Klamovka in Prague (district 6) he would also be jamming in ateliers with people from the Jazz

Section, or playing gigs at Junior Klub and Opatov with *Garáž*. Reflecting on musicking

during this period, Macháček states:

> [Musical scenes were] not black and white…a lot of friends here, a lot of friends there. I
> was always merging. I had [some friends] who were very Underground orientated. This
> one guy's father was a sculptor. They had a house with an atelier and this was used for
> jam sessions and these people were very connected with the Jazz Section. These people
> were very influenced by Jazz Section but also Rock in Opposition…they had all the jazz
> section magazines[120] [talking about] these groups. So through there, these people
> organized jam sessions. I was also very friendly with Jazz Section people; I especially
> liked Oldřich Janota and playing with Richter, from Švelík [at Opatov]. At this time I was
> going to every concert.

It was also at this time of jam sessions, Underground pubbing, concert attending, LP

listening that Macháček began to play with the *Plastics*. By this point in time, the *Plastics*

were not only officially "Forbidden with a capital 'F'" (i.e., phase three [Stárek 2009a]),

but found it hard to play with any other bands because of the amount of state police

attention that was paid to them. The last concert of the *Plastics* took place in the village

of Kerhartice in 1981 (described below) and shortly after some Undergrounders (e.g.,

Brabenec, Zajíček and Skalák) emigrated. However, the remaining members of the

*Plastics* continued to rehearse, compose and record new material.

Macháček began playing with the *Plastic People* when he was 18, some members

being twice his age. An avid listener to the *Plastics*'s albums from the 1970s, such as

their 1978 piece 'Passion Play'. Macháček (2009b) recalls:

> [It was Jan] Brabec's idea. [Jan] visited some of these [jam sessions], and at some I was
> doing these Robert Fripp-type sounds, or attempting to, and [Jan] liked it and [The
> Plastics] needed a guitar player. Jan recommended me to Mejla [Hlavsa] and then we

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[120] The Jazz Section regularly put out bulletins and publications on music and literature. In connection with
other material in this chapter, one particular publication was devoted to John Lennon and Yoko Ono,
featuring a discography of Lennon, lyrics and photographs.

started to practice Půlnoční Mýš. So, I had a couple meetings with Mejla and then he invited me to play. (Macháček 2009b)

Macháček's playing with the *Plastics* highlights the apprenticeship that across many musical cultures is a way to pass down how resources are used within a cultural space. The musicking taking place within rehearsals and recordings for 'Půlnoční Mýš', both in Zbraslav and a cottage in north Bohemia, allowed for Macháček's own musicality, expertise and competence to interact and connect to the other musicians on the recording to produce a form of knowing; emergent knowledge that is often tacit (know-how), relying on aesthetic agency, similar to Tony Ducháček's entrance into *Garáž* by singing Lou Reed. As Macháček describes playing Fripp-like lines, coming out during his musicking in a jam-setting—these lines resulting from Macháček's own listening and informal imitation learning of the Fripp-Eno 'No Pussy Footing Around' (Macháček 2009b). From experiencing PJD to listening attention to LPs to just 'having that feeling'—that intuition is precisely an individual's aesthetic agency and knowledge put into practice and brought into effective action through musicking.

Macháček's know-how of the cultural space and musical expertise, not only in jam and recording sessions but also in extra-musical contexts, shows how individuals could live *in* the cultural space. Non-official spaces often afforded surviving day-to-day moments of public humiliation in school, on the street or in a job. Thus, the cultural space was a place to work from and where the survival of ideas and feelings emerged via relationships and activity as musicking. The cultural space functioned, in other words, in ways similar to those described by Grossberg (1984: 239), in his discussion of rock'n'roll as providing strategies for "escaping, denying, celebrating, finding pleasure, in other words, for surviving within a post modern world," however this assumes to a degree that

the strategies lay dormant waiting to be plucked out by the listener in order to get by

rather than occurring in happenstance situations. Jachým Topol (2006 [1990]: 54)

describes the emergent resources of living in the space through his first encounter with

the Underground:

> I immediately found myself in a world of adventure. It was as if the humiliating
> schizophrenia of school life just ceased to exist. Boredom and the grey streets – broken
> only by the red of the banners – no longer dominated my life. I discovered an existence of
> another world in which it was possible to work, in which work had a point – and it was a
> world of adventure to boot. I did not give a thought to human rights. I did not give a
> thought to socialism, or capitalism, or revolution, or the market economy; not even to
> free speech—they were nothing but abstract notions as far as I was concerned.

The experience within the Underground cultural space described by Topol acts as a map

of a liminality in the journey between official aesthetic—"grey and humiliating"—to the

Underground—"a world of adventure". Machovec (2001: 174, 185) has echoed this

world of adventure as "a space of freedom…a micro world, micro society" from where

one had the "possibility to live". Similar to how the Underground first appeared at Manes

in 1969 (see 4.1.4) it was, at the very least, a suspension of the everyday, and at it's best,

it was a transport to a new modality of thinking and feeling. Topol's worldview was

reoriented to adopt, learn, and create new dispositions as a result of engaging with a

cultural space—tacitly learning from aesthetic experience, which formed a base for a

liminal transition state of being.

From here, it is possible to see how this 'Second Generation', born into

"absurdity", entered the folds of the non-official cultural space. This helps to highlight

how the cultural space generated in the 1960s via *BigBít* venues and touring international

acts became suppressed in the 1970s and then started to bubble up through cracks in

bureaucracy (e.g., performing jazz rock without lyrics), witnessing public concerts put on

through gray zone organizations (e.g., the Jazz Section), participating in highly isolated concerts (e.g., at Havel's cottage) and simply the happenstance of being in the right mix of people (e.g., attending Radotín high school). Along with these points of converging aesthetic material, people and places, Underground samizdat and magnitizdat[121] came to be a critical guide and arrangement of aesthetic material and the non-official space in the 1980s while simultaneously crafting distribution as a creative end in itself.

## 6.3 Engaging Samizdat and Magnitizdat

Throughout the '60s, '70s, and '80s objects came to circulate within the Underground and the non-official cultural space, which helped in co-producing the Underground. The nature of these circulating objects changed from being an addition to musical performances in the 1970s to becoming the primary carriers of the Underground cultural space in the 1980s. Machovec (2008: 2) underlines that the "rich underground activities" of the 1970s had largely become samizdat and magnitizdat activities in the 1980s. According to Smith's account of magnitizdat within the Soviet Union (1984: 91-92) opportunities for musicians were four-fold: 1) keep silent, 2) send work abroad, 3) emigrate, 4) remain and publish surreptitiously. In Czechoslovakia in the 1980s, these four options remained although with two further variations: 5) self-censorship or lyrical ambiguity and 6) audience distribution. It is in regard to this last option that sound technology, both non and re-recordable technology, played an increasingly active role, one in which distribution became, in itself, a mode of creativity in non-official cultural

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[121] Illegally produced and distributed recordings.

production. In the next section I first discuss magnitizdat practices and then turn my

attention to the samizdat magazine *Vokno*.

### 6.3.1 Magnitizdat: Re-recordable technology

Magnitizdat was a key mode of illegal publishing that emerged during communism.

Magnitizdat refers to recording and distributing sonic material that was not available to

the public, music that was banned or censored, sound that could be seen as being

potentially subversive. Magnitizdat, in terms of distribution in the shadow economy or

blackmarket, was not necessarily subversive but instead filled a market gap in times of

shortage (Smith 1984: 91-93). In the Eastern bloc countries, tinkering practices emerged

in settings where resources were limited and results were required quickly but could

produce "maximum effect" through situated experimentation (Busher, Gill, Morgenson

and Shapiro 2001: 23). For example, some of the earliest methods of magnitizdat arose

from discarded X-rays in the Soviet Union in the 1950s: the emulsion on the X-ray

provided a material that could be engraved as one would a record (Ryback 1990: 32-33).

The production and distribution was known as *roentgenizdat,* or, "playing the bones" and

could be played at 78rpm on a seven-inch player.

The forms of knowing learned through radio and LP listening (e.g., "Czech Ears"

from Chapter Five) served to develop practices related and translated to other sound

technology, such as re-recordable technology of open-reel and audiocassette tapes**.** These

sets of practices surrounding the exchange of illegal concerts, compilations and LP-

copies became extensions of practices associated with older sound technology, such as

radio. Reel-to-reel and cassette tape technology facilitated exchange to develop into a

mode of communication in its own right. Simultaneously, the new technology and practices that magnitizdat facilitated during the late '70s and '80s in turn enabled a wider culture of alternative sound as listeners forged new (and highly non-official) practices of musical exchange and recording. Tapes could now be acquired by ordering through samizdat magazines, recording concerts, trading with friends and acquaintances. As tapes came to be associated with innovative practices, the alternative articulations made between music and collective action burgeoned. The once distributed radio listeners were now linked via participant design to multi-actor collaborative interaction involved in exchange thus generating network links in the non-official cultural space.

This burgeoning – and the situation within which distribution became a cultural and political end in itself (even more so when smuggled through embassy channels) – in turn served to augment the contextualization cues previously associated with radio and LP listening. Considering the *Plastics's* 1978 release of 'Egon Bondy Happy Hearts Club Banned' (EBHHCB) on the French label SCOPA, these contextualization cues were much different than the band's intent. The group, along with *DG-307*, recorded the album in the mid-1970s:

> TH: The recording was made at Hrad Houska?
>
> IB: Recording was '75. Or '76.
>
> TH: Could you tell me about how the album was made?
>
> IB: I wasn't there during this recording but I know the situation and the story. It [Hrad Houska] is a castle in the forest. And Svata Karásek was like the caretaker of the castle library and there the first DG recordings were made. If you know this double CD [Historie Histeria on Guerilla Records] it was recorded there. DG used the chapel. The Plastics used another room because the chapel was not suitable for them, too much reverb. They used homemade amps that Janíček made [see Figure 2 in Chapter 3] and a homemade mixing console—it was really, really Underground [laughing]. (Bierhanzl 2011a)

However, while the recording session was done 'in the Underground', once the tape reels arrived in the West, the contextualization cues, along with the album's audience, changed dramatically:

> It was produced in France by Jaques Pasquet. He was a promoter of […] Nico, Magma and all these guys. And he was quite close to people in 'Liberacion', it was like a left-wing magazine, and they were in touch with Petr Uhl here [Prague] with Charta. These [were] ultra-leftists. So there was quite big support from France for the Underground here. They did this booklet [of EBHHCB]. There was a discussion here because the booklet was very political. And it was the impact of these people from 'Liberacion' because they wanted to have these Russian tanks [in the booklet]…so there was a Czech poet, Ivan Hartel, he was in London. Plus people from 'Liberacion' so they did this booklet, and Pasquet with Paul Wilson they produced this vinyl. (Bierhanzl 2011a)

Figure 26 shows Bierhanzl's description of EBHHCB's booklet.
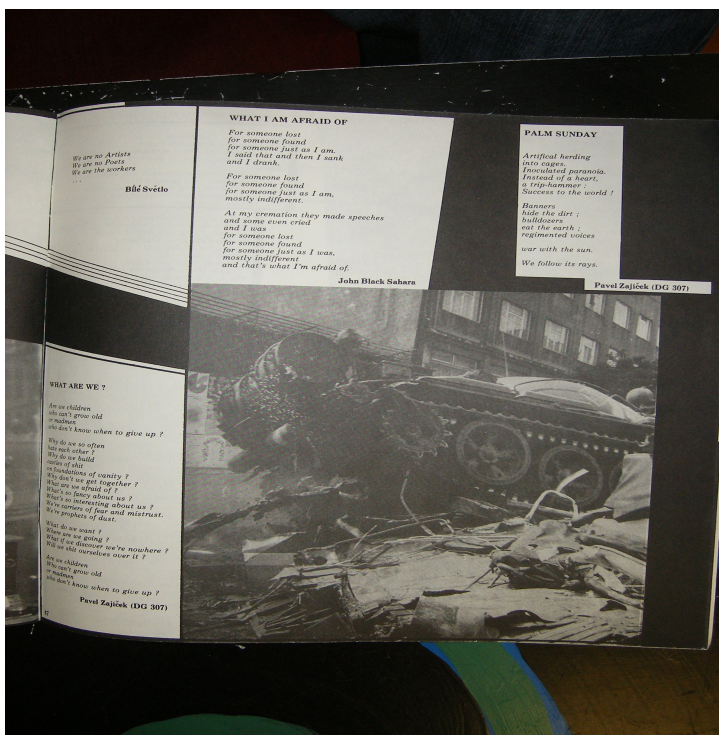


**Figure 26 Page from the *Plastics*'s 'Egon Bondy's Happy Hearts Club Banned'. Libri Prohibiti (2007)**

Overall, these processes took music further and further away from both its original associations (e.g., how it was framed by artists) and from the conventional notion of creation/composition as a distinct phase, putting it further up the chain in arts production

(Becker et al. 2006: 19). Instead, recordings smuggled out of the country and produced in the West, recontextualized musical works by delivering them to consumer groups that their authors were not originally intending to reach. However, in some cases, much of the production process still occurred in Czechoslovakia before being sent abroad. Bierhanzl describes the recording process of other *Plastic People* recordings:

> IB: I was producer of some PPU [Plastics People of the Universe] recordings…like Hovězí Porážka ['Beef Slaughter' recorded in 1982-1984 in Prague], and Co znamená vésti koně ['Leading Horses'-recorded 18-19 April 1981], and in collaboration with Cibulka and Robin Hájek. He [Hájek] was sound engineer who had a Revox. Cibulka had a Sony 377 or something. It was like 19cm speed and the Revox was professional 38cm speed. On big studio tapes. ¼ inch. So, usually we used this tape machine for recording concerts and for recording albums…it was mostly in Hradeček—Václav Havel's farm—it was recorded during the weekend, 3-4 sessions live. No overdubs, just live into 2 tracks. For Půlnoční Mýš, I just did the overdubs—I was not in the original sessions—so there are overdubs. There is the band, one tape, one session and then some effects and solos.

> And so from this 'Co znamená vésti koně' and 'Hovězí Porážka' it was quite sure that it would be published in Canada on Boží Mlýn [Paul Wilson's record label set up in Toronto]. And I was then producer of Co znamená vésti koně and Hovězí Porážka. In Robin Hájek's flat we connected like four tape machines together. One [reel-to-reel] tape machine was the master and 3 or 4 other were for copying. So in this way we did like 100 copies and then it was distributed to people. But you know without a name, just tapes, because it was better if police found these tapes in flats that they then didn't have names.

> Before [1978's] 'Passion Play' we brought some special small tapes from Poland—it was like an LP format but as a tape, small reel and in a paper cover and paper box. So we put photographs on the cover. There was one cover photograph of the farm. One black and white of the drum set on stage, on Hradeček farm. There was Plastic People's Passion Play, inside was tape like 9.5cm speed.

> So there was one side, 20 minutes, and then side B 22 minutes, like an LP format and then there was a booklet with lyrics and photographs. So it was like a samizdat. There is this booklet in Libri Prohibiti. It was made by me and friends. In a similar way we did the Plastic People 'U Klimy' [concert for Ladislav Kilma, 'Jak to bude po Smrti'], live recording, but without booklet.

> TH: Was 'U Klimy' also at Hradeček?

> IB: No no, Klima was just a live recording of a concert at Nová Víska. Then we did DG 307 Dar Stinum [at Nová Víska].

> TH: Did you play on this too?

> IB: Yeah yeah, and the other one, the album after Dar Stinum. But Dar Stimun was also produced on vinyl in Sweden…on Pallas's, Šafrán. But they didn't produce the next album. Just Dar Stinum. (Bierhanzl 2011a)

As Bierhanzl mentions, there were two émigré labels that distributed smuggled tapes and reel-to-reels: Šafrán in Uppsala, Sweden and Paul Wilson's Boží Mýln, based in Toronto. Šafrán was run by Charta 77 signatory and émigré Jiří Pallas. Pallas attested that the albums he did send back into his former country were not for Šafrán's financial gain, although some albums did fetch 500-1000kč[122] on the blackmarket (Theiner 1983: 31). Šafrán, originally the name of a group of folk singers forming in Czechoslovakia in 1973, sold albums of banned Czechoslovak folk/singer-songwriters both in the West and sent albums back into Czechoslovakia. Šafrán was a singer-song writer group of musicians who used poetic lyrics laced with political undertones, whose music is most widely represented by singer-guitarist Jaroslav Hutka (who appeared with Vlasta Třešňák at the Third Festival of the Second Culture, see Jirous's description of the event in section 5.4.3).

Thus music distributed in Czechoslovakia during this time took on its meaning and social power as a form of production from its repackaging, novel, and adaptive forms of distribution. Reel-to-reel and cassette tapes, the music content they contained and the new listening spaces they implied, developed local articulations of musical meaning while it heightened and expanded the one's network. In other words, music was recontextualized through its modes of distribution. The action that constituted the object /sound technology of cassette tapes extended from just listening, as to a radio broadcast or listening, to the acts of recording, compilation, smuggling, trusting, designing and bootlegging. New associations, images, and ideas could be hung on tones (DeNora 1986:

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[122] 5.4 CSK = $1 in 1986

93) and it is here that the associated practice of tinkering and the participatory design feature of tape trading/bootlegging come to the fore.

Moreover, actors moved between collective listening practices afforded by LPs and reel-to-reels. Čuňas describes radio/reel-tape listening practices in the late 1970s at an Underground *barák* (Nová Víska):

> Č: While living on the commune [Nová Víska], we used to finish meals together and then put on Voice of America.
>
> TH: Where did you listen to the program?
>
> Č: In the kitchen, it was the only room big enough for all of us to fit. We had about 10-12 people during the week and many more [Undergrounders] at the weekend.
>
> TH: How did you listen?
>
> Č: Well, everybody was silent, even the kids who normally ran around knew that they should be quiet at this time. We wanted to hear about what was going on in our country.
>
> TH: And did you listen to music programs as well?
>
> Č: Not really, after we'd listen to Underground [reel-to-reels] and drink. (Stárek 2009d)

The listening experience at Nová Víska illustrates more general, fluid and multiple listening tendencies common at the time, as listeners moved from one sound technology to another, radio to reel-to-reel recordings. While the listening happened together in the room, affording micro-social interaction, action changed significantly based on listening attention: Voice of America implied silent listening for information and Underground bootlegs involved relaxing and social activity.

While the radio offered variation and the possibility of experiencing new music, this new pattern of listening behavior contrasted with LP culture in Czechoslovakia, where large collections were rare and the same albums were often played repeatedly in domestic environments (as Lindaur indicated in 4.1.1). Lindaur describes the scarce

selection of readily available Western LPs and how listeners' who wanted to acquire LPs had to turn toward weekly LP blackmarkets:

> Every Sunday morning we went outside Prague to exchange the records, although this was illegal. You would go with 10 or 15 of your records to the forest. You would lay a blanket on the ground and display them while you waited for other people to come with their records. And then you would exchange the records or sell them for a few hundred crowns or whatever. It was very difficult because the police would come regularly and the records were banned. But it was the only way in which you could get some modern rock music, because it couldn't be bought in the shops. (Qtd in O'Connor 2006: no page number)

This blackmarket emerged as officially there were few places to buy Western LPs, although a Czechoslovak label did release some American jazz imprints and select albums could be purchased or order through the record clubs, *Gramofonový Klub* and *HiFi Klub* (Vaníček 1997: 114-121). Moreover, cultural centers from other countries served as a place to pick up foreign music (Vaníček 1997: 116). At the Hungarian Cultural center in Prague, for example, it was possible to listen to or lend albums from *Omega* or other Hungarian rock giants.

It is in this rather large gap of official and non-official musical attainment that local magnitizdat distribution came into existence. Čuňas describes how the practice of recording and distributing music started from the 1960s and developed along with access to technology:

> [In the 1960s] we already had [reel-to-reel] tape recorders, so music was reproduced before we had the paper samizdat, so Western music was spreading already, you couldn't get records here though. I have never seen the LP of Led Zeppelin or Deep Purple, I mean the covers, but we knew the records—their music—really well, because we were copying them—taping them from one [reel-to-reel] tape recorder to the other. The one with the better quality tape was making more copies from theirs. And this was already going on for years. And then when Plastic People of the Universe started, we did the same with reproducing and spreading the music. The spreading was as spontaneous as the samizdat. There wasn't any production company, or none that would put name on it. So

the music was only spreading through the tapes and it worked, all you had to do was connect two tape recorders together, press play and then it copied the tape, the same was with cassettes. Everyone in Czechoslovakia wanted Western music. Yeah I understand you. Music from abroad was a business in terms of the vinyl. For some it was a business and for some it was their passion, their hobby. (Stárek 2009d)

As Čuňas notes, the trading and exchange was dispersed, happening between friends, siblings, and acquaintances thus involving a collective of people dipping in to and reconfiguring a musical experience linked not only to listening but also to magnitizdat distribution. With tape exchange, the informal learning shifted the contextualization cues from the physical space of the room to the social ritual of distribution. Actors, in turn, became reconfigured by dipping in while simultaneously reconfiguring the sound technology for their own use and purpose

However, as Čuňas further points out, some did see exchange as a business. Considering those who turned the practice of magnitizdat into a business within Czechoslovakia (as compared to Šafrán and Boží Mlýn), Petr Cibulka started S.T.C.V (Samizdat Tapes Cassettes Videos). Primarily, Cibulka ran S.T.C.V. from his apartment in the Moravian capital of Brno with his mother taking care of the administrative side of the label (Vaníček 1997: 117-131). Cibulka, moreover, is credited with producing one of the first Underground compilation tapes in 1976 (Stárek 2009a; Mueller 2007). This first compilation tape by Cibulka installed the start of manipulating re-recordable technology as participant design, signaling the formidable quality cassette tapes afforded a do-it-yourself (DIY) set of practices, which was an object lesson in how to generate a social formation of alternative culture.

Chadima ran a similar independent initiative, First Records, from his flat in Prague (Chadima 2009). First Records' approach differed slightly to S.T.C.V. in that
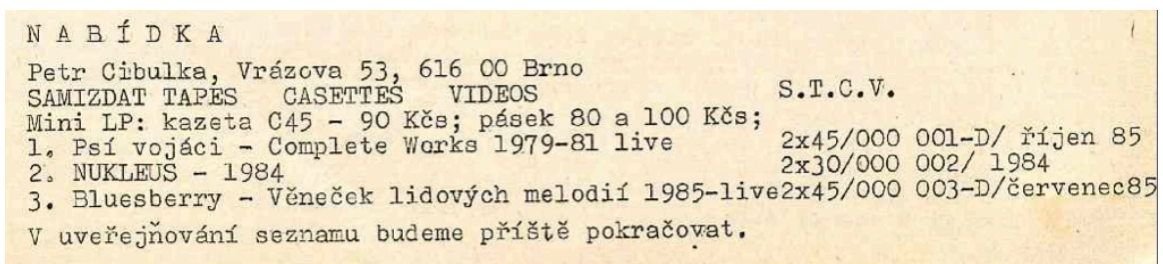
Cibulka held that magnitizdat and samizdat should be spread widely and in quantity, echoing distribution and dissemination as a creative, alternative mode or being. Chadima similarly used distribution as a creative mode of being however focusing on releases that met his idea of quality music as well as creating cover art and liner notes for many of his releases (Vaníček 1997). Bierhanzl comments on how magnitizdat as a practice was a convergence of these different musical streams in the 1970s and 1980s:

> Alternatives were also doing a lot of home recordings and they were connected through the Jazz Section. Cibulka started a big company and produced something like 200 copies. Cibulka produced everything—[folk artists Jaroslav] Hutka, [Vladimir] Merta, then Underground, then Alternative bands. (Bierhanzl 2011a)

In a similar manner as the practice of magnitizdat allowed for a convergence zone of musical streams, Čuňas shows how magnitizdat converged with samizdat:

> The cassette producers were Chadima and Cibulka, they were the main producers and then others like Black Point…since Cibulka was the main, we printed his list in Voknoviny [a supplement for Vokno] so one could see what they wanted, because there was so much of it. For example, people could write and ask for the band they wanted, because there were lots of bands at this point and it was hard to find their recordings. So with every new technology I was thinking about its use for us. (Stárek 2009c)

Figure 27 shows an offer for Cibulka's S.T.C.V from *Voknoviny* #2, 1987 featuring *Psi Vojáci*'s "Complete works –1979-1981 Live" both on cassette tape and reel-to-reel (*pásek*).



NABÍDKA
Petr Cibulka, Vrázova 53, 616 00 Brno
SAMIZDAT TAPES   CASETTES   VIDEOS          S.T.C.V.
Mini LP: kazeta C45 - 90 Kčs; pásek 80 a 100 Kčs;
1. Psí vojáci - Complete Works 1979-81 live      2x45/000 001-D/ říjen 85
2. NUKLEUS - 1984                                2x30/000 002/ 1984
3. Bluesberry - Věneček lidových melodií 1985-live 2x45/000 003-D/červenec85
V uveřejňování seznamu budeme příště pokračovat.

*Vokno*, and its supplement *Voknoviny*, as such, became an artifact of converging collective knowledge production combing diverse elements and streams of the Czechoslovak non-official cultural space from different authors pointing toward the convergence of non-official thinking and living and less toward factionalization based on aesthetic preferences. The reader of samizdat, or the listener of magnitizdat, were thus drawn further into a set of consumption practices which linked listening, technology, and contextual cues provided by samizdat magazines as *Vokno* and the practice of exchange.

### 6.3.2 Vokno: Collective Knowledge in Blue and Black Ink

In one sense, the texts of samizdat magazine *Vokno* (and its supplement *Voknoviny*) were a performance of objects, both real (copied cassette tapes, translations of foreign texts)

Figure 28 *Vokno* Underground samizdat magazine

and imagined (covers of albums, glossy magazines). The continuation and reinvention of the Underground, and people living within it, was significantly helped, in part, through networks of people linked together across the federation by samizdat and magnitizdat channels. Starting in 1979 in the aforementioned Underground *barák* Nová Víska, the magazine "about the second and other culture" (see Figure 28) offered its readers a mediated window into what had come to be defined as the Second Culture, emerging from the previous ten years of Underground cultural space furnishings: Festivals of the Second Culture, threat and fear, dissidents, punks, all

contributing to an entangled collective of people, events, and objects, which the samizdat magazine came to pattern and organize.

*Vokno* had by the mid-to-late 80s established itself as one of the key movers of non-official ideas across the country. Importantly for the Merry Ghetto, *Vokno* helped substitute the decreasing private performance opportunities by creating a zone of distributed creativity and a further way to "do it to the max" (by producing the maximum amount of copies possible). Moreover, *Vokno* production helped constitute other non-official practices, bringing together a network of methods (typing, printing, editing, critiquing, commenting, sharing), techniques (smuggling, hiding, trusting, exchanging, storing, procuring ink) and people (Undergrounders, dissidents, Alternatives). As set out in the opening lines of the first issue of the magazine in 1979, it put forward a rubric of purpose:

1) To inform about past events of the second culture (future events cannot be published 'for obvious reasons')
2) To provide a space for the exchange of views and voicing an opinion […]
3) Translations—we will reprint what might be of interest from foreign news […]
4) Literary Supplement—composed of both poetry and prose […] it must be noted that we have decided to ignore copyrights, both published in translation and literary works in the home field. […] We would also like to emphasize that we publish each original contribution, which we choose to print without any censorship, not one word will be deleted!
5) We do not forget a bit of humor, which at this time is highly necessary.

As the opening text explicitly states that *Vokno* cannot discuss the future plans, it then reads as a history of events that potentialize the future. As a result of the magazine's illegal status, it could not publish anything that was to take place for protective reasons (as point #1 describes above). Therefore all content within the magazine concerns commentary on past events. *Vokno* as a 'stock-taking' device of Underground history

helped to frame, stylize and order experiences (e.g., *Budějovická Masakr*, The Second

Festival of Second Culture) and project this stabilization of Underground culture across

the country through its distribution web. As a result, *Vokno* helped in 'world making' for

its readers by potentializing the conditions for learning the second culture through

vocabulary and tools (devices, settings, gestures, constraints). Namely, it was a field

guide for how to dip in to the Underground cultural space and with what materials.

Moreover, because of the nature of *Vokno* being an illegal publication, it afforded an

object lesson in non-official praxis.

As such, *Vokno*'s editors were subject to police harassment. Radio Free Europe,

reporting on Charta 77-related arrests, details three arrests of Undergrounders involved in

the production of *Vokno* and who were signatories of Charta 77:

> Martin Fric an employee of the State Fisheries, aged 28, married with one child,
> is a Charter 77 signatory. He was arrested in October 1981 with three others for
> publishing the unofficial periodical Vokno. He was convicted of causing a
> "breach of the peace" in July 1982 and sentenced to 15 months in prison.
>
> František Stárek [Čuňas] is a musician and surveyor, aged 31, married, and a
> Charter 77 signatory. He was first arrested and tried in July 1976 as a member of
> the Plastic People's band for organizing a rock concert; he was sentenced to eight
> months in prison, reduced on appeal to eight months suspended, and was released
> in September 1976. He was arrested again in November 1981 with three others
> for publishing the unofficial Vokno periodical. He was held in detention until his
> trial in July 1982 and was sentenced to 30 months. He is still in prison.
>
> Ivan Jirous is an art historian and former leader of the Plastic People pop group;
> he is 39, married, and a Charter 77 signatory. He was first arrested with three
> others in February 1976 at his wedding party, was convicted of "hooliganism,"
> and was sentenced to eighteen months in prison in September 1976. He was
> rearrested in October 1977 and sentenced to another eight months in April 1978;
> on appeal the sentence was extended to eighteen months. He was arrested a third
> time in November 1981 with three others for publishing the unofficial periodical
> Vokno. He was brought to trial in July 1982, convicted of "disturbing the peace,"
> and sentenced to three-and-a-half years in prison. He is still in prison. (Winter
> 1984: 9-15)

*Vokno* was set about, primarily, to disseminate the 'second culture' in order to break, as

Čuňas considered, the "information blockade"[123] by the government (Stárek 2009c).

Certainly, new technology helped in making this happen. As Čuňas discuss:

> Technologies were always better than a paper. Technology made it less hard work. When samizdat was copied on a typewriter, that meant hundreds of pages, which wasn't just hard work but also the time it cost—by the time the typewriter girl typed it—that would make up only ten pieces, so therefore it was easier to write on cyclostyle membranes, which were then multiplied so that would make five hundred copies from the one original, so it was the same amount of hours spent on it and same work put into it, but with fifty times more results, so that's why we decided in the year 1979 to multiply the copies by [reproduction] machinery [as opposed to previous ways of typewritten samizdat reproduction]. I was always excited about any new technology. (Stárek 2009c)

*Vokno* came to act at a distance: the magazine was an inscription of not only what was

Underground culture in the 1980s but also the trail of Underground activity since the



**Figure 29 *Voknoviny* in 1990. Čuňas and Allen Ginsberg**

1950s both in and outside Czechoslovakia. In this sense, *Vokno* could open up mental, temporal and geographical spaces. For example, one could 'travel' to New York in the late 1960s via texts by Tuli Kuffenberg[124] or participate in the recollection of a musical event five years prior. Thus, *Vokno* was critical in providing resources for the transformation of action, which in turn generated new capacities in the individual. Importantly

within space-furnishing activity, *Vokno* crafted the space by putting into place a

patterning of cultural material in two manners: by showing 'what goes with what'

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[123] Indeed, whenever I confirmed quotations for the thesis from Čuňas, he often replied "spread it like samizdat!", indicating the importance of sharing information in all forms.
[124] Co-founder, along with Ed Sanders, of band *The Fugs*. Poet, writer and active counter culture figure in the US 'beat generation'.

evidenced in the table of contents and also via object lessons in how it was (illegally) exchanged.

By drawing together these diverse resources from many forms of non-official musicking and related cultural activity, a new ground for the doing of 'togetherness' was being laid. 'Togetherness' was becoming more distributed, not necessarily through people in a room listening to music together but by *Vokno* aiding in the potential feeling of togetherness through exchange (e.g., an element of trust had to be ensured between the giver and the receiver of illegal material). In addition to potentializing new forms of togetherness, part of *Vokno*'s role in the 1980s was to resituate the symbolic significance of Underground music by placing it into a new network of relations. I explore this type of musical power via legacy creation.

### 6.3.3 Legacy of The Plastics

While I have spent much of the thesis so far discussing how associations between cultural resources are ecologically crafted into a cultural space, one might also ask what happens in a cultural space when it is stripped of furnishings. Does it cease? Does it stop affording modes of being? How does adaptation occur? *Vokno*, New Wave, Moravia, reproduction machinery, the Second Generation indeed *fill in* these ecological gaps and thereby assist in exploring new habitable territories of the space, yet how a group such as the *Plastics* takes new symbolic form needs to be interrogated.

During this period in the early 1980s, the legend of the *Plastics* and the Underground continued regardless of lack of performance opportunities and in spite of

many Undergrounders having emigrated or thrown in prison. For example, the last[125]

concert of the *Plastics* took place in a small village of Kerhartice in North Eastern

Bohemia in March 1981. The *Plastics's* previous show before Kerhartice had been two

years before in the Nová Víska *barák* in 1979[126]. The 1981 Kerhartice performance was a

birthday celebration for Milan Hlavsa. If you were one of the few who received an

invitation (one never asked about concerts that could seem suspicious and arouse ideas

that you were collaborating with the regime [Šimák 1984]), "you were to burn it

immediately" (Bierhanzl 2011b). Bierhanzl describes why the concert had to be changed:

> Before it was supposed to be [a sculptor's] house—near Krkonoše…Someone had the
> invitations and forgot them in a pub. So then we changed it—it was supposed to be in
> Kotelskou on Saturday and it was in Kerhartice on Sunday. Like afternoon, 2pm. People
> came with cars and left—so it was like a one-hour recording. After 3 weeks, the house
> was burned down.

While the concert was a success, the police soon after burned down the house, as

Bierhanzl states. The recordings from the show were used for the *Plastics's* album 'Co

znamená vésti koně' (Leading Horses) released by Boží Mlýn. Reidel (2001 [1997]: 22-

23; Jirous 1981: 5-10) describes how this performance signaled another wave of brutal

repression by the state police:

> The live performance of Co znamená vésti koně on March 15th was the band's last
> concert—the police burned down the house in the village of Kerhartice where the concert
> took place. It was obvious that tough times had culminated. In November Ivan Jirous was
> arrested a fourth time; this time for his connection with Vokno. He was sentenced to three
> and a half years. Under brutal pressure by the secret police, Vratislav Brabenec was
> forced to apply for emigration.

In place of performing, even if for small groups of people and without some of its

primary members (e.g., Brabenec), the *Plastics* continued to rehearse and record:

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[125] The final concert of the group during communism in Czechoslovakia.
[126] The concert/album for Ladislav Klima, 'Jak to bude po smrti'.

So (after 'Co znamená vésti koně') we decide to make studio recordings and publish it, so it was the idea of 'Hovězí Porážka'. Six months rehearsing, then recording, no concerts, and then, I think it was...I don't know. I don't think it was Boží Mlýn. Maybe it was just on tape, then 'Půlnoční Mýš' was LP. Produced by Chris Cutler. He founded, you know, that fictive company in Holland[127] just for this. (Bierhanzl 2011a)

These recordings were not easy to locate within Czechoslovakia, but one was able to

trade tapes of the concert among friends, thus distributing the now non-performing

*Plastic People* legend to new ears. This legend, sustained in part through recordings, also

emerged through people simply talking about the group and the Ghetto. Macháček

continues to explain how the Ghetto survived in the 1980s:

The legend [of the ghetto] sort of survived and the new stream of uncompromising people said that nothing should be done officially—everything should be done in the Underground and no one should play officially…even this was different and changing in 1984, for example Psí Vojáci who were in the deep Underground applied for official status and in 1985 they started to play officially at Na Chlemnici or at Opatov [as PVO-- Psí Vojáci Orchestra]. So it was changing in the 2nd half of the 80s. Půlnoc[128] is already in America. All these attitudes of complete isolation and against compromise were already dead by 1986-87. (Macháček 2009b)

A text in *Vokno* 10 by Ivan Jirous on the *Plastics*, takes into consideration the band's

legacy and points out that sixteen years of playing and surviving in the Underground is

long for any group, especially in "the conditions of a totalitarian greenhouse" (Jirous

1986: 2). The *Plastics*' role in the Underground, according to Jirous, fulfilled a "notion as

a moral appeal" being "decisive for the whole new wave of Prague rock bands." He

continues to discuss some of the variety of poetry used on 'Půlnoční Mýš' and why—in

particular from Milan Nápravník who, as Jirous writes, is slowly being forgotten in

Bohemia and should be brought back to minds through the *Plastics'*s music. The

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[127] 'Freedonia' record label

[128] *Půlnoc* was comprised mainly of members from the *Plastics* (Jiří Kabeš, Milan Hlavsa, Josef Janíček) who wanted to perform rather than continue to work from the Underground. Drummer Jan Brabec did not join this new formation.

inclusion of Nápravník illustrates the difference from the 70s Plastics' recordings and performances, specifically the absence of composer/saxophonist/lyricists Vratislav Brabenec, which made space for Havel to suggest poems (and poets like Nápravník) as lyrics. This resulted from Brabenec's emigration to Canada in 1981 following the state police campaign *ASANACE* and Havel's increased participation in the Underground (e.g., writing for *Vokno*, holding concerts at his cottage) after the 1976 trial.

Jirous' *Vokno* article, written in February 1986, one of the few spaces of time when he was out of prison during the 80s, muses on the *Plastics'*s position within the non-official cultural space in regard to their album, 'Půlnoční Mýš':

> Grotesque and magical. Maybe it's the singing of mice in a labyrinth. Probably because the Plastic's music is so different from the contemporary rock music in the West ... perhaps the world is still more and more complicated to be communicable to anyone who is outside its walls. Music, which has necessarily wrapped itself in the shape of the shell from which it is unable to escape. But we who are listening to the Plastics closely, or rather within a common shell and in it we hear the familiar themes. Půlnoční Mýš's harrowing music still sounds in a dark yet crystal clear space, from which the Plastic's once sang Bondy's text "Magical nights, conceived by time...We live in Prague, that is the place, where the Spirit itself will show its face". (Jirous 1986: 2-3)

The "common shell" of the non-official cultural space suggests the *Plastics'*s symbolic form and legacy for all those young bands described above, those established bands and those yet to be formed, who are, as Jirous inclines, within a common shell. In other words, the *Plastics* were inscribed as the truth-bearer and exemplar of all independent activity. Jirous' text, ends with the poem 'Magické Noci' [Magical Nights] written by Egon Bondy in 1950s Czechoslovakia and set to music by the *Plastics* in the 1970s—the cadence of the lyrics and music have provided, for lack of better words, an unofficial

slogan or Underground mantra, whose meaning and historical furnishings are passed down but always taking on new attachments in the context of use[129].

## 6.4 Conclusion: From Generation to Distribution

From examining selected convergence zones as mechanisms of generation within the non-official cultural space, it is possible to understand how actors put together resources in a shifting socio-political context. Musicking assisted in blurring public-private activity in the non-official culture space in three ways. Firstly, musicking generated new subject positions by drawing on different 1970s musical streams to produce New Wave groups in Prague, the 'Brno Scene' as well as 'Second Generation' of the Underground. Secondly, increasingly public events (Prague Jazz Days, John Lennon Wall) allowed greater opportunities for dipping in, display and explicit political activism. Thirdly, creating and distributing magnitizdat and samizdat magazines like *Vokno* blurred and spread the non-official space by pulling together many different strands of the 'second culture' not only in Czechoslovakia but from the West as well.

As this chapter illustrated, 'blurring' indicates how non-official musicking began to be distributed more widely throughout the 1980s. Such distribution ultimately allowed for a greater variety of situations for musicking to be coupled with other activity, for example, to petitions, marches, recording and printing. The distributive quality of these objects rests not only on people crafting musical practices or even performing, but by

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[129] We can even witness new adaptation's of Bondy's poem—the Underground magazine 'Mašurkovské podzemné' from Přerov, Moravia, which began in 1984 to reach places that *Vokno* could not do with its distribution web, playfully states its slogan as "My žijeme v Mašurkově/to je tam/kde se nikdy nic/nezjeví." "We live in Mašurkova/It is there/Where nothing is/not appearing"

contributing to musical efforts by writing, exchanging or using poetry for lyrics, which served to extend aesthetic practices to the far reaches of non-official activity. This network generation is a function of the distributive properties of musical production and consumption as a form of creativity. When this distributive property comes in contact with conditions that attempt to suppress it (e.g., by shutting down gigs, smear campaigns in newspapers, burning down houses), possibilities for creative collaboration grow within an arena of 'make do' action (e.g., recording in flats, smuggling tapes, homemade cover art). To further extend the limits of this arena of action, the following chapter focuses on how radio listening helped to widen the space to a technologically dispersed population, thereby attempting to show how these distributive qualities of non-official practices became implicated in revolution.

# CHAPTER 7: RADIO LISTENING IN THE SPACE

Throughout the thesis so far, I have demonstrated how a cultural space is furnished by locating, opening up, crafting and generating aesthetic resources that come to be distributed through networks of people, objects and materials. In Chapter Four, I have shown how aesthetic material is located through different mediations (e.g., 'raw' sound of *Velvet Underground*), which came to open up the space ('raw' Velvet sound goes with 'raw' Total Realist poetry and 'raw' *AKTUAL* sound) and then crafted into a patterned set of 'rules' (e.g., "The Underground is without fires", "Say no to the devil") of the space. Chapter Five focused on how these aesthetic phenomena (out-of-tune, rough, raw, primitive) became associated with musical practices that served to perform 'truth to self' within this patterned space. In part, this 'truth to self' was understood through forms of suppression, which, with the extra-musical work of contrast and comparison structures to the establishment, helped to convert feelings into dispositions that drew together emotions (anger, joy, threat, fear), and physical spaces (barns, pubs, apartments). Suppression and establishment thus became valuable tools in space making activity in which to see how such furnishings come to take on meanings that bring people together as a method of resistance as immunity. Chapter Six addressed a wider non-official space of musicians along with Underground activities in order to understand the blurring of arenas of action via musicking in convergence zones.

In this chapter, I seek to cast an even wider net of the non-official cultural space; dipping one's toe into the shallow end of the pool, we could say, through listening. Here I explore how the socio-political context of listening illuminates discursive forms of

listening that weren't background music or sound, but rather fixed modes of attention. In order to so, I consider the configurations of listening to Radio Free Europe (RFE) broadcasts. The point is not to address the success or not of RFE's broadcasts but instead to center in on the communicative-experiential domain of radio listening. Although RFE as an information facilitator is often the focus of scholarly text and analysis concerning the Cold War (cf., Urban 1997; Nelson 1997; Puddington 2003; Cummings 2009), missing from many of these histories is the co-formation of transmission and reception and how the listeners *used* the broadcasts. In order to correct this gap in the literature and to get underneath how actors dipped in, I examine telephone messages left on the Radio Free Europe call-in answering machine of the RFE Czechoslovak desk in Munich. My aim is to examine how people became listeners and why, how people learned and communicated by music broadcasts, how collective goals were formed and what were patterns of listening attention. In other words, how subject positions were mediated in the ether.

## 7.1 Radio Listening Practices

Conditions concerning control and access to technology varied greatly between Czechoslovakia and other Eastern Bloc countries during communism. A key problem for communist regimes was how to address not only restrictions on musical practices but also assert policy and control in relation to technology. How, for example, is a regime to protect its population against unwanted radio frequencies and whether or not to monitor and assess the ideological content of cultural products. Moreover, technological

innovation—particularly gadgets like camcorders, cassette players, VCRs—themselves raised ideological questions across the Bloc; many were invented and produced in the West, thus how does a regime import such objects without destabilizing the foundations of the communist system (Kusin 1983)? These issues were met by each regime in differing manners, which in turn affected access to quality technology and cultural products such as albums, films, literature and clothes. Thus the regime's direct involvement and level of control in sonic-related matters led these products to be active participants in non-official music experiences.

Listening to the radio, however, was always legal in Czechoslovakia. In fact, it was often encouraged or compulsory in certain situations, such as collective listening to state propaganda in the workplace or passively in public areas outfitted loudspeakers (Rév 2004). But the content of certain broadcasts—Radio Free Europe, Voice of America, Radio Luxemburg and BBC—was illegal and listening to prohibited radio content could lead to punitive measures. Nonetheless, radio, ubiquitous, inexpensive and manufactured in the Bloc, provided a readily available entrée into non-official musical experiences; the only step to dipping into the shallow end of the non-official cultural space was for an individual to tune in at a certain time to specific radio bands. Moments of dipping in were made possible simply through listening.

### 7.1.1 General concerns of the Radio Listener/Hearer

While modes of radio listening could have been for either informative, news-related purposes or for musical enjoyment (often the two were wrapped up into one program), this activity could be anxiety-producing as it was risky and possibly dangerous. For

example, if listening in a block of flats, neighbors could overhear the unusually loud

hourly station update of "This is Radio Free Europe on the 16th, 19th, 25th, 31st, 41st,

and 49th short-wave bands" (Rév 2004). In this sense, the radio sound—both volume and

content—afforded other peripheral modes of listening: over-hearing and eavesdropping.

Not to be confused with 'bugging' or state surveillance methods, overhearing and

eavesdropping emerged from the socio-political circumstance, living situations of over-

crowding in urban areas, and simply dispositions of 'curious' peoples. These practices

became one of many resources individuals used in what can be described as a skill set in

a second economy, also including skills Grossman terms as the "4 Bs of resource

procurement, *bribery, bartering, black marketeering* and '*blat*'[130]" (Grossman qtd in

Sampson 1987: 128).

While I do not mean to assert that individuals were more inclined to eavesdrop in

these situations for malicious purposes, in some contexts information about the tenant

living above in a larger flat with a balcony could be used advantageously if one wanted

(Klaniczay 2009[131]).  On the other hand, a friendly neighbor who overheard someone

listening to Western broadcasts was placed in the precarious situation of having unwanted

and potentially harmful information. All of these modes of listening in private spaces—

attention to broadcasts, overhearing and eavesdropping—were underpinned by sound

producing heightened emotional levels of fear, anxiety and at times, danger.

Moreover, while listening to radio in private, one was also subject to noise of

radio jamming from Soviet jamming, commonly referred to as 'Stalin's Bagpipes' by

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[130] Russian term for 'connections' or 'influence'.

[131] Interview regarding a concert in a Budapest flat in 1985. Here, the issue of being a 'noisy neighbor' involved in illegal activity came up. One could be reported and the person informing could then be rewarded with the flat (if the noisy tenant is removed).

listeners in Czechoslovakia, as discussed in 7.2.3. As Rév (2004) argues, the noise let the listener know that even in private, in the confines of their own home, the regime was still able to censor, control—and at the very least—be made present, in the lives of citizens (Bijsterveld 2008).

Such anxiety-producing listening situations, as described above, could be to some extent alleviated by well-timed listening. It was possible to listen at early hours of day or late at night and so avoid sound jamming. Quoting K.R.M. Short (1986: 6), Rév (2004) illustrates the temporal strategy of listening:

> The timing of the broadcasts is also important, because the twilight hours of morning and evening are the most ineffective of Soviet-originated sky-wave jamming. This is because the western broadcasts can take advantage of the ionosphere's "solid" condition at these times, while the eastern jamming broadcasts have difficulty in achieving a reasonable reflection in their "broken" section of the ionosphere. This creates a time-related gap in the Soviet defenses.

The strategic listener was thus able temporally to configure their sonic space and practice in order to hear more clearly and to avoid the omni-present regime's jamming noise, as described in further detail below.

Considering reception conditions and access to alternative radio stations, Radio Free Europe's listening numbers often fluctuated at different points through communism. However, listening numbers were also directly proportionate to 'crisis' type events[132] and so offered potential for a transformational sonic experience: in these cases, wherein ideological and repressive state apparatuses were accentuated by invasion, military suppression or martial law, there was an increase in radio-listeners tuning into foreign

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[132] For example: Poznan, Poland 1956; Hungary 1956; Prague 1968; Martial Law in Poland 1981; Chernobyl nuclear disaster 1986.

broadcasts (Kusin 1980: 1). Two official inquiries conducted in 1973 and 1977 at the

Research Institute of Journalism in Bratislava found that

> The size of the audience increases only in emergency situations when a number of people seek to supplement the available information but, having obtained it, quickly repudiate it again because they do not accept its content. Thus, they do not undergo an ideological conversion (Kusin 1980: 2).

In some cases, these emergency situations created a point of entry, a purpose, for listeners

to tune in to RFE, helping to create a dedicated, core set of listeners—around eleven-

twelve percent of radio owners[133] according to the above inquiries—who took refuge in

foreign broadcasts.


## 7.2 Calling Out to Tune In


I look to a dedicated set of listeners, RFE's "core audience", who were active participants

using the call-in format of the Czechoslovak Broadcast service of Radio Free Europe.

Installed in the early 1980s as a practical extension of receiving letters from listeners,

RFE's answering machine enabled listeners to leave a maximum two-minute message per

phone call[134]. Although not person-to-person contact, the answering machine supplied a

political 'ear' for anonymous confession, where knowledge and resistance could be

displayed, performed and produced collaboratively. The listeners' responses reveal, on

one hand, forms of consciousness and commitment to RFE's 'struggle for freedom', and

on the other, unconsciously adopted routines.

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[133] While the number of listeners to radios is difficult to estimate, there were 3,778,364 radios in Czechoslovakia in 1978. (Kusin 1980).
[134] RFE asserted that the time restriction was to prevent tracing by the regime.

The telephone calls to RFE in Munich were received from all over Czechoslovakia – Banská Bystrica, Prague, Ostrava, Olomouc, Brno, Ustí nad Labem, Prešov, to Gottwaldov (now Zlín) in both Czech and Slovak languages, as well as from émigrés living in Yugoslavia, Sweden, France, Austria, Australia and Canada. The RFE initiative rested on Czechoslovakia's developed direct-dial telephone system along with its density rate of 23.2 telephones per one hundred people in the country. In order to accommodate the capacity of international direct-dialing, RFE set up the answering machine in the summer of 1985 and the corresponding program "Telephone Replies" to address through broadcast many of the questions, concerns, thoughts and information received[135]. RFE reported that they were receiving over one hundred calls per day[136]— each call could easily account for larger groups at work, home, or the cottage, thus the representative sample is unknown[137]. As one message shows: "Just a greeting from thirty-two miners from [the town of] Most. Good bye and thank you" (9 October 1985).

The data below is taken from transcripts[138] of these telephone messages from 1985-1986, totaling over a thousand phone messages gathered at the Open Society Archives[139], however over thirty thousand calls were made from Czechoslovakia to the RFE's desk during this period,[140] thus the data presented here is a very small portion of the total amount of calls (three percent of the total messages). Additionally, intermingled

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[135] The service started "after station employees discovered it was possible to direct dial to West Germany from [Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Bulgaria]." AP 17 July 1986

[136] "Telephone Calls to the Czechoslovak Desk", Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute, Open Society Archives, 300-30-29.

[137] Additionally, these calls could reflect an even greater population of non-listeners: those who do not tune into RFE for technical reasons (weak signal and/or jamming) or disinterest but hear of RFE broadcast content through word-of-mouth transmittal. This is RFE's 'secondary audience' or 'second-hand listeners'. See Radio Free Europe Eastern Europe Audience Reports. Open Society Archives.

[138] "Telephone Calls to the Czechoslovak Desk", Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute, Open Society Archives, 300-30-29.

[139] Between June 2009 and July 2011

[140] Associated Press 17 July 1986

within the messages were a handful of letters and postcards sent from Czechs based all over the world. I initially selected these years (1985-1986 from the data set's 1985-1989 time period) to pursue listeners' reactions to perestroika and glasnost. Strikingly there is little mention of any governmental reforms, let alone Glasnost or perestroika by the callers.

### 7.2.1 Radio Free Europe in Czechoslovakia

Radio Free Europe went on the air for the first time on 4 July 1950 with a broadcast to communist Czechoslovakia from a studio in New York City's Empire State Building and ended on 30 September 2002. Hill (2001) describes the beginning of the broadcasts and its strategy:

> George Kennan of the State Department asked Ambassador Joseph C. Grew to enlist prestigious civilians to lead an anti-communist organization dedicated to returning democracy to Eastern Europe, using the talents of the refugees. This organization, the National Committee for a Free Europe (NCFE), later the Free Europe Committee, was established in 1949 with several objectives: find work for the democratic émigrés from Eastern Europe; put émigré voices on the air in their own languages; and carry émigré articles and statements back to their homelands through the printed word. These objectives were realized through the establishment of a publishing division, Free Europe Press, and a broadcast division, Radio Free Europe.

Each broadcast into Czechoslovakia started with a script penned by Czech émigré Pavel Tigrid[141], the script outlined and fulfilled RFE's objective of using Czech voices and minds to carve out the concept of the listener—someone heroic and brave who was participating in a collective and not isolated:

> You are not forgotten. This is the purpose of Radio Free Europe…to remind you that you are not forgotten…that you are not alone. To you, chained by tyranny, we will bring a consistent, reliable well of information. We will bring to you the voices of your friends

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[141] Tigrid was an announcer on BBC during WWII and later an émigré in West Germany.

and compatriots…voices you may already know…voices you will come to know. We
will speak to you freely and without restraint…we will speak as free men who believe
there is but one foundation for peace...the freedom of each person, the freedom of each
nation to shape its own destiny. Thus, to speak for freedom, Americans and the
democratic leaders exiled from Eastern Europe have united to bring you the voice of
Radio Free Europe. (Qtd in Cummings 2009: 10)

Tigrid's announcement foresaw, and in part shaped, the emotional shifts for some that
were implicated in the drawing of the Iron Curtain after WWII: closure of free
communication leading to feelings of detachment, apathy and helplessness. However,
rather than a decidedly West-East exchange as Tigrid puts forth, the ordering of
experience was ultimately co-configured between the listener and how they managed
their competencies in an on-going and changing manner with radio technology, as shown
below.

### 7.2.2 Voice in the Ether

Yet RFE was not the only informational radio source. In the 1960s Czechoslovak national
*Radio Prague* and other media outlets (newspapers, TV, film, music) began to take on the
liberalizing face of the regime from within (as discussed in section 4.1). During this
immense thaw in media censorship, RFE listeners began to turn toward Czechoslovak
state media. Czechoslovak journalists, presenters and reporters residing in the country
became the center of this development as a result of their own quality and
professionalism, which placed them in a position of authority and trust by the public
(Skilling 1981: 6). Exemplifying the internal policy changes to radio programming in
Czechoslovakia, was the reevaluation plan of the broadcast media by the state:

Only at the beginning of [1965] was a start made, certainly stimulated by an increased
awareness of radio competition (VOA, BBC, RFE) from the West and an awareness that,
in a situation of "thaw" inside the country, better radio and television programs had

> become a top priority requirement. The Czechoslovak broadcasting service has set up a
> new system of editorials, which has permitted improvement of the standard and
> effectiveness of reporting and propagandist programs. The number of information
> programs has risen to 23 daily, and the subject matter has been enriched. Recently, news
> reviews, evening commentaries on foreign reviews of our press, a morning program
> entitled "What Is Going to Happen in the World Today," a topical commentary "The
> World Tonight," and an agricultural program entitled "Farming Newsreel," etc., have
> been newly introduced. Programs of modern jazz music have been introduced.  From
> 1500 to 1800 hours, conforming to Western forms of programs. (Kratochvil 1965: 3-4)

This new face of media programming eventually took its toll on the RFE Czechoslovak

service, decreasing the amount of listeners almost to the point of closing down the service.

The improvement and prominence of the *Radio Prague* commentators thus placed them

in a key role during the Warsaw Pact invasion on 21 August 1968. As Skilling notes,

"they became the natural spokespersons of the people during those fateful days in August.

None of them needed any introduction; people literally knew them by their voices"

(Skilling 1981: 53). With the former liberalizing regime of Alexander Dubček replaced

by a new "normalizing" regime, RFE listenership increased dramatically.

While a series of factors affected the increase in RFE listeners after the Soviet-led

invasion, two main content-related points stand out. Firstly,

> The [Czechoslovak] format of programming for Europe, which for years received half the
> total output allotted to foreign broadcasting, has undergone considerable change since
> 1968. Programs of a high cultural and musical level have been cut in favor of propaganda
> about the achievements of the communist system. This reflects the general deterioration
> in quality of all Czechoslovak news media following the 1968 Soviet-led invasion and
> subsequent purges in the media[142].

Secondly, and perhaps as crucially, were the additions of *Radio Prague* announcers Slava

Volny and Karel Jezdinsky to the RFE roster, who were on air during the August 1968

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[142] Radio Free Europe Background Reports, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Collection, Open Society
Archives, September 25, 1973, "Review of East European, Soviet, and Chinese foreign broadcasting".

invasion and could be recognized by voice (Skilling 1989). Puddington (2003: 152) details the announcers' appeal in Czechoslovakia:

> A poll taken by the Czechoslovak Academy of Science in the spring of 1969, and apparently suppressed by the normalization regime of Gustav Husák, gave RFE a rating only slightly below that of Radio Prague and Radio Bratislava, an impressive figure given the difficulty of reception under jamming conditions. At least part of RFE's enhanced appeal can be traced to the addition of several of Radio Prague's most respected political commentators.

Thus the sound of the announcers' voices and the articulation of the Czech language (described below) provided continuity and comfort for many listeners. Indeed, RFE used voice timbre, which was thought to simultaneously cut through jamming conditions and interference while also providing, what was thought to be, an easier mode of listening attention. This was supported by frequent changes in the announcer's voice as "a new voice would automatically [restore] flagging listener attention…offering a larger variety of voices within a relatively short time means increased likelihood for RFE to be heard"[143]. One listener's message on the RFE answering machine stated in regard to the combination of multiple Czech speakers:

> I have been a listener for many years, my father listened to you from the very beginning— he remembers Jara Kohout—I like Rožina's songs but also her beautiful pronunciation; another excellent speaker is Mr. Stepánek, give them my thanks for a beautiful, truly Czech presentation. (3 September 1985)

Here, the caller weaves together the listening continuity from young to old, carried by song and voice. Many callers (see below) commented on the upbringing they had with RFE. The long arc programming over nearly the entire era of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia indicates a sonic experience (e.g., remembering announcers' voices) to

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[143] RFE-RL East European audience and opinion research, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Collections, Open Society Archives, 300-6-2.

which one could model the passing of time (daily, weekly, yearly) and personal

narratives (e.g., childhood). The habitual listening became part of their daily life while

the answering machine became a site for displaying a variety of commitments and frames

of appreciation.

Other listeners alluded to the frequent 'double play' of the voice in that they

describe the listening experience of not only the sonic texture but also a sound icon of

voice-as-freedom. "We listen to your voice, it's, the voice of Radio Free Europe, it is a

great source for us" (7 November 1985). Listening here becomes a resource for the

emotional regulation of hope as well as a resource at a collective level: the caller's use of

'we listen' indicating that what has come through the ether has been shared, discussed

and negotiated with others.

Echoing the 'double play' of the voice as an individual and collective emotional

resource, a listener reports in a letter sent from Italy:

> I thank you that you exist, you help us survive […] Slava Volny for always hitting the spot,
> Jedlicka for his form and beautiful Czech, M. Schultz, K. Jezdinsky, too bad that he is not
> in the US, V. Hejl—continue being objective—I am impressed by Mr. Selucky's
> commentaries—they have maximum effect. (November 1985)

Another enthusiastic letter sent from Yugoslavia describing voice recognition through the

ether: "I like listening to Mr. Patera (Valenta)—I like the commentaries by Slava Volny,

V. Hejl, A Kalinová, Jan Mlynárník—we all know you, even your new voices" (4

February 1986). This caller's comments match Tigrid's prescient opening, which

declared knowing through acousmatic voices. Furthermore, the voice acted as an RFE

imprint: recognition and identification by voice was a protective security measure as it

gave listeners the guarantee that they were listening to RFE and not a hoax or counterfeit station[144] or jamming by the use of mixed speech interference.

### 7.2.3 From Radio Jamming to Knowledge Production

Jamming as a sound event placed the listener at the intersection of the Cold War—attempting to seek perceived objective information furtively under a sky of frequency warfare. Jamming sounds and interference included buzz saw noises, combinations of speech and music, and "atmospheric noises" all intended to deafen the incoming signal from RFE. As Nelson (1997: 5) notes, "the practical effect of such massive blockades of noise is that, during peak evening listening hours, up to 80% of all usable short-wave frequencies in Europe [were] affected by jamming."

According to Hill (2001: no page number), "Jamming [of RFE] was done by the Soviet Union continually from within the first 10 minutes of programming in 1953 through most of 1988". While Voice of America, BBC, and RFE all offered listening opportunity, they were not offering the same content and were therefore not regarded the same by governments in the Eastern bloc and USSR. As a 1989 Radio Free Europe report stated:

> RFE was separated from other broadcasters as being subject to jamming because of its 'malicious gossip'. The main difference between governmental radio programming and RFE being that governmental stations reported on events in their own country [eg VOA, BBC] and concerned 'spreading knowledge'. RFE was instead, as described, interested in reporting on events that were occurring in the country to which its broadcasts were transmitted. (Eyal 1989: 3)

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[144] This was the case of bogus Radio Solidarity programs in Poland—listeners were advised to use the sound of the voice to identify the imposter programs.

This difference in station categorization was implicated in which stations were jammed and which were not; RFE was targeted as infringing on the sovereignty of a nation by spreading rumors. The report continues:

> [Even though] Moscow stopped [skywave] jamming most Western radio in 1973—it continued jamming RFE. Jamming extended into Poland on 20 August 1980 with the emergence of Solidarity. [...] Hungary ceased jamming in 1963-4 and continued to allow unhindered broadcasts after 1975. […] The Kremlin moved to cease jamming activities in the first half of the '60s and allowed VOA and BBC to be broadcasted without interference. Romania and Hungary followed suit until the [1968] invasion of Czechoslovakia. (Eyal 1989: 2)

Looking at the 'jamming factor' in listenership, RFE conducted a number of audience and opinion polls to interrogate jamming conditions' effects on modes of listening.  In one such poll, thirty-four percent listened to RFE despite jamming, twenty-six percent were prevented from listening to RFE by jamming[145], and forty percent were non-listeners for reasons other than jamming of RFE[146]. The report concludes on a note that highlights the co-configuration of the listening space:

> It must be borne in mind that the effect of jamming depends not only on how RFE's signal strength and the power of the jammers stack up against one another, it also is related to the amount of effort prospective listeners are ready to put in to deal with jamming.[147]

Thus, the listeners of Czechoslovak RFE had to negotiate a listening experience of sustained attention and nerve. This is evident by one caller's announcement to any state police phone tapping while leaving a message on RFE's answering machine:

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[145] The mode of interference identification in the report is questionable, as the report states: "there is evidence that East Europeans are liable to blame every kind of reception difficulty on the regime (atmospherics, improperly insulated electrical appliances, etc.).

[146] RFE-RL East European audience and opinion research, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Collections, Open Society Archives, 300-6-2.

[147] RFE-RL East European audience and opinion research, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Collections, Open Society Archives, 300-6-2.

[…] you make me very happy, when I can listen to you. That's all, and I wish you the very best. Well and now for something for the security (state police) if they are listening, or for the jamming station…I can never get anything done at work because I am constantly trying to keep you tuned in clearly. Now especially that Slava Volny has started talking, I couldn't hear anything. It seems to me that those jamming mechanics must have come back from lunch, that probably wasn't very good and so they started jamming intensively. Stop you people, it doesn't help anyway, I'm not going to do anything for the socialist sector anyway because I'm going to keep on tuning my radio. So well, anyway all the best and bye! (10 October 1985)

Tuning in thus became a fidelity goal that had a different intent than other forms of radio listening (such as exploratory listening [Douglas 2004: 55]) that was matched to the slight gestures of knob-tuning. As the caller evidences, the constant micro-movement of knob-tuning as a result of avoiding jamming interference took on political undertones as those gestures were articulated as not "part of the socialist sector". Knob-tuning, in this light, became the embodied movement of the fidelity goal of clear reception and unstrained listening attention.

Some listeners showed a proficient knowledge at recognizing jamming, locating, and identifying alternate frequency bands for listening, and timing of jamming.

The present situation of reception: short wave is quite bad. What makes it worse is the fact that in the Jihomoravia [southern Moravia] region the signal fades out after about 17:30 on band 19m. Then the band 25 goes on for another hour or so and that's it. On the lower frequencies, programs like Political Block are impossible to listen to because of the jamming; this at 18:10 and it also goes to the Newsreel at 19:10. (2 December 1985)

The caller's intimate knowledge of frequency bands, jamming conditions and how jamming works (not to mention RFE's programming schedule), indicate the organization of actions emerging from a negotiated listening experience. Other callers, moreover, were aware of placement of ground jamming centers near their homes, providing material evidence of the sonic intrusion (something one might drive by daily on their way to work):

Good evening, I have been listening to your station for more than five years now. I am very sad that I can only hear parts of your programs, that is, a few understandable sentences. You see I live near Brno, and the jamming station on Žlutý Kopec is always operating. All your programs are jammed, except between 17:00 to approximately 18:30 when they are somewhat understandable. During this time when I can hear you could you answer a question for me about how I can get around the jamming somehow? Maybe you could, if possible dictate the directions to me, I would be very grateful. And not only me, but my friends as well. I will be waiting on Saturday, from 18:00 to 19:00, where you answer the questions of your callers. Bye. (10 October 1985)

In both of these telephone messages, jamming created a situation which generated an amount of know-how in that listeners were able to adjust, find bands, frequencies and report back on which ones were available. These were simple successive and accumulated gestures, as using a tuning knob or finding that 'sweet spot' of reception. In this sense, the jamming had favorable outcomes for RFE in that it led people from listening to other patterns of behavior that became inscribed in bodily practice.

On the other hand, many radio amateurs were listening and had little to no experience with the jamming, showing the disparate range of levels of knowledge amongst listeners. As one caller inquired:

[…] Tell us something about your broadcasting, why are your transmitting stations in Portugal? […] How does the ionosphere work? Why is there gradual fallout on shorter wavelengths? How does the concentration of ionites decrease after sundown? Is jamming more thorough in the summer because apparently the jamming stations are located in Russia, beyond the polar circle where there are polar days? What kinds of jamming are being used? Mixed voices, counter modulation and what does it mean if your broadcasting station sets into the frequency of your broadcast? And so on. Why does the speaker have to have a quality voice…against distortion? (15 November 1986)

Even though the caller has an apparent lack of knowledge, they still display and use a specific, localized lexical set relevant to RFE, jamming, radio and Cold War politics.

Moreover, in order to counteract extreme jamming from groundwave centers in Czechoslovakia, RFE instructed its listeners during one program on how to construct

antennae for better reception. This broadcast, repeatedly requested by listeners to air again, was a more direct way of inciting action based on behalf of the listening population. Seemingly, jamming proved too powerful:

> Although I am using the antenna from 1984 that you broadcast, which in the past has worked stupendously, at present, nil. You see, they jam by means of ionospheric distortion, mainly from the East, and the antenna doesn't have any effect I do have one solution but I'll have to tell you about it some other time. All the best of health to all from Monitor. (20 January 1986)

Elementary to advanced tinkering of antennae provided other listening solutions and moments of learning. Importantly, the feedback given by the caller relies on the circumstance of the situated jamming space—a site of sound interference that RFE could only speculate about and instruct based on information gathered from callers' comments. Furthermore, the above example shows the collaborative effort of the RFE project and highlights the situated knowledge of the amateur listener. Hardly an 'established opposition', these listeners are nonetheless part of a generative network of knowledge sharing that aided in collective knowledge production and goal attainment. Moreover, tinkering with antennae was a manner of learning to be a listener, how to avoid the sound of jamming, which was, implicitly, something you didn't want to hear and should be avoided: a sonic goal of fidelity mapped upon a cognitive goal of access to information. Indeed, the struggle of listening through jamming was a prize earned by nerve and focus.

Critically for listeners, good reception was significantly more difficult to achieve in Prague than the countryside. As an RFE audience and opinion report concludes, "the weekend plays an absolutely crucial role in Czechoslovak RFE listening patterns: most

listeners tune in on Friday and/or Saturday and/or Sunday."[148] This listening pattern in turn corresponds to *chata* (cottage) culture in normalized Czechoslovakia wherein many citizens exited the quasi-public sphere participation for cultivating the private sphere at weekend houses, which were popular particularly for Praguers; this trend is generally considered part of the placid consumer culture that was 'exchanged' for the increased amount of censorship during normalization, as Šimečka, Jirous and Havel noted in Chapter Four. The lower level of jamming strength in rural areas calls attention to '*chata*-as-retreat' and resituates *chata* culture as affording regular modes of listening normally excluded from the urban setting. As a caller describes:

> Vlk at the telephone. I have been listening to you regularly and this for several years, ever since I have started spending my weekends outside of Prague. In Prague, reception is almost always impossible because of jamming, but even in the country, it can be very difficult sometimes. Radio wavelengths simply do not reach our receivers. This could be caused by the unfavorable ionospheric constellation. On the next wavelength over, however, London [sic] and the Voice of America as well as various Arab stations come in loud and clear…reception is very poor and the majority lose interest [sic]. (2 March 1986)

Vlk's description of reception conditions illustrates weak transmitter strength, as opposed to jamming, as the main obstacle for listening specifically to RFE. The rural signal, however faint, underpins two moments: firstly, listening in Prague was "almost impossible" therefore the initial hearing of the signal in the countryside led Vlk to "several years" of listening—in other words, RFE had been incorporated into habitual listening. Secondly, this same signal, due to the weakness of reception, is the cause for people to "lose interest' and terminate listening, indicating disengagement because of sound levels rather than because of information content. In this light, the urban-rural

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[148] RFE-RL East European audience and opinion research, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Collections, Open Society Archives, 300-6-2.

movement sonically configured weekenders according to reception conditions and their corresponding situated mode of listening attention.

### 7.2.4 Popular Music in the Ether

Up to this point I have described how radio listening and the sonic features (voice, jamming, signal strength) of broadcasted material provided a space and place for people to craft emotions (beliefs of comfort and hope), configure the body (knob-tuning), situate place (urban-rural) and provide material for goal attainment (clear reception). Similarly, broadcasted music also played a decisive role in shaping listening habits. Popular music radizdat[149] was immutable enough to provide a level of instinctual emotional investment ("we could feel it") while still affording the flexibility of local assembly.

As quoted above, many listeners began listening to RFE's music programs and then moved on to the political shows. Once more, a caller recounted to RFE his familial listening upbringing from music to news, mapping from childhood to intellectual maturation:

> I did some reminiscing about the past, when I was a little boy I started to listen to Radio Free Europe. At first my dad called me to hear the evening news but I did not understand much. Then I started listening to the music programs myself; they used to be in the afternoon. They were moderated by Honza Douba (Mr Mekota) and later by Rožina Jadrna. At that time already I started thinking about what kind of a station it was to bring such great popular music which we were not allowed to listen to in Czechoslovakia in the 60's, neither on the radio nor on TV. Gradually, I made it to your political program, to regular listening, during which I created and broadened my political horizons. Of your

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[149] Refers to radio-related activity such as publication by radio (e.g., announcements on air), transmitting banned music back to the country of their production (e.g., Karel Kryl's songs) and the transmitting of Western music and news into the Bloc primarily though Radio Free Europe, BBC, Radio Luxemburg or Voice of America broadcasts.

commentaries the memories of Jiří Lederer captivated me especially. Certainly you plan to repeat them, for which I thank you. (11 November 1985)

The caller's regular listening evidences habits that produced knowledge—RFE's programming planting a seed and then watering it over time. This occurred in one manner through the transition from music to news, illustrating a gradual 'latching on' to RFE's informational objectives that some listeners went through. Music programs were often bookended on either side with political commentary, known as "sandwiching" by regime authorities (Puddington 2003: 139). The "sandwiching" layout was put first into practice in the Hungarian unit of RFE, whose music program "Teenager Party" was the first popular music program model for other RFE services.

"Sandwiching" helped contribute to local inscription and assembly in what Green (2006: 101) calls *delineated meaning*: musical meaning arising from the social, political, religious and cultural context, personal associations, memories and concepts linked to music by the listener. Partly contributing to musical experience, delineated meaning can often be distilled down to tacit familiarity with the music, in a sense, that this is 'my kind of music', or this is 'not my kind of music'. By examining musical mediators such as the listening space, situation and programming, we can see how musical meaning became constituted, modified and altered when brought into new spaces of reception yet still maintaining immutability.

A letter sent to RFE illustrates such mediators as the presence of announcers, music and family:

Don't be angry that I listen to your competition, VOA, BBC, DLF—I accuse this system—it leaves the individual no opportunity to excel—although my parents were communists, I do not trust Marxism-Leninism—I remember a good teacher who kept no

secrets from us and taught us to think politically—Slava Volny, he's our man, he thinks just as we do—we greet Karel Moudry, Karel Kryl, Karel Jezdinsky, to name a few—our children like you too, especially the music. (12 October 1985)

Besides offering testimony to personal listening habits, callers from Czechoslovakia often utilized the answering machine to dedicate and request songs to both residents inside and outside Czechoslovakia. For example:

I would like to request a song by The Purple, "Perfectly Dangerous".  I have a beautiful wife and a very sweet 15-month-old baby girl and I would like to have the song be for all three of us.  Thank you and goodbye. (20 January 1986)

Here again we witness the listening experience bound together with family, music and a listening space where all three—father, mother and daughter—are collectively 'in the room'. In this light, music requests took on the form of 'gift-giving'. Similarly, one frequent caller requests:

Good evening respected friends.  I would like to ask you if you would be so kind and play a few rock and roll hits by Elvis Presley for Tonda and Milan from Troseka, from Ivan, code name Vienna… So my request is for the 5$^{th}$ of January [1986], a few of Elvis Presley's rock and roll hits, some hard ones!!! (4 December 1985)

Requests-as-gifts highlights the international creation of a communication space provided via the media ensemble of music, broadcast and answering machine. Moreover, the sharing of sensibility ("some hard ones") shows how the coordinated ensemble afforded the display of knowledge tacitly learned from the 'felt' listening experience.

In ways that parallel McRobbie and Garber's account of 'bedroom culture' (1997: 112-120), a space in which to engage with music and other cultural goods and so to create alternative culture and social ties, radio became a way for listeners to imagine and experience other modes of being and connect with other listeners by distance. Regardless if the lyrics were understood or not, there was a feeling; as Čuňas claimed in reference to

listening to radio "we didn't know what they were singing about, but we felt it!" (Stárek 2009) he told me as he pounded his fist on his chest. Likewise, in the above quotation, the listener requests not only Elvis, but also a specific parameter of Presley's songs—"some hard ones"— illustrating the caller's shared typology of musical parameters with the broadcasters.

Although not as frequent as broadcasting music, the station's answering machine also received music via telephone:

> Good morning, I would like to send you one of my own songs for one of your religious programs. I hope that it will be a usable contribution in as far as the quality of sound is concerned. There is a refrain after each verse. [*music*]
>
> *Verse two*: We gather together to celebrate you and we sing to you, this always brings us closer together.  If only this song could chase off all our stress.
>
> *Verse three*: We bow to your mother as well, and strongly believe that she stands near. Mother of our Lord, be forever blessed.
>
> *Refrain*.
>
> Good-bye. (14 December 1985)

This caller contributes his expertise to a practice that coordinated music, telephone, answering machine and broadcast. The flexibility of the answering machine—the fact that any caller was guaranteed two minutes per call and would not be hung up on— allowed it to be used in a novel manner that helped to balance the slightly uneven, top-down mechanism that RFE was attempting to avoid in its broadcasting.

RFE additionally received frequent requests for the songs of Czech musician Karel Kryl, who was also an announcer in Munich. Originally from Olomouc in Czechoslovakia, Kryl achieved fame during the Prague Spring and after the Warsaw Pact invasion—similar to Slava Volny and Karel Jezdinsky—through his songs broadcast on

*Radio Prague*. As a singer-songwriter, his music was emblematic of the late 1960s

Czechoslovak youth culture (his music invoked at the John Lennon Wall march).

Following the Soviet-led invasion, Kryl composed a number of folk songs that still

remain in play in the Czech Republic at the time of writing. Kryl's song, "Bratříčku,

zavírej vrátka"[150], becoming the most famous, is sung in a calming, soothing tone, told

from older brother to younger brother, attempting to explain the Soviet invasion. This

particular song received considerable airplay following the invasion, which then saw Kryl

going on to do substantial touring in the country and across Europe, until the borders of

Czechoslovakia were closed in 1969 and Kryl found himself on the other side. Kryl then

took up residence in Munich and broadcast on RFE until the democratic transformation

of Czechoslovakia in 1989. Within the data set of answering messages, Kryl often

received calls and postcards requesting information about where people could buy his

cassette tapes abroad, if he had any information or news about the Underground[151] and if

he could play his songs.

As one listener asked,

> [I'm] a Free Europe listener, I am from Banská Bystrica. I am very interested in Karel
> Kryl's songs….as for the ones that I would like to request: Neznámý Vojín (the
> Unknown Soldier).  That's because it's my birthday and we want to celebrate with Karel
> Kryl and him as well, his composition.  Also we would like to ask you if…..my friend is
> interested in something punk-rock, the style of the Sex Pistols, if it would be possible to
> play something.  Thank you for understanding. Good bye. (26 October 1985)

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[150] "Little brother, close the door" in reference to overhearing parents talking in the kitchen about the invasion.

[151] Indeed, Kryl had contact with many Undergrounders who had emigrated from Czechoslovakia in the early 1980s. In 1985, Kryl attended the "Fourth Festival of the Second Culture" (4-7 July) that took place in France at Undergrounder singer/songwriter Charlie Soukup's countryside house. At the gathering, other Underground, Alternative and Chartist exiles attended (e.g., Svata Karásek, Pavel Landovský, Vlasta Třešňák, J.J. Nehuda, Dáša Vokatá).

The caller's request to celebrate evidences how some listeners lived *in* the ether, as a space where personal relations (both in the room and mediated by broadcasts) were played out and as a place where one could join together a taste continuum (from Kryl to Sex Pistols). Although the request was ostensibly for the listener's interests, it elucidates the listener-generated dissemination of knowledge in that new sounds and ideas came across the ether in regular intervals.

7.2.5 Learning in the Ether

Some requests were made not just for musical enjoyment or celebration but also for informal educational purposes. Requesting songs allowed for listeners to tape the radio in order to acquire recordings otherwise not available in Czechoslovakia. For the many purposes this served (e.g., tape-trading, selling), it importantly allowed for musicians to learn songs and lyrics (or at least sonically-similar enunciation) through playback and imitation. As Green (2008: 25-28) identifies, one method in which musicians use to learn music is by

> informal learners choos[ing] the music themselves, music which is already familiar to them, which they enjoy and strongly identify with. [.... ]the main informal learning practice involves copying recordings by ear, as distinct from responding to notated or other written or verbal instructions and exercises. Informal learning involves the assimilation of skills and knowledge in personal, often haphazard ways according to musical preferences, starting with whole "real world" pieces of music. [...] Within the formal realm, there is more of an emphasis on reproduction.

Green's observation on music learning within the formal realm as being one of reproduction, playing non-familiar music, emphasis on notation and exercise leads to a dynamic conclusion that within informal musical education, there is a greater degree of working outside of prescribed parameters. Music, and the way in which it is learned,

could become empowered as an exemplar for non-musical actions. In other words, learning music in informal manners as such provided a window of possibility for action to snowball into other potential non-official actions, such as acquiring tapes via networks of consumption.

The practice of taping radio transmissions was not only used for music[152] but also for informal academic learning. Often referred to as "Flying University" (in Poland) or "Bedroom University" (Skilling 1989: 139), these informal lectures often took place in people's homes. In lieu of some people's access or willingness to attend such lectures (or the potential legal ramifications), RFE aired its program "Radio University".

> I listen a lot—you steal much of our free time as well as work time, thanks— Radio University is excellent but a tape recorder cassette is only for 45min. And it is difficult to tape the program. I was hoping for more repeats during the summer. (October 1985)

Radio University was installed in RFE programming to bring the ideas of prominent academics and intellectuals to listeners. This programming, along with broadcasts of popular music, largely synthesized two leading Czechoslovak dissident lines of thinking: firstly, to create moral, anti-political, diffuse, spontaneous and parallel communities, which was generally championed by Charta 77's first spokesman Jan Patočka and Václav Havel, and secondly to create institutionalized parallel educational and informational structures that would substitute the state's, put forth by Václav Benda. The latter's charge to create a *parallel polis* coincided with Radio Free Europe's express purpose to be a 'surrogate home service', providing a communicative institution while undermining the legitimacy of the Czechoslovak state media.

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[152] Hungary's "Teenage Party" had a greater-developed music request system wherein people could request whole blocks of songs via postcards and letters for recording purposes.

To build such a communicative system that could undermine Czechoslovak state media, RFE broadcasted information based on requests of the listeners. For example, the regime set up television receivers to pick up Austrian TV, although there was never an officially produced timetable of programs (Šimečka 1984: 144); this was done in effect to help buttress the private-public safety valve features of normalization. One caller describes how they bundled together broadcasts and learning:

> We are a couple from Moravia. We would like to thank you, you are doing it very well. Not only independent, non-party people listen to you, many communists do as well. You are listened to very often. We would like to recommend that you broadcast some sort of a language course daily, say in English or in German. We can get Vienna television almost everyday and when various news items or scientific discoveries or technical developments come…we should understand. Thank you. (26 March 1986)

Here, the listener brings together a complex communicative chain (Czechoslovak receivers, Austrian transmitters, caller, answering machine, RFE broadcasts) to make possible situations of learning.

7.2.6 Information, Hope and Habits

As evidenced through such programs as Radio University, RFE's broadcasts drew in listeners for a number of reasons. Some listened and requested information on, for example, the Czechoslovak national hockey team's reputation abroad, the story of "what really happened" in the Vietnam War, or what is the Nobel Prize[153]. However, the answering machine was not only a one-sided exchange but rather an interactional collaborative project of knowledge production: RFE drew on the contributing experiential expertise of listeners to discover what they knew, didn't know, what they laughed about,

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[153] Czech author and poet Jaroslav Siefert (1901-1986) won the Nobel Prize in literature in 1984. Also a signatory of Charter 77.

events that were occurring yet were closed from official media, and so forth. Some callers

requested more personal responses, as one listener's message at RFE:

> Good day. Here is one drug user who abuses, well, one could say Alnagon. I am being persecuted for that under paragraph 177. Its manufacturing is prohibited. Actually it is Alnagon tablets which I crush and….with water  I inject it in my veins.  I know it is filth, but the experts say…that it contains morphine.  Therefore could you have something in your youth program about….[interrupted]. (19 November 1985)

Correspondingly, another youth called in requesting withheld, ignored or suppressed

information:

> My name is Tomáš Hanzal and I am 17 years old, this means that I was born in '68.  I often ask my parents what it was like here after the war; but they don't remember very much as they were also very young, and anyway they don't know the reasons why the Russians crawled in here in 1968 either.  Nobody can find out anything from our media; so I would like to ask you if you could feature some sort of shorter report about the post-war era.  For example the death of Klement Gottwald in 1968 or something like that.  I think that the number of people who listen to Free Europe is not small, and that it would interest them, if not the older ones, then my age group certainly.  So thank you very much and bye. (7 November 1985)

Other listeners tuned in to the broadcasts as a mode of survival, a lifeline beyond the

borders of Czechoslovakia:

> Don't be mad, but I have to tell you a few honest words. Your commentary is the only thing that still gives me hope….(interrupted)….(continued) Your editorial team is the only thing, the last thing which is keeping me alive and giving me energy and faith in something.  In justice and democracy. Goodbye. Justice must prevail. (8 April 1986)

Echoing the combination of hope for the future with social-political values,

> We are very grateful, all of us listen and there are many, many of us.  I hope that you will help us in the struggle against fascist communism.  It is worse than a terrible monstrosity. The whole nation is suffering as a result. We all know that the communists have thrown us back several generations. News from Karel. The end. (24 October 1985)

The material that RFE gave many listeners to locate hope also took form in building

relationships with the commentators and the institution itself:

Good evening dear friends, I wish you the very best. I have been listening to you for 60 years now [sic] and one could say on a regular basis. Over the course of the all those years, thanks to your information and commentaries I have been able to create a clear picture in my mind about the situation here at home as well as abroad. Your broadcasts have always meant a great deal to me. This especially during the so-called "times of crisis" be they here or abroad. (15 November 1985)

Long-arc listening habits also deterred individuals from RFE, as another caller puts it:

Respected friends. I listen to you very often, practically every day, and this for the past three years. At the start I used to listen with great excitement, but as time passes, now I occasionally laugh but the laughter is somewhere between resignation and sadness, hopelessness, this with the realization of the swift passage of time and our lives that it is almost unfathomable. It isn't that I have sobered up or suddenly found some common sense, but when I think of all my dreams, expectations and beliefs that have disappointed me…..I live in a small town and I am afraid that I would be found out. Elections are coming up and I am not going to vote. That, along with this telephone call, wouldn't look good for me. To the point now: way back when I used to listen to you I considered you my friends, now you are simply journalists. You talk too much about how bad things are here, fine, but I hear that everywhere. Everyone is complaining but they'll still go and vote tomorrow. I have a feeling that your perception of us is too idealistic…..It's terrible, it's laughable, but it's horror. What to do? How to live on? Only in creativity can there be some, perhaps that is the last place where a little truth, honesty, unpretentiousness can be found, but even there, actually who knows? It is all mad and unbelievable, but here…..[end]. (4 November 1985)

The caller's quotation illustrates the stagnation particularly present in late socialism: an onward march to a drum beat that no one could hear anymore, highlighted by the passively loyal display to the political system (need to vote); habitual motions that are more difficult to topple than a political regime. Amongst the data set, people did not express hopelessness frequently; preferring instead to leave messages of empowerment, but such messages also came laced in anxiety, unease and fear.

### 7.2.7 Communicative-Experiential Space of Radio Listening

A central material configuration of the listening space and communication were conditions that produced feelings of anxiety and fear. Very few callers to RFE left

messages revealing anxiety or fear resulting from listening, however, many described the

fear that arose from placing the phone call. As RFE described:

> Many listeners that have had their requests answered are calling to thank us. They seem
> to have been able to overcome their anxiety. There is however, still a large number of
> callers who hang up after hearing the recorded message. It seems they become anxious or
> that they are speechless when they are asked to leave a message. (2 September 1985)

The hang-ups evidence another moment for a listener: whether they were encouraged by

friends, colleagues or by RFE to call, they did dial the number themselves, in some cases,

facing up to an incapacitating fear. Some describe the fear and paranoia of calling and

listening:

> I am afraid, but I would like to let you know that believers in Czechoslovakia are
> subjected to terrible and unbearable persecution.  I am afraid to go on talking. (15
> October 1985)

> This is Egon at the receiver.  I am going to try and tell you all this information as well as
> I can, my biggest problem is calling you.  You see I am absolutely certain that I am being
> monitored, or bugged… (10 January 1986)

> I would like to know why my fear won't let me speak….I'll call another time. (15
> November 1985)

> I can now talk, I will try to talk…it's true, I am trying to talk…I couldn't even dial the
> number it just didn't want to work. Friends, I listen everyday, I could listen all the time,
> thank you for objective journalism. I tried again and it worked…I wish a belated happy
> New Year, good bye. Good bye and thank you.  Thank you again, good-bye from all of
> our friends who are afraid to call. Thank you all very much. (22 November 1985)

The calling space—work, public phones, home—contributed to the quality of fear or

anxiety in the mid-1980s. As the second respondent above, 'Egon', describes his paranoia

emerging from being bugged or monitored from within his home whereas others describe

fear from being caught in the act at work. The geography of fear thus fluctuated with

technological innovation and access (those who had direct-dial telephones within homes)

as well as shifting the experience from public spheres (work, pay phones) to private

spheres (home).

Echoing the situational generation of fear from their workplace, one caller

describes his calling event:

> [….] I do not know how to say this because I am calling from work, where else, my fear is great. I have to look out the window to see if someone is coming or something. You should at least give some thought to this—the problems of the ordinary man who lives and takes advantages of all (interrupted). (12 November 1985)

Illustrating the shift in attention to radio at work from the 1950s state radio propaganda

collective listening to private listening to foreign broadcasts (Hagen and DeNora 2011:

446-448), one listener describes the RFE callers and the difficulty of doing this in

Czechoslovakia.

> The majority of the telephone calls are made by people from office telephones when they are at work [….]You must be well aware that people who call you are a group at the tip of the proverbial iceberg. A whole line of listeners just don't get to a telephone so easily. Many people don't have a phone at home. And telephone booths, as you know are usually a desolate state. You can't use the door, the glass is broken and everything can be heard. Apart from that, even today, many telephones can't call out of the country, in many offices, because ever since the telephone charges went up, the call-out telephones have only been in the offices of the high-ups. So many people just don't get to a telephone. That's all. Good bye. (15 November 1985)

The insight provided by the caller above illuminates the listening and calling

circumstance: fear emerged from assorted mediations and devices including radio

broadcast listening, telephone, answering machine and location of calling.

In order to circumvent some aspects of anxiety or fear, while allowing listeners

and callers to communicate and receive messages from others on air, RFE encouraged the

use of code names by callers. Listeners called in and left messages generally using code

names in order to protect their identities when their requests were answered over the radio. RFE's suggestion to use code names not only drew listeners into a situation but also into a language-based acquisition of practice. Code names allowed individuals to safely send and receive messages across the ether, which proved particularly effective for family and friends who were split up or exiled. For example, a listener in Czechoslovakia could leave a song dedication from "Vlk" (*Wolf*) to "Babička" (*Grandma*) in France.

> On December 15, that's in two weeks, on Sunday, please could you play some very good Elvis Presley rock and roll hits. Dedicate them to Milan, code name The Garden of Czechoslovakia. I am looking forward to them, those rock'n'rollers. Greetings to Honza, Rožina and Jirka Karneta in New York. Thank you and goodbye. (4 December 1985)

> Could you please relay a message to code name Pater-Noster, namely what is the area code to West Berlin? It seems that is a state secret in Czechoslovakia. Thank you. (March 1986)

The broadcasts and answering machine afforded a disparate group—living on two or more continents—to be held together. This also implicates a further mode of listening attention in that cases of refugees or exiles, where a permanent address may not be present, the ether was one way to keep in touch. In one such case, a parent leaves a pleading request:

> Please, advise me of my son's address….I listen to you every day, but please do not publish my name. My son is in San Francisco. Please look for him. He was born on August 18th, 1958. He escaped in 1982. [….] I've had no news of him since May 1985 Thank you for finding him for me. (20 November 1985)

Code names also enabled the aim of some Czech dissident groups, who were more interested in transmitting information than distributing of self-published banned material (*samizdat).* This proved quite useful as not only was the communication more immediate, groups did not have to spend time re-typing text after text (as was the written type-writer culture of Czechoslovakia at the time [Skilling 1989: 26-32]). As Skilling points out, a

group could get texts to RFE in the morning and they could be transmitted by the evening. For example, one group, calling themselves Český Les (Czech Forest), frequently called in to RFE with different reports:

> The group that calls itself Český Les and all Slovak democrats are protesting against the occupation of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet Army and is boycotting all the Soviet war films being shown in Czechoslovakia. We are protesting against Soviet nuclear arms by boycotting the Soviet war films that are going to be shown here. (2 December 1985)

By calling and leaving a message, groups as Český Les were able to relay information immediately, use their limited resources in an ingenious manner, reach a wide audience, and raise international awareness.

## 7.4 Conclusion: Technology Shaping Collective Practice

My intent in this chapter has been to pursue how the wider public (specifically, those 'adapted citizens'[154]) used sounds, and further, to consider the question of what those sounds, coupled with their uses, could afford. Sound devices (e.g., radios, transmitters, antennae and cassette tapes) and their use allow us to think more generally about sound and music's role as a resource for collective agency within movement culture, particularly in regard to the question of larger systemic changes that occurred in Czechoslovakia during the 1980s. Part of this story is how forms of sound technology are not immutable objects, but are better understood as possessing fluid properties, constituting and constituted according to their relation and association to other practices, policies, customs and technologies. Radio-listening practices help to show how sound is able to become a flexible medium in which all of the fine shades of actors' lifeworld can

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[154] Introduced in section 4.2.1

be displayed (e.g., from fear, to hope, to curiosity, to sharing). In this sense, technology as a liminal device permitted listeners to pursue or try out alternative or independent ways of being and feeling to varying degrees, from dipping a toe into non-official waters to plunging in and without ever re-surfacing.

The question is then how did musical material, representations and sound technologies contribute to what, following activity theory, is described as 'active' (fully conscious, intentional) and 'operational' (quasi-conscious, practical) constructions of agency (Batt-Rawden and DeNora 2005). When speaking about how someone tacitly self-assembles a range of sensibilities via aesthetic related practices, the distinction between 'operational' and 'active' agency becomes important because it helps to highlight the heterogeneity within non-official culture. In the above sections, I addressed specifically how radio listening afforded small, incremental degrees tacit of commitment to the non-official cultural space (e.g., from growing up with RFE, to listening at the cottage, to listening with disregard to the socialist work sector). These recorded telephone disclosures show us how listening to RFE broadcasts created an entry point for challenging perceived quotidian banality and stagnation and provided a material resource to use in order to craft emotional (anticipation, amusement) and cognitive structures (engagement, distraction).

Moreover, these calls, although taking place within the late period of normalization, help to illustrate the macro-political climate, of which Glasnost and perestroika had just appeared. While an instrument of reform in USSR, it appeared differently in Czechoslovakia. Poor performance since 1968 had been attributed to circumstantial variables rather than assigned to decision making in the country. Thus, the

Czechoslovak government's following of Soviet precepts were aligned more toward addressing mismanagement than reforming openness like the Prague Spring. As a 1987 Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Background report succinctly states, "the censor's blue pencil remain[ed] sharp" (Kusin 1987: 4).

The data presented in this chapter is an extension of a cultivated private sphere, of the adapted duality of living in normalized Czechoslovakia. However, this data also shows another, historically absent, face of this wide-spread dispossession among citizens: that while the conditions of the socialist public sphere did not afford a safe space for disclosure of opinions, listening and radio did point to new forms and evidence of resistance. Further, Šimečka's (1984:144) observations of the private-sphere-as-safety valve also helps us to understand why, perhaps, the state allowed the direct dialing system to be so easily used and why these calls were not prohibited in offices. Moreover, it illuminates possible motivations for listening to RFE, as a resource and practice for resolving tensions between public display and private belief.

Thus, listening attention as a common practice holding people together addresses a new typology of bodies in the Cold War. Primarily this was accomplished by people using radio to dip in to non-official activity. Firstly, it helped sensitize individuals to "alternative" sensibilities connecting actors to networks of dispositions that held together a broad non-official cultural space and thus afforded the possibility for actors to distance themselves from official society – creating more distance the further one waded into non-official waters. Dipping in became a way for an actor to try out or test their competencies and expertise in differing circumstances and situations thus affording potentially new emergent states of being. Secondly, informal learning via radio, radio dissemination,

bedroom culture and sandwiching contextualization help to show how an alternative movement culture grew beyond a radical section (i.e., the Merry Ghetto) of the non-official cultural space and into everyday life of normalized Czechoslovakia. Within these situations, the musical object was simultaneously an aesthetic material *and* its distributive technologies.

By looking at the Czechoslovak broadcast unit of Radio Free Europe, I have detailed the co-configuration of radio and users by how the technology was employed as an organizational force of habitual action, a conduit for producing and generating collective knowledge, a mediator of tacit knowledge and a space of interactive communication. Non-official sensibilities, then, could be informally learned courtesy of radio listening, call in activity, attention to the texture of announcers' voices and their use as 'sound icons', emotional regulation through broadcasted popular music and the use of skywave and groundwave jamming and used in the creation of tacit knowledge. Other mediators influencing and shaping the listening experience, such as family relations and experiential aspects of fear were addressed.

The answering machine shows how this technology became a hinge within a media ensemble. The ensemble itself relied on a constant adaptation and adjustment of listeners' input and replies, exile letters and samizdat producing diverse communicative modes that led to new icons and new genres via constraints (jamming, signal strength) and craft practices (tinkering, taping) and conditions (normalized Czechoslovakia). In this sense, the ether was not only a West to East transmission-reception relationship, but a multifaceted center that was one component of a much larger network that spanned macro-level confrontations (e.g., state policy over broadcasting) to micro-level emotions

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(e.g., fear, excitement). This evidence signals a wide field of practice wherein a heterogeneous transnational listening collective was shaped, shaping and sharing the airwaves.

Thus social changes across eastern Europe in the late 1980s—different parts of government break down and dissident political initiatives by opposition groups—rested on a technologically dispersed, linked population of actors who had, at one point or another and to varying degrees, dipped in to an aesthetic ecology, tacitly reconfiguring dispositions by reforming creative constriction as a resource in self-assembly, not only within the Underground but also within the wider non-official culture.

In this time of social change and revolution, often the jingling of keys is a central symbolic moment in the 'Velvet Revolution' in Czechoslovakia in November 1989. The main square of the city—Václavské Náměstí—was filled with a public jingling their key chains. Some suggest it was a way to tell the communists, "goodbye, it's time to go home" (Sebetsyen 2009: 48). To add a further layer of symbolism, I suggest the jingling of keys was a sound event showing the cultivated private sphere 'sounding out itself' in the public. In a sense, the network of people who had sonically dipped in to a non-official space behind the locked doors of their bedrooms, chaty, kitchens, *baráky* were taking out that sound from their pockets.

# CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION: GETTING BY TOGETHER

This research project began as an exploration into how music was implicated in furnishing the Underground cultural space in Czechoslovakia, the ways in which music mediated knowledge production, and how it became articulated within everyday life to underpin community activity. At the heart of the thesis argument is *how* sound and music form the bases of feeling, thought and commitment to non-official cultures, collectives and community activity. My aim has been to show the practices of locating, crafting and opening up a space, what actors can do within it, and how collective sensibilities converge and depart to generate new arenas of action.

At the same time, I attempted to contribute to the historical study of music and resistance within the former Eastern Bloc. In order to do this, revolutionary triumphs were grounded in more situated accounts by considering quotidian aesthetic engagement from listening to a radio to banging on an empty oil drum that, as was shown, could generate resistance in the form of immunity to unwanted cultural 'pollutants'. While this does not preclude oppositional forms of resistance—such as leafleting, protest marches, petition signing, regime criticism in public forums—it does serve to illuminate the subtle degrees of how one mobilizes the self, together with others, to do resistance. In their interrogation of epistemic notions of what can be considered 'activism', Horton and Kraft (2009: 14) detail similar forms of micro, small-scale action, calling it "implicit activism." Here, gestures, words and small acts contribute to reciprocal affective activity of "caring", thus pointing out the ambiguous relationship and boundary between emotion and political action.

In the same vein, my research calls to attention the aesthetic "holding forms" of ways of life (Witkin 1974: 180) that are seeded in often happenstance manners or not consciously goal-orientated. I have presented a more or less chronological account of the development of the Underground cultural space within a broader arena of non-official activity, these holding forms—such as 'raw' sounds—take shape bit by bit, accumulating over time and space in often process-like and non-linear ways: in rooms, barns, bedrooms, in the ether; with friends and enemies alike; feeling unity with strangers with whom one shares aesthetic experiences. Such micro-sociological investigations, set within the Cold War context, have allowed me to zoom out to meso- and macro-level questions (e.g., from jamming sounds in the bedroom to tanks in city streets to the Bay of Pigs). Moreover, by examining aesthetic forms and practices in this context, we get a closer, and arguably richer view, into the matrix of action that interrogates disciplinary concerns not only of sociology but also of psychology, anthropology, history, science studies, music therapy, popular music studies and humanities.

As this thesis has suggested, an interdisciplinary approach to studying the social is essential. Indeed, how we come to define the social is called into question when we "reassemble" it to consider people, objects and materials acting together (Latour 2006). 'Togetherness', then is not only about *people* being together; rather, it is about people, timbres, cassette tapes, back beats, establishments, buzz saw sounds, photographs, places, transmitters, long hair, legacies, regimes, police, poetry, histories and so on and so on being ecologically assembled (or rejected) to (re)form a habitable, healthy space from where one can live.

Within cases of suppressed or subjugated peoples (either in an institution, a locality, a household or a society), it is perhaps best to return to Becker's (Becker and Pessin 2006: 279) "sociology of the possible" and the role of aesthetics in actually making those possibilities happen. Instead of considering fields of limited resources, I have traced how aesthetic materials, and their responses, are indeed indicative of how groups generate resources. This does not need to be researched necessarily at a level of transforming governmental regimes (even if that may be an outcome), but rather pursuing research in cultural change in the quotidian practice of 'getting by' and 'making do' together. Ultimately, as the Underground shows us, such cultural change comes down to an attunement of the self and environment: with what and with whom one 'feels right' and how does one achieve that state of collective security in micro-level interactions.

8.1 Dipping in to Spaces

Frith (1996: 111) has remarked that "making music isn't a way expressing ideas; it is a way of living them." Indeed, music (and more broadly sound) comes to underpin not only daily activity but also entire ecologies of ways of living that can make unbearable situations tolerable. As I have shown, music can aid in ordering experience by building a meaningful affordance structure that interacts with local conditions to help produce and enable learned subjectivities. The malleable properties of music within a cultural space help sustain and maintain action and dispositions that hold together, yet are also adjustable and adaptable over time.

In this light, the thesis has been about how to correct a sense of social and cultural dis-ease through music thereby creating a way of life. Music as an active ingredient in the making of a social world hinges on the material conditions coordinated by people acting together with bodies, places and information. To these ends, I employed the concept 'cultural space'. It is a tool that takes into account the accrual of mediations and affordances through the practice of locating, opening up and crafting aesthetic resources. This swirling mix of resources presented here arose from a particular time, place and set of actors who reflexively adjusted, adapted and aligned (human and non-human) relationships to an environment and its information. This enacted Underground cultural space was constitutive of and constituted a way of life that allowed for community activity.

In order to explore how this way of life came into being, I set out to show the beginnings of this community activity in Chapter Four. From music scene activity (Straw 1991; Bennett 2004) involving fans getting together to listen to music and patronize venues, a set of aesthetic-related practices began to take shape through people locating 'what felt good' and 'what sounded right'. By taking into consideration material aspects as Straw (1991: 374) points out, such as the circulation of cultural commodities (Western cultural media), and socially temporal aspects involving canonization (pre-Prague Spring), accrual of values (into the normalization era of 1970s and 80s), it is possible to see the indexical and contingent qualities of aesthetic resources that rely upon mediations and actors' use for producing meaning. This locating activity in the 1960s set in motion a liminal state of transition. In a sense, these micro aesthetic sites of transition (i.e., personal revolutions) were manifested in the streets in 1989.

The discussion of liminality has shown how actors appropriate furnishings in cultural spaces. In particular, I highlighted the tacit activity of what I have called 'dipping in' to available resources. This term seeks to highlight an actor's "aesthetic agency" to maneuver within an ecology of people, objects and materials that makes up a space (Witkin and DeNora 1997: 1). How far one dips in relates to the ability of the individual interacting with the environmental affordances. In other words, the further one dips in to a cultural space, the more the person may be configured by the space and, reflexively, the more the person knows how to use it.

In this sense, 'dipping in' helps to harmonize 'tacit learning' and 'liminality'. I suggest a subtle difference: tacit learning leads to liminal states when there is a degree of transition (from one ecology to another) involved. How do we measure this degree of transition? This is a matter of how one is able to gauge a level of dis-ease according to one's "inner logic" (Havel 1991 [1978]: 169) and use aesthetic material to enter a more healthy space. For example, situating oneself in a place they feel more at ease and in comfort. Subsequently, this is where maintaining well-being is part of the unintentional political project of 'going Underground'. As demonstrated in this research, musicking affords such liminality. It is something we all have access to that allows us to transition (or move, or journey) between, and from, the margins of private life and public life, to help balance out or 'even up' levels of well-being for maintaining ontological security. As shown in the Underground, liminality via an ecology of aesthetic forms (raw, primitive, dark, non-syncopated, screamed, heavy, un-tuned) took hold in crafted cultural practices involving 1) "doing it to the max" and 2) playing with spirit or one's

convictions 2) within secure spaces 3) by way of organizational set up of 'cocooned' micro public Underground events for communing/rejecting.

This dual activity of communing/immuning is a political claim. In Chapter Five I showed that music practices—such as listening to, performing, rehearsing, thinking and talking about music—were used in knowledge production for 'problem-solving' and 'management' mechanisms within the Underground. Specifically, I looked to an ultimately political tension (emerging in normalized Czechoslovakia) framed by the Undergrounders: *how to be 'true to the self'* in an environment that was considered essentially rotten. In order to consider what was 'essentially rotten' about this environment, I looked to acts of oppression in situated contexts that suppressed conditions, in different ways, for the Underground to 'be' themselves: suppressing creativity through requalification exams, suppressing access to live music through shutting down concerts (*Budějovická Masakr*), suppressing embodied values by shaving long hair, suppressing 'togetherness' through forced emigration, interrogations, home searches, and police raids. I was able to show how tacitly felt experiences from these points of suppression were converted into clearer forms of an 'Underground awareness' through the regime's 'creative constriction'. In other words, suppressing one thing for another to become expressed.

Moreover, I showed how emotional content—spirit, anger, fellowship, joy and fear—helped shape how one entered the Underground cultural space wherein political conditions of suppression not only helped to calibrate a community based on survival and protection but also served as a resource material for producing an Underground subjectivity. Suppression is thus part of the experiential conversion process of sensibility

to disposition. Considering Becker's (1953) social learning steps, favorable or positive experience help continued use of an object. However, the police suppression as described throughout the thesis evidences how unfavorable learning can lead to new understandings of affirmations of values within a group. The 1974 *Budějovická Masakr* shows us how suppressed aesthetic material—such as rock'n'roll and long hair—underpin how a group comes to know themselves. Thus by focusing on suppression as a mechanism of conversion of feelings to dispositions, I call into question Becker's (1953: 239-240) notion of 'favorable' experiences as being key to continued use of an object. Hennion (2005) provides a more corporated, less cognitive, approach that takes into consideration how content is revealed to actors through mediations (be those favorable or unfavorable) that trigger experience of the object. This framed activity produces bodies that emerge in situations. Similarly, I have shown a far murkier picture, where unfavorable coercion and suppression (e.g., shaving heads, forced exile, expatriation) were counter acted and solved as a consequence of people, objects and materials coming together.


8.2 Musicking and Power


Using an ecological perspective within studying cultural spaces replaces the "zero-sum game" of Bourdieu's field theory, which posits conflict over limited resources (Becker and Pessin 2006: 276). Ecologies, on the other hand, are able to co-exist or even replace one another, generating power and resources interdependently. Thus ecologies exist in a far more "extendable, open space to which, moreover, it is difficult to assign limits" (Becker and Pessin 2006: 277). This interdependency does not preclude conflict, but

rather sees two or more entities cooperating together (wherein good will is not implied).

Collective action is then a more complex phenomenon where entities such as the

establishment and the Underground act *together* to generate power respectively.

Central to generating and distributing power is the act of musicking (Small 1998).

Here, music is decentralized from being a thing that exists in the world that 'only

musicians do' to a core material that all can *act with;* at the same time music *acts on*

everyone. The Underground helps to show us forms of musicking (e.g., non-virtuosi) that,

when crafted within a cultural space, can be just as 'powerful' as a Paganini violin solo.

The musical experience is thus a flexible material for building a space from where to

imagine, feel and participate. Musicking in a cultural space makes it a space that is at

once lived, embodied, enacted and "intertwined with culturally diverse epistemologies"

(Finnegan 2003: 183). These "diverse epistemologies" are pulled together and crafted

from a range of indexical, malleable cultural resources mediated by technology, people

and spaces of listening. The pulling together and arranging of these resources assist in

opening up and generating new habitable areas of a cultural space, as illustrated in

Chapter Six.

Musicking in a cultural space thus helps us to begin to theorize about music's role

in relation to collective action and collective consciousness (and so to build upon earlier

work devoted to this theme in ways that seek to delineate the actual mechanisms through

which music provides 'exemplars' for action and collective mobilization [Eyerman and

Jamieson 1998]). I would suggest that the musical experience made possible an

alternative notion of belonging (to histories, to regions, to movements) that aided to

redraw borders of Cold War experiences and subjectivities that get underneath the East

and the West (Fickers et al. 2012). Listening, tuning in, crafting bootleg tapes and recording afforded the act of participation in what was a growing *parallel polis* in Czechoslovakia. How non-official dispositions spread to a wider public helps to situate political activity not necessarily in protest marches and more public sphere displays but rather in gestures (knob-tuning, reception sweet-spot locating) and sound. These sonic-related gestures help build an embodied, felt consciousness that actually get people 'in the streets' (and get over fears), which then lead the way to such moments of political transformation as witnessed across the Bloc in 1989.

### 8.2.1 Resistance and Well-Being

Resistance is then not just going against something. It is more positive. It is about replacing that which irritates. This replacement involves practices and (re)furnishing the spaces of action, thought, imagination and feeling coordinated together. Simultaneous to this communing of practices and materials is a rejection of unwanted material in order to build an "effective resistance" thereby increasing one's immunity capabilities (Gomart and Hennion 1999: 244). By taking this approach, my research has moved the discussion of opposition forward by examining resistance in micro actions and micro publics as a matter of well-being and how music can contribute to habitual—albeit often times tacit— forms of resistance that are more concerned with resolving ontological conflict and crafting long-term self-projects than explicitly orientated goals or institutional resistance that 'succeeds' wherein revolution or regime change is concerned.

Through tracing the debates concerning music and resistance within Czechoslovakia, I have shown how the communist regime was used as a resource in

relation to music, subsequently revealing political moments for the Underground. I looked to this question not only within the core Underground collective but also within the wider "gray-zone" culture by examining radio listeners, thus demonstrating how subtle forms of listening attention and sound became habitual matters that often snowballed into forms of action associated with, and articulated as resistance (i.e., protesting in the streets, signing petitions). From these points of inhibition, the research drew on the data to show how cultural material converged and departed in situated zones in order to generate new corners of the non-official cultural space

The research has not attempted to pin down a systematic or complete description of life in the Underground and the innumerable amount of contingencies involved. Nor does it claim that what is presented here is generalizable to all of what can be considered Underground; again, the Czech Underground phenomenon is much too large, varied, contextual and subjective to assume that the arguments below could apply to everyone. In this same light, it is then possible to take these conclusions that the Underground has shown us and apply them in different contexts.

8.3 Afterlife or Renaissance? Researching the Recent Past for the Future

As Goffman (1981: 46) has pointed out, cultural practices that bear their weight in present may be a result of "referential afterlife". Memories, legacies and traditions of the living past that come to make up models for contemporary living are thus a complex body to research. To carry out this study, immersion in the Underground world nowadays was essential in understanding the significance of events, places, people and modes of

behavior. The project rested on a situated group of people and history and how music in the Underground came into the lives of those surrounding them and how this is still used today.

In order to assess how the Underground perceived the political and cultural regime of Czechoslovakia, one method was to employ ethnographic content analysis of samizdat texts and interviews given from the 1970s and 1980s. These samizdat texts offer both a situated account as well as guide to what was considered significant within the Underground during this time. These texts present different settings and circumstances of Underground thinking and experience in relation to the state, their distribution and content acting as mediators of music for understanding 'the political', and a departure point for how dispositions were discussed and thought about using music.

These data help to conceptualize the regime in a significantly different way than academic and journalistic texts, which often put the Underground in binary position with the regime (Ryback 1990; Ramet 1994) as performing resistance. These texts do not address what and how the regime was considered suppressive beyond discursive notions of communism being equated to the evil empire. Neither is it considered how such a regime helped germinate cases as the Czech Underground. To put it simply: framing and sensibilities were not the focus, rather, the fervor of the fall of communism in the Eastern Bloc took center stage in these analyses and did not offer critical examination of the regime. By revisiting more precisely the perceived and articulated suppression within the binary of 'Underground versus Establishment', we are better equipped to set up and understand how the Underground as a cultural space shaped itself after 1989. Therefore, as much as the Underground may have "turned their back on overt politics" (Elias 1979:

5), the regime was inescapably a critical actor in the Underground's assembled resource repository. But how the regime and its practices were revealed and formulated within the Underground via music and how this formulation found root within a more widely expressed network is part of the aim of this thesis. Therefore, I addressed such epistemic questions by relying on Undergrounders' terminology and understanding of the regime.

These prior studies have noted the importance and crucial relationship between the Underground and the dissident humans rights groups formed around Charta 77. The research presented here calls in question how dissidence has come to be framed historically (and by whom). The growth of the Underground through its various mediators, technologies and spaces shows us how dissent is not just an elite intelligentsia but is part of a more generalized sensibility, which also has to do with aesthetic distribution and availability.

Yet, perhaps the availability of resources nowadays that fuels the "referential afterlife" that Goffman describes is something different here in the Underground circa 2012. In this thesis, I showed how events from the communist era still serve as material nowadays for continual building of the cultural space by way of teaching, learning, remembering, and commemorating as well as music still mediating forms of behavior (e.g., doing it to the max) and ways of thinking and being (e.g., non-conformity). This learning, of course, occurs in new mediations, relationships, and adaptions to new technologies: Underground seminars in official institutions, Underground presentations on Window's PowerPoint, Underground webpages on social media websites. A focus on the 'living' Underground thus highlights tradition as something that is tied up in material practices and shared sensibilities, canonized through repetition, continually malleable yet

durable. Thus, the Underground Renaissance is a revolving or continuing refreshment of cultural practices from the past to the present—a revolution happening now.

## APPENDIX A: LIST OF ARCHIVAL INSTITUTIONS

Archive of State Security Services: Prague Czech Republic.

Archive of Theatre on a String: Brno, Czech Republic

Artpool: Budapest, Hungary

British Library, Newspaper collection: Colindale, London, UK.

Institute of Contemporary History: Prague, Czech Republic

Karta Center: Warsaw, Poland.

Libri Prohibiti: Library of samizdat and exile literature, Prague Czech Republic.

Open Society Archives: Radio Free Europe Czechoslovak Section, Budapest, Hungary.

## APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Following Spradley's (1979: 58-68) model for an ethnographic interview, each interview contained the proceeding questions and explanations:

1. The interviewee will be given the explicit purpose of my research and what the interview will more or less cover: "I am researching music in the Czech Underground for my PhD. I would like to speak to you about some of your experiences as a musician and member of the Underground."
2. The respondent will also be informed about recording: "I would like to record today's interview so I can go over it later. Please feel free to ask me to turn it off at anytime in the interview."

After these preliminary questions, each interview will have a very different focus depending on the individual's participation in the Underground, however the question format will again follow Spradley's techniques. For example:

1. Descriptive questions: "Can you describe an Underground concert for me (if too broad a question and the interviewee cannot recall, I will suggest a concert that I know this respondent attended/performed).
   a. From here, probing questions can be used: "How was it organized? Where did it take place? Who was there? Was it publicized?"
2. Descriptive questions can then lead to structural questions: For example, "At this particular concert, [musician's name] performed. How did this person arrive to the Underground? [the purpose of the question is to stimulate the respondent's structural definitions of differing categories/classifications of musicians: official, non-official, Alternative, Underground, jazz.]
   a. Furthermore, these questions will use the language of the Underground members, e.g., 'jdeme do hory' 'na baráky'[155]
3. Contrastive questioning will also be employed, depending on the interviewee's personal history: "What were the differences between 'hard' Underground members and 'weak' Underground members?" [anticipated answer could describe those who were thrown in prison, emigrated, or who published samizdat]

Additionally, once again depending on my rapport with the interviewee and the frequency of interviewing, I will explain the precise intentions of the each interview.

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[155] Translated from Czech, "We go to the mountains" and "in the houses"; the former referring to clandestine concerts in the countryside, the latter signifying communal living of some Underground members.

# APPENDIX C: ETHICS CONSENT FORM

**Title of Research Project**

Musicking in the Merry Ghetto: The Czech Underground from the 1960s to 2000s

**Details of Project**

This project aims to explore how members of the Czech Underground used music to furnish a cultural space for community activity.

Your part in this study will involve participating in a recorded interview. If you choose to take part in this research, you are undertaking this on a voluntary basis and have the right to withdraw your consent at any time. You also have the right to refuse to answer any questions I may ask without giving me reasons.

**Confidentiality**

Interview recordings and transcripts will be held in confidence. They will not be used other than for the purposes described above and third parties will not be allowed access to them (except in the case of legal subpoena). However, if you request it, you will be supplied with a copy of *your* interview transcript so that you can comment on and edit it as you see fit (please give your email below).

**Anonymity:** Would you prefer your interview information to be held and used on an anonymous basis, with no mention of your name? (I still need to refer to any conflict resolution program you participate(d) in).

*If Yes*

*Name of interviewee:*....................................................................................

*Email/phone:*.............................................................................................

*If No*

*Pseudonym to be used:*.................................................................................

**Recording:** Will you allow the recording of this interview, or do you prefer written notes only

**Consent:** I confirm that I am over the age of eighteen and therefore legally allowed to participate. I understand the above information and voluntarily consent to participate in the research project.

*Date…………… Signature:*

......................................................................................................................

I, the interviewer, will leave a signed copy of this consent form with you, the participant, at the time of the interview.

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