

TESI DOCTORAL

**Taste in music as a
cultural production**

*Young people, musical geographies and the imbrication
of social hierarchies in Birmingham and Barcelona*

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Ray Rogers: *What was growing up like for you?*

Mike Skinner: *Not hard, not easy. School was hard. It's quite tough for boys – you have to establish yourself as someone not to be fucked with, and I was never good at that. I wasn't at the rock bottom of the stack – I wasn't a freak – but I was nowhere near the top. And it's hard at that age. If you're on the football team, or play other school sports, it makes you physically confident, and I was never really into that.*

Ray Rogers: *What did you do instead?*

Mike Skinner: *Music. I never did music at school, but I was always pissing around at home, making music. I had a guitar for a bit, and then I got tape recorders and keyboards. I've been messing around with it since I was about seven.*

Interview carried out by Ray Rogers

(http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1285/is_4_33/ai_100572741, March 2003; consulted in December 21, 2004).

PREFACE

The words of Mike Skinner heading this *Preface* point out to an aspect that has been only marginally addressed within the youth cultures literature, that is, this conflictive and hierarchical reality of the experience of adolescence and youth. Besides some great exceptions, only social psychological research on popularity in schools has properly paid attention to it. This aspect, nevertheless, is very visible in journalistic and artistic accounts of young people's experience, not to say in everyday conversations. This is because even if youth cultures research has tended to ignore youth hierarchies, they are the cause of much stress and discomfort – as Skinner puts it, 'it's quite tough' in school, since 'you have to establish yourself as someone not to be fucked with'. The spatial metaphor he uses ('I wasn't at the rock bottom – I wasn't a freak – but I was nowhere near the top') is what I explore in this thesis. In the same way that he found in music a passion to negotiate his position in the world, I have focused on how music mediates the cultural production of what I name 'youth geographies'.

If I chose this quote is because Mike Skinner is the artist behind *The Streets*, whose *Original Pirate Material* – I have decided – has materialised the closure of a long circle in my life. Music was, when I was a teenager, quite important for me, although after a while, without noticing it, I thrown it out of my interests. I felt uncomfortable with the hidden and subtle symbolic violence involved in the negotiation of music value with (new) university mates. I just did not like the fact that while we discussed bands and songs, there was a good deal of symbolic violence between us. After that, in a perfectly immature response, I did not buy nor tape any record for almost ten years. It was after I had carried out my first

research on youth styles – and I do not think this is a coincidence – that I started buying and listening to music again. A few years latter, when I was writing up this thesis, a friend gave me a pirate CD – he had just bought a legal copy – of *Original Pirate Material*, the debut of The Streets, and listening to it I was carried away by it in a way I had not experienced since I was a teenager. It did not seem a coincidence either, as if my research on youth had had a therapeutic influence on me. The circle was closed, and I recovered music in my life.

This intellectual and therepeutical journey has lasted many years, and is the result of many influences. When writing the conclusion of this thesis, it came to my mind my first long essay as an university student of the then Information Sciences degree, which drawn upon Herbert Schiller's analysis of what would now be regarded as a somewhat updated expression *Mass Communications and American Empire* (1969). The pages that follow, I realised when writing the last ones, discuss similar topics but from the eyes shaped by the imprompt of 17 years of academic work. The outcome is the result of many readings, conversations, lectures, seminaris and interviews, that is, of other people's words and ideas. If this thesis is so distant from that long essay on 'mass communication', is thanks the all who have taught and helped me.

First of all, I thank all the youngsters and adults that have uninterestedly participated in the fieldwork of this and other research projects. It is not only that they have shared what they thought and felt and made me see things differently from what I would have ever see them by my own, but that they have provided brilliant insights, corrections and hints which I have followed in this thesis. I am particularly indebted to the six schools and three youth clubs that collaborated – and have been vampirised – in the fieldwork, and within them I especially thank those I caused more inconveniences: the teachers and youth workers that directly helped me, not only organising the interviews, but sharing their knowledge about music and young people.

Second, I thank all those that have engaged in intellectual conversations that have modified my thought. The exchanges with Paul Willis have always excited and enhanced my sociological imagination, and shaped my theoretical interests as it is obvious in this thesis. He also was very helpful when starting my fieldwork in Birmingham. The feed-back from my supervisor, Salvador Cardús, has always been rich, insightful and full of priceless hints and warnings. His generosity in sharing so many personal ideas with me is now part of this thesis, as I hope it is his way of understanding sociology, the same that captured me more than ten years ago when I was finishing my degree. The readiness of Francesc Núñez, my office companion, to read all the manuscript and make intelligent and detailed comments and suggestions, as well as our conversations and friendship since we were sociology students, are also part of the pages that follow. With Isaac Gonzàlez I have shared during the last years several research projects and given several talks about the same topics of this work, and some of the ideas that it develops are theirs as much as mine. With David Carabén I have had many enlightening conversations and got priceless book recommendations that have

raised my understanding of contemporary popular culture. With Ismael Comas I have had access to his rich and two-folded knowledge of popular music. With Toni Estradé I have always felt lucky to be near him and be able to enjoy his tremendous erudition and sociological passion. With Andy Furlong I have learnt more in many informal conversations than I could have learnt in years of study. With them, many other colleagues like Mike Featherstone and Steven Stoer, visiting scholars in my University doctorate program who directed me to the Cultural Studies literature; Miquel Àngel Alegre, research colleague and friend with whom we developed several of the ideas in this thesis; Carles Feixa, the father of youth cultures studies in Catalonia who is as intellectually generous as encouraging and supportive; Robert Hollands, a scholar I admire and with whom I have been able to exchange ideas and impressions; and those many teachers, authors and friends which have provided me with the theoretical basis to produce the following pages. Among them, there are three without whom my way of understanding sociology would not have been the same: Joan Estruch's introduction to the sociology of knowledge was an experience no sociology student should be denied of; Ángeles Lizón made me change my mind and study sociology instead of political science; Maria Jesús Izquierdo gave me a fundamental, vivid, consistent and non-scholastic knowledge of the founding fathers of sociology.

In Cambridge, I had the opportunity to enjoy a copyright library and to meet Ken Prandy (and the other members of the Sociological Research Group), Gill Jones, Bryan Turner, David Abbott, Anna Bagnoli, Harriott Beazley, Janet Foster, Ben Bowling, Simon Charlesworth, Rober McAuley, Judith Ennew and many others that kindly shared their time and often read or listened to what I was doing. I was also able to talk to young people in Hill's Road 6th Form College, and to dance events promoters in my college, Fitzwilliam. In my two years in England, I also benefited from the generosity of many scholars outside Cambridge who also shared their time, ideas and literature, and many other things, particularly Andy Bennett and Howard Williamson. Howard also helped me, among many other things, to have instant access to three youth clubs in Birmingham. In Birmingham, Peter Simon, Paul Hodgkinson, Adele Williams and Martin Holt shared time, ideas and fieldwork with me, as did Zak Avery in his visit to the city. Amparo Lasen also made, in my last months in England, my stay more personally and intellectually rich.

Third, there are also many public and private institutions without which this work would have not been done. The Sociology Department of the Autonomous University of Barcelona has been a fantastic, however strange, intellectual stimuli. The Fundació Jaume Bofill funded my first paid research on youth taste, and helped me with two grants (one *beca complement*, in 2000-01, and one *beca salari*, in 2001-02) for this particular research, as well as support when different commitments postponed the finalization of it and when I decided to write it in English. The Generalitat de Catalunya funded with a Batista i Roca grant my fieldwork in Birmingham in the year 1999-2000. And Josep Maria Batista i Roca, through his commitment to the academic development of Catalonia, made possible through his

posthumous donation to the Fitzwilliam College in Cambridge, my stay in that fantastic intellectual and human environment the years 1998-99 and 1999-2000. Geoffrey and Anna Walker, on the one hand, and Dominic Keown, on the other, taught me more than I expected from this 'strange bit of england' and made me feel at home. Them and the other fellows, colleagues and friends in Cambridge, particularly Nick, Sinan, Alex, Mark and Jesus, made those years a privilege. I also had the support of the schooling authorities in both Birmingham and Barcelona, Tim Brighouse and Marina Subirats, to carry out fieldwork in schools in both cities. In Birmingham, the now extinct Cultural Studies and Sociology department of Birmingham University opened up their seminars and socialising occasions, and three youth clubs allowed me in and shared with me many of their rich and direct knowledge about young people in the city. And since 2003, the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, and particularly Isidor Marí, Francesc Núñez and Agnès Vayreda, have always been generous and patient in allowing me to postpone commitments in order to be able to finish this thesis.

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INTRODUCTION: THE LUGBARA OF UGANDA

The power of music can be extraordinary. Through music we can enjoy incomparable experiences, both personal and collective. And this is especially the case for young people, among whom listening to music is almost compulsory. They experience moments of lightening joy, of individual and collective ecstasy and ineffable beauty, to the extent that forever after, a few notes of certain songs can automatically evoke memories and sensations of their youth. A few notes which will compress in themselves strong feelings impossible to retain in a thousand images. For some, a passion for music can even modify the direction of their lives. The power of music, indeed, can be extraordinary.

However, for others and in many situations, music is barely relevant or even totally insignificant. The variety of experiences in relation to music is enormous, ranging from full commitment to absolute indifference. The present attempt to deal with music aims to take into account this range of experiences. It is true, nevertheless, that I will not be as concerned with musical experience as I will be with the production of (social) knowledge through tastes in music, or what I will call the cultural production of musical and social geographies.

Taste in music tends to be understood in everyday life as a matter of 'individual' experience. Discourses about music emphasize the uniqueness, charisma, 'coolness' and authenticity of both performers and listeners, not to say the music itself. In the sphere of production, musicians, when popular, become adored celebrities. In the sphere of consumption, we consider an individual's musical taste and musical experience as an indicator of their inner being and even 'moral value'. The result of perceiving music as a matter of individual aesthetic experience – a personal dialogue between individuals and music forms – is that its social or collective implications are often downplayed, if not ignored. The dominant image sees music and art in general as 'finite provinces of meaning' in relation to everyday life, in the sense that the aesthetic experience *leaves behind* 'ordinary' everyday life – even if this experience is a significant ritual of everyday life – and *enters an* 'extraordinary' relationship with the work of art in the mode of being transported to another world.

It should not be forgotten, however, that this relationship between individuals and cultural forms depends upon the existing 'prejudices' *within the individual* as much as it does with the symbolic form, and such existing prejudices are to a great extent socially acquired¹. Prejudices are an inherent part of the musical experience because before, during and after we actually 'listen' to a piece of music, our experience is mediated by prejudices about this piece and music in general that *we*

¹ As Simon Frith brilliantly puts it, "This is the sociological paradox: musical experience is socially produced as something special; the importance of music is therefore taken to be that its meaning is not socially produced, is somehow "in the music." Pop fans too have an aesthetic mode of listening. Pop fans too believe that music derives its value "from its inner and private soul." (Frith 1996: 252).

and the persons surrounding us have. Particularly for young people, listening to music is not only about music, but also about 'presenting to' and 'living with' others. Music, like any other symbolic form, is embedded in social structures and social relations, and cannot be separated from them, cannot be reduced to a 'finite province of meaning'. For a young person, listening to classical music, to the Spice Girls or to obscure underground garage music implies causing a different impression on others, and this – contrary to what classical aesthetics of music would claim – can hardly be isolated from the musical experience itself.

If we pay attention to musical taste – as any other aspect of youth taste –, we will realize its importance in the perception – or even better, cultural production – of our social reality and our presentation of the self in everyday life. The musical taste of those surrounding us provides quite useful information about them. Musical taste, although perceived as a matter of personal judgement, relies upon collective dispositions and typified knowledge. 'Cheesy', 'classy', 'underground', 'low', 'distinguished', 'pretentious', 'trendy', 'cool' and many other adjectives that evaluate music are collective judgements continuously negotiated in the social arena. It is not only that we 'learn' the concepts to classify and talk about music, but also that reactions of others to our musical taste, or the meanings that others attach to our musical taste, are important realities that make us who we are, so we learn to deal with them from early on – they have, therefore, a powerful influence on individuals and their relationship with music. Even for those who do not attach much importance to music, their indifference will probably constitute an important element of their social and personal identity.

Contemporary forms of common culture

The obvious complexity of the collective aspects of our musical experience must not deter us from analysing and acknowledging it. The main goal of the following pages is precisely to offer an account of young people and music that makes visible some of these often opaque social – collective – implications. The argument is that by focusing on particular aspects of the collective meaning-making process associated with musical forms, it will be possible to understand a little bit better how *contemporary forms of common culture* are being built. To do this, the stress will not be placed on either the aesthetic experience of young people or the musical form itself, but on the *process of cultural production, through musical commodities, of social geographies and our own pathways through them*. This is, needless to say, a very partial account of music, but nevertheless, I argue, a fertile one in order to understand the process of cultural production of social meaning in contemporary society. After all, reductionism is a fundamental strategy for developing scientific knowledge.

One of the idiosyncrasies of *contemporary forms of common culture* is the importance of 'commodities' – musical commodities in this case. Young people's experience with musical commodities does not merely relate to personal meanings, but also, to a certain extent, to meanings shared by other young people. Those 'at-least-partially-shared' meanings are, in this sense, part of the (intersubjective) culture that enables meaningful communication to take part in collective life.

There is something *new* about these contemporary forms of common culture mediated by commodities, which makes it particularly interesting for sociological analysis. The intersubjective meanings, for instance, are heavily dependent on the economic logic of the production of cultural commodities, which we might name 'the political economy'. The interplay between big global corporations and underground markets is increasingly complex, as is the perception of time through trends, fashions and revivals, or the relationship between consumption and social stratification, as well as the link between global and local meanings.

Popular music is not directly handed down from one generation to the other, as nursery songs can be to a certain extent. On the one hand, popular music is always *in the making*, and on the other hand, it needs the mediation of the industry that ensures that objects and places make the music available to every new generation of young people. Without clubs, music venues, record labels, record shops, the music press, radio stations, television and now the internet, popular music would not be as it is. And all these carriers and mediators of musical meanings must adjust to the logics of commodification and profit making. Meanwhile, the perception of young individuals is that their relationship with music is not only 'personal' and 'original' but even 'authentic' and 'unrestricted'. This paradox will be the focus of attention of our interrogation of the contemporary forms of common culture.

Since individuals see their relationship with music as personal, we can indisputably conceptualize collective meanings around music as *unintended consequences of social action*, that is, as the aggregate result of every individual's relationship with music. In the way we make sense of our social reality, we not only *believe* but rather *need to believe* that individual taste is 'a personal responsibility'. If we did not think so, our social organization would probably be jeopardised, since it would undermine the way we make sense of social and cultural differences and hierarchies. In a sense, the following pages can be seen as a contribution to the understanding of how consumer culture is actualising the way that young people culturally conceive and produce social geographies, a social space where, alongside the crucial struggle for scarce material resources, we also struggle for and seek respect, self-esteem and identity, and we thus make sense of our everyday life – sometimes resulting in deep and often hidden tensions and even injuries to individuals.

Through the window of music, we will focus on a particular aspect of the organization of contemporary forms of common culture, namely on how we make sense in everyday life of our social experience in terms of social distances, particularly those distances related to generalised advantage and disadvantage. We will do so by paying attention to both the process of cultural production, which is obviously dynamic and involves the agency of individuals, and the objectified character of social geographies, which relates rather to the impact of institutionalised social reality on individuals. The concepts of 'cultural production' and 'social geographies', therefore, will be central to conceptualize the dialectics of human social activity. It is appropriate, therefore, to spend some time making clear what we understand by these two notions.

Cultural production of social geographies

In this thesis the notion of ‘cultural production’ will not refer to the cultural production of *musical symbolic forms* (songs) but of *collective meanings attached to musical forms*. Here, therefore, the term ‘cultural production’ refers not to the individual but to the collective aspects of meaning making. It is not the cultural production of works of art, but of meanings that enable us to make collective sense of our everyday experience.

We human beings struggle to survive not only by making and remaking our material conditions of existence, but also by making sense of the world and our place in it². Our ‘material’ conditions are not self-evident in themselves: we only experience them through the cultural forms which we use so that the conditions make sense to us. And our usage of cultural forms cannot be understood as merely personal, but collective, in the same sense that our language is not merely personal, but shared by a broader community of speakers. I specifically refer to the ‘collective’ cultural production to stress that human meaning-making is not only ‘individual’, but dependent on shared ‘forms’ and ‘meanings’. As Paul Willis put it:

[I]mportant and specifically creative aspects of meaning-making are accomplished through *work upon forms*. Meaning-making is not an internal quest, a search for an ever elusive (disappointing if found) true self as an unchanging inner essence or state of being or intrinsic soul. Meaning-making can be considered a work process involving its own kind of labour and expressive outcomes issuing into some kind of inter-subjective space. This work is never ‘done’: only by expressing themselves over time do human beings continuously reproduce themselves culturally. This process of labour requires, assumes and reproduces a locating cultural world through which self-expression is achieved’ (Willis 2000: xv).

The focus will be placed on the collective cultural production of what will be called ‘social geographies’, which is a compressed way to say *a particular institutionalised way of experiencing both social distances and inequalities*. Focusing on how young people culturally produce social geographies – and their own pathways through them – we will pay attention to the particular sphere of meaning that makes sense of the organization of the (mainly hierarchical) social distances and proximities. Cultural production does not circumscribe, naturally, to this particular aspect, and even though other elements could be considered, in the following pages the focus will be placed on the cultural production of our experience of social geographies and its relationship with unequal conditions of generalised advantage and disadvantage. To be more precise, by ‘social

² This idea and the very notion of ‘cultural production’ are directly drawn from Paul Willis (2000: xiv). Interestingly, in Catalonia Toni Puig already used this same concept in relation to youth cultures in 1986, although not in exactly the same sense (Puig 1986).

geographies' – or 'social space' – we will understand the experience of social reality in a – not only hierarchical – pattern of distances and proximities³.

Since the notions of 'cultural production' and 'social geographies' are not easily grasped, and even though they will be gradually developed throughout the following chapters, a good starting point can be to travel far away from Western young people's experience, specifically to John Middleton's description – in the 1960s, even though the fieldwork was carried out during the 1950s – of how the Lugbara of Uganda conceived their social world (Middleton 2002 [1965]). On the basis of what the Lugbara said about themselves, he wrote that they ignored the spatial limits of their society, apparently unlike us. In fact, however, reading his description of their knowledge and perception of their social world we realize that it has a lot to do with ours. The Lugbara live – in Middleton's account – in homes from which they see the surrounding hills, fields and huts. They can see the members of neighbouring families and lineages, their huts and their fields. At night, the fires make it obvious that one belongs to a wider system including other groups scattered through the open fields, even though they do not have any doubt that there is a point when instead of Lugbaras there are people from another system. The Lugbara understand their own society and location in the world through the concepts of high people and low people, depending on which of the two hero-ancestors they are descended from, Jaki or Dribidu, associated to the hills Liru and Eti. Every Lugbara traces their genealogy back until it reaches one of these two heroes. The larger the social distance between two Lugbaras, the further back was the genealogical link between them. In fact, however, little was known about the genealogy of other Lugbara communities.

Not only time – in mythical terms through imagined genealogies – but also space is important. Actually, social distance generally correlates quite well with spatial distance. In terms of space,

Every household thus saw itself as surrounded first by people like themselves, then by a circle of people whose territories were filled with sorcery and magic and who were evilly disposed towards them, even though it was assumed they were Lugbara. But this was relative: when compared to groups beyond them, who were even worse, the closer strangers appeared almost like one's own kin. They were people beyond the bounds of society altogether (...). Although they were never visited, it was maintained that they walked on their heads. (Middleton 2002 [1965]: 28)

When a person visits places outside their community, the (normal) individuals who are met are seen as the exception that confirms the rule. In both schemes, the fundamental distinction is drawn between the close people, members of their own community, and distant and inverted people, beyond social relations and outside

³ 'Social distances and proximities' can refer to material social interactions *and* to imagined distances, so they are not necessarily related to spatial practices – although generally they will be. The spatial thinking of society is part of our everyday life, where we irreflexively – and reflexively – locate as 'close' or 'distant' different persons and practices.

genealogical tradition. Each community has its own genealogy, only known to its members, but all the Lugbara share the same corpus of myth. (*ibid.*: 29)

When new elements enter this stock of social knowledge, as happened with the arrival of the Europeans, the Lugbara have to culturally produce new meanings to make sense of them. The rapid change provoked by colonization, indeed, pushed them to rapidly develop their stock of social knowledge. When Middleton visited Uganda between 1949 and 1953, he already noticed many of these adaptations. The Europeans, for instance, had already been given a location within the Lugbara conception of society – there were different categories of Europeans, but all of them had a status in it.

The point is that as ‘primitive’ as this stock of social knowledge might seem, it is not that different from our own way of conceiving our social world. There are important differences, but if we make the effort to think honestly about how we *really* imagine our social space, we will find it more familiar than we tend to recognize. Our maps of meaning also locate ourselves and others who are similar in the centre, as the *normal* members of society. And the further we go, both in terms of time and space – and of course in terms of ‘social space’ –, the more we *invert* those individuals that we perceive as ‘distant’. They are ‘strange’, not ‘normal’, even ‘less human’. It was not that long ago that it was a commonplace to publicly refer to homosexuals as ‘inverted’, or to non-Westerners as ‘savages’. We, like the Lugbara, also give a relevant role to myths and heroes. Think, for instance, of pop stars: we consider them to be different from ‘normal’ people and, at the same time, we can trace the genealogy that connects us to some of them and not to others, not in terms of literal affiliation, but of an affinity of taste.

It is true that we rationally organize space in detailed maps, and we have access, through the media and social sciences, to the understanding of another’s reality. It is also true that we pretend not to believe in myths, but in ‘rational’ historical facts and narratives. We ‘know’ all this, but our everyday mental maps of both physical and social space, as well as the genealogies that *we actually use*, are very much like those of the Lugbara. Even though we know that we can precisely locate our physical place on a map, we personally experience those places (both physical and social) that we personally use or visit as clearly existing and those that we do not as opaque and imprecise. In the same sense, although we know there are historical accounts of our past, we imagine ourselves in relation to a few historical myths and heroes that we learn about in school and popular culture, as well as to the particular myths of our family. And as was mentioned above, it is equally true that we perceive those socially ‘distant’ from us as ‘rare’, ‘strange’, ‘not normal’, ‘other’, and therefore, to some extent, ‘inverted’. We continually experience, in our daily lives, Obelix’s surprise when faced with ‘those crazy Romans’.

Modernization has not only transformed the experience of time and space, but also complexified social reality and accelerated social change. Communication technologies and infrastructures have modified the influence of space and the circulation of social knowledge. In terms of time, modernity shifted the focus of attention from the reference of the past (tradition) to the orientation to the future

(progress). In recent decades, there has been a sense that in everyday life the focus has shifted again, in this case to the present. Among young people, this shift is particularly strong, since the idea of a life-project loses relative importance in relation to the 'normative' enjoyment of the present⁴. The fact is that rapid social change implies an experience of social reality notably different from that of more or less stable traditional society. Among other factors, capitalism, industrialization, urbanization, democratization, science, consumerism, cultural pluralism, social differentiation and globalization, have all transformed our experience of our social environment, including the way we make sense of 'difference', social distances and hierarchies. Cultural meanings organising social geographies are now more dynamic and susceptible of transcending localised physical spaces. To a some extent, now we can transcend time and space and experience ubiquity and simultaneity.

Even if we acknowledge the blurring of the importance of time and space in physical terms, it is important to note that we still need to culturally make sense of them in imagined terms. Despite the technological possibility of transcending time and space, both dimensions are still crucial in organising our experience as well as the distribution of power, even if they are less dependant on physical time and space. Now, indeed, they are more obviously 'imagined' or 'culturally and technologically mediated' than a few decades ago. We could even argue that in our contemporary society, social distances and proximities, as well as the articulation of the 'past' and the 'future', of the 'old' and the 'modern', depend to a greater extent upon the meanings we produce around popular culture, that is, in relation to the media and the commodity culture. Media and advertising representations and the appropriation of commodities in everyday life culturally produce the language of social location and time. It is through the media that we apprehend our physical space and come to think of the United States as closer to Birmingham and Barcelona than Casablanca. It is through the media and commodities that we understand and make sense of our location in terms of time: the way of being 'modern', 'traditional', 'old', 'classical' or 'backwards' has a lot to do with our disposition towards fashion and commodity culture. Not just individuals, but whole countries will be perceived as more or less modern depending on their consumer lifestyles.

And in the same sense that commodities and popular culture play a crucial role in the way we imagine time and physical space, all of them are relevant to the way we imagine our social space. Contemporary forms of common culture cannot be understood without commodities, which in their turn configure a particular relationship with time and space. This means that if we are interested in how we culturally make sense of our social experience in terms of time and space in contemporary forms of cultural relations, we need to know the differences between us and the Lugbara – as well as between us and our grand-parents – in apprehending and culturally producing social geographies. This, I argue, will help us to

⁴ Amparo Lasen (2000) provides a good illustration of what she names young people's 'presentism'.

better understand how we make sense of our location in social hierarchies. In complexified modern societies, under the surface of rational equality and individual choice there is an underground organization of social distances and proximities which are not only 'made visible' but also 'produced' through the cultural meanings of commodities, an overwhelming stock of symbolic materials that mediate our perception of social reality.

Cultural forms, social injuries and localised globality

It is in this sense that I have said that this thesis deals with the process of cultural production, through musical commodities, *of a certain way of experiencing both social distances and inequalities and our own pathways through them*. Musical taste related to the consumption of musical commodities will be the window through which we will look at the contemporary collective cultural production of social knowledge organising social geographies, including deep feelings of hierarchy, inequality, social distance, respect and self-esteem. Since these feelings can be a source of stress and suffering, I consider this task an important one for sociology, or the sociological imagination, in order to provide individuals with patterns of interpretation to help them to reflexively transfer the causes of their uneasiness or suffering from personal to structural and historical explanations.

Many young people have the feeling that music changes their lives, while others just do not pay much attention to it. Some of them experience in music the great feelings of discovery, passion, authenticity and truth. They just feel incorruptible commitments and adhesions. They associate their music to their deeper feelings and their sense of both uniqueness and belonging. They just do not conceive life without music. Others, however, do not take music so seriously; their enjoyment might be equally enthusiastic, but they do not fully commit themselves. Perhaps using it at certain moments of their youth, but without being either carried away or lost in it with the same intensity. This distance, however, does not mean that music does not play an important role in their lives as well. And the same is true for those youngsters that just ignore it – or it may be better to say, *resist* it, or even *feel overwhelmed* by it. They are affected by music anyway, in the sense that during their youth, ignoring music is inevitably an element of their identity. Music *is just out there*, and even when you ignore it, you can't escape it.

In fact, discourses, practices and social knowledge around music build and configure a proper collective cultural tradition that is transferred not only – or not basically – from parents to their children, but also from older young people to their younger counterparts, with a central mediation of the media and the political economy, which must be understood on a global scale. This cultural tradition, moreover, is part of the tradition of youth styles, which while partially global is also connected to the local tradition of social meanings – those related to material conditions amongst them. Musical taste as a cultural tradition, therefore, has to do with individual aesthetic experiences, but also with global flows of meanings, social power relations, social comparison and social injuries. Certain sounds inevitably evoke meanings that transcend both the music and our individuality, meanings

that are part of our cultural tradition, which is the result of the collective negotiation of meanings, with the intervention of both the media or representations from 'above', even from other countries, and meanings experienced and derived from everyday life, embedded in localised everyday problems and tensions which are often hidden from public representations.

This collective cultural tradition allows us to make sense of the world in which we live, including its existing inequalities. The meanings mediated by commodities are intertwined with the organization of capitalist production and consumption in astonishingly regular ways, for instance in the way we make sense of cars or clothes – or different popular music styles – in relation to social class or gender identities and positions. It is *as if there were* a hidden logic linked to capitalism as we have known it. Commodities mediate and articulate meanings of class, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation in strikingly regular ways across Western societies.

This thesis will therefore attempt to connect the global logic of change in contemporary culture to the experience of some young people in Birmingham and Barcelona. Global distribution of commodities will be analysed through the local production of meaning, trying to identify globalised meanings and local idiosyncrasies. Music will be considered as an element of the broader context of popular and consumer culture, which following the logic of the political economy provide the materials of the common cultural tradition that channels or provides patterns of meaning to deal with an adolescent's search for identity on leaving childhood behind. Adolescence is a time of stress which, for some, will be unforgettably exciting, and for others, something to forget. The stress of adolescence can be quite harsh and difficult, to a great extent because of the play of social comparison and social distances that can lead to social injuries shaping not only social reputation, but also the inner being of many young people. This social comparison is increasingly carried out through the mediation of commodities, and such commodities follow a logic of production and distribution which affects the cultural production of local meanings.

Young people, however, are not passive individuals but persons appropriating symbolic materials to make sense of their existence. The soundscape is the combination of *what's out there* and *what we do with it* – what every young person, what every group or collective of young people, does with it. This is true for any objectified knowledge or social practice – also that of the Lugbara – but is particularly obvious in the case of music, especially popular music, because of its rapid change linked to fashion, fads and trends. Music, as a cultural form, enables us to forge our individuality *while* being subject to a tradition and a particular social structure. Both elements are inherent in our relationship with cultural forms. As in language, by conforming to the existing (linguistic) structures, we can work out our own individual and collective 'identity'.

Moreover, it is not only what *every young person* does with it, but *what every generation of young people* (collectively) does with it. When we say *everyone to his taste*; when we assert that music is volatile, experienced, practical and inapprehensible; when we realize the undeniable power and ephemeral essence of fashion; then, we

become particularly aware that we are not merely talking about an aesthetic 'essence' of music, but also about the importance of collective discourses and practices around musical artefacts in conditioning people's relationship with music.

To sum up, we are talking about how our surrounding cultural forms – in this case not only musical forms, but discourses about musical forms – channel and at the same time enable the communication through which we can negotiate our place in the world, our identity. By looking at the process of cultural production of such cultural forms, we can try to better understand how our identities are being forged, not as 'essential' but 'relational' realities – a 'relational' realities that do not fit very well with our mania for 'uniqueness' and 'authenticity'.

I. Musical forms and social geographies

The outlined approach to music and young people, which narrows the focus of attention to the process of cultural production, through musical commodities, of a certain way of experiencing both social distances and inequalities and young people's pathways through them, needs justification. First, Chapter 1: *Young People and Music* will contextualise the particular approach to musical forms and the possible contribution that this thesis may bring to the tradition of youth studies. Second, Chapter 2: *Living distances and proximities* will develop in more detail the specific theoretical tools through which the experience of social and musical geographies will be understood and analysed. Third, Chapter 3: *Asking for music in the field* will detail how the theoretical framework will be materialised in a particular methodology and fieldwork.

I. YOUNG PEOPLE AND MUSIC

To make explicit the theoretical point of departure, instead of doing an encyclopaedic review of the literature – many of the academic references will be displayed in the footnotes – the focus will be placed on the discussion of those aspects that could be seen as fundamental and characteristic of the chapters that will follow.

First, some time will be spent discussing how ‘musical form’ and most importantly, ‘taste in music’, will be considered from a sociological perspective. The emphasis will be placed on the discussion of the terms through which ‘social’ aspects of the music experience will be understood and located at the centre of the analysis. The notions of ‘tradition’ and ‘prejudice’ will prepare the ground to an approach to music and taste in music as ‘communication’ that will closely relate to the sociology of knowledge, focusing not only on how young people collectively *make sense of music in their everyday lives* but also, and more centrally, on how they *make sense of their everyday lives through music*, placing the focus of attention on the taste in music as socially embedded. Second, we will detail how the approach aims at contributing to youth studies in five different but related aspects.

Musical form and social relations

The juxtaposition of sociology and music tends to lead to many raised eyebrows, so this exercise requires special attention. Art, or the aesthetic experience of art as it has been conceived during the last two centuries¹, is one of those realities which, although connected to everyday life, tends to be seen as what Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann call ‘finite provinces of meaning, enclaves within the paramount reality [of everyday life] marked by circumscribed meanings and modes of experience’ (1989 [1966]: 25). When carried away by the contact with a musical form, everyday reality can be suspended as in a dream. Those believing in the autonomy of the (musical) aesthetic experience and the symbolic form are suspicious of any approach to music that focuses, as sociology does, on its connections to the ‘social structural determinations’ of everyday life. Sociology, when talking about music, is often seen as an example of the social decline of the idea that music can be powerful enough to influence both individuals and their well-being².

The tension between an approach to music as ‘autonomous from’ or ‘inextricably linked to’ the ‘social’ is resolved in quite different ways by different theoretical positions. The traditions of aesthetics, art history, semiotics and sociology, for instance, represent different ways of looking at it, although we can identify this same fundamental tension between the ‘autonomy’ or the ‘social embedding’ of the symbolic form in each academic field. Antoine Hennion (2002

¹ For an analysis of the historical construction of fine art as we generally understand it, see Shiner’s *The Invention of Art* (2001).

² This evolution is underlined by Storr (2002 [1997]: 14).

[1993]) calls it the tension between aesthetisation and sociologisation (or between ‘pure aesthetics’ and the ‘ethnological model’), which can be found even in the field of ‘aesthetics’, where there is an opposition between a ‘fine art system’ based on detached contemplation and the challenge of those who attempt to include ordinary pleasures and everyday functions in the field (Shiner 2001)³.

The standpoint of mainstream Western aesthetics of music maintains the autonomy of the aesthetic experience from social influences, to the extent that it basically ignores – even when acknowledging them – the social circumstances that strongly influence the relationship between individuals and musical forms. This field explores the experience with music as a finite province of meaning, separated from the paramount reality of everyday life (the ‘art for art’s sake’ disposition that became popular during the second half of the 19th Century). This mainstream approach, even when it acknowledges the social contexts that intervene in the aesthetic experience of music, argues that the uninterested and detached aesthetic experience exists and must be distinguished. This perspective is interested in the aesthetic experience and the aesthetic value of the ‘symbolic form’ *regardless* of the social context influencing both of them. In spite of its valuable hints on the understanding of musical form and experience, its underlying ‘essentialism’ (aesthetic value and experience are considered independent of ordinary pleasures and everyday functions) makes it not very useful in sociologically understanding the meaning of music in everyday life⁴. As noted above, moreover, this mainstream perspective is not free of criticisms within the field: many contemporary critics and

³ For an analysis of the classical distinction between ‘aesthetic value’ and ‘social function’ in relation to popular music, see Adell (1997). This distinction is also central in Bourdieu’s sociology of taste and the definition of the aesthetic perception as valuing form over function.

⁴ A good example of the difficulties of justifying such ‘underlying essentialism’ are the problems of Roger Scruton in finding this ‘essential’ reality: ‘In addition to describing the musical surface, we might also try to judge it – to show just what is good or bad in it, and just what it means. Analysts like Donald Tovey were not content merely to describe ‘what is going on’ in a classical symphony. They wanted their readers to enjoy what they heard, to see how important it is, and to discriminate between the trivial and the profound, the sentimental and the genuine, the bad and the good. Is this possible? That is one of the deepest questions in aesthetics, and it has two parts: first, are there aesthetic values, in addition to aesthetic preferences? Secondly, is there any way of justifying our judgements of aesthetic value? I believe that we must give a positive answer to both of those questions, although it is hard to prove the point. This positive answer is quite clearly assumed in any musical criticism worth the name.’ (Scruton 1999: 393-4). The positive answer to these questions is what later leads him to criticise the pretensions of neutrality of what he calls ‘marxists, structuralists, Foucauldians, and feminists’ as nothing but a ‘mask’ (ibid.: 395).

Pierre Bourdieu rejects this underlying essentialism in the following terms: ‘Todo análisis esencial de la disposición estética, la única forma considerada socialmente “correcta” para abordar los objetos designados socialmente como obras de arte (...) está necesariamente destinado al fracaso: en efecto, al negarse a tener en cuenta la génesis colectiva e individual de este producto de la historia, que debe ser reproducido por la educación de manera indefinida, dicha forma de análisis se incapacita para restituirle su única razón de ser, esto es, la razón histórica en que se basa la arbitraria necesidad de la institución’ (1988 [1979]: 26).

philosophers 'have been exploring approaches to art and the aesthetic that do give a prominent place to ordinary pleasures and everyday functions' (Shiner 2001: 305⁵).

The fields of the history of art and the social history of art have been important in *combining* the respect for the art form with the importance of social (power) relations surrounding it in order to understand the socially accepted aesthetic value. In contrast with classical history of art, which amounts to a 'sacred' history of art, during the 20th Century different authors developed an approach that took into account the power relations involved in the production, selection and distribution of art⁶. Semiotics provides yet another approach to music and symbolic forms that analyses them from the point of view of their connections to the social. After a close analysis, it interprets the symbolic form, looking for its deep social connections. While sharing with aesthetics the prominence of the analysis of the symbolic form, it differs from it in being strongly interested in its connection to the 'social'.⁷ Whereas aesthetics claims some sort of 'essentialism' of the art form, semiotics might be seen as having a different sort of 'essentialism', in the sense of seeing basic features in musical forms *independently* of the actual meaning people attach to them⁸. The difference from aesthetics is that the essence is not its aesthetic value or experience but its inherent and hidden connection to its social context.

The truth is that, as mentioned above, the tension between 'aesthetisation' and 'sociologisation' is present in every single field, although we can consider the fields of aesthetics and sociology – or social sciences – as the poles where opposed perspectives predominate. Sociology studies the social influences on music and the influence of music on social relations, so tends to resolve the dilemma of considering musical symbolic forms as 'autonomous from' or 'inextricably linked to' the social by choosing this latter option. Sociology, therefore, is often accused of falling in the trap of 'sociologism' – that is, identifying everywhere the omnipotent force of regular social structures and not paying enough attention to individual differences or, in this case, to the musical forms themselves. Nevertheless, it could equally be argued that in fact sociologists fail to recognise fully the social and structural factors of the musical experience, perhaps as a result of the same fear of 'sociologism'. Many sociology and cultural studies scholars are wary of (struc-

⁵ Shiner mentions Arnold Berleant, Thomas Leddy, Crispin Sartwell, Richard Shusterman and Carolyn Korsmeyer.

⁶ See Hennion (2002 [1993]) for a critical review of the approaches to art and music from the history of art and the social history of art.

⁷ Roland Barthes, using some of Saussure's ideas, developed the semiotic approach, applying the linguistic analysis to other social practices like fashion or cinema. In the study of youth cultures, Dick Hebdige (1996 [1979]) opened up the path to the use of semiotic analysis, in contrast to 'culturalist' approaches based on more ethnographic perspectives. This differentiation also operates within popular music research. Adell (2004), for instance, clearly distinguishes between what he terms 'semioticoformal analysis' and the 'sociological study' of popular music.

⁸ Even if they are, as in Hebdige's account (1996 [1979]), 'signifying practices' combining *polysemic* signs in a complex *bricolage*.

tural) generalizations, to the extent that they often fail to recognize and cover in their accounts the importance of the social and structural factors: whereas young people and all those involved in popular music often refer, in everyday life, to terms related to class, gender and ethnic distinctions⁹, sociologists do not give them the same central presence in their accounts of music.

In any case, it cannot be denied that sociology tends to forget the specificity of the symbolic form and consider it *as if it was not important*, as if it had no specific effect on individuals – that is, as if all symbolic forms were the same. In contrast with mainstream aesthetics, for instance, sociological strongest versions depict high art (and traditional aesthetics) as the (false) pretension of universality of a particular historical (modern time) and social (middle and upper classes) experience of beauty. The (aesthetics) separation of the symbolic form from its social context – or the aesthetic experience from its ‘function’ or its ‘practical’ consequences – would be, from this point of view, a particular view belonging to the privileged classes of modern societies¹⁰. This position leads to a clear ‘relativism’, as opposed to the ‘essentialism’ of the field of aesthetics, in that when anyone defines a symbolic form or an aesthetic experience as ‘good’ or ‘bad’, the sociological perspective, rather than being interested in the analysis of the symbolic form, would prefer to discuss the power relations behind this judgement. This implies a sociologically neutral position in relation to the symbolic form¹¹, which is obviously difficult for the field of aesthetics to accept. This means that sociology aims to gain understanding in part at the cost of reducing the (circulating) works of art to a mere outcome of social processes and interactions. This approach is thus more interested in the social *use of art* than in art itself.¹²

Needless to say, within the field of the sociology of culture, there are many attempts to combine the aesthetic, semiotic and sociological strategies of analysis. It is true, moreover, that sociology has paid attention to music from its very beginnings because it saw in it something which is idiosyncratic. In fact, since the beginning of the sociology of music, which we could date back to the 19th century with William Dilthey, what is evident in many sociological works about music is ‘the belief that music *has* ‘immanent’ qualities or laws, and the attempt to formulate the problem of how it can then be said to express, embody, or indeed *do*, anything ‘social’ (Bradley

⁹ People who listen to music often talk about themselves and others in terms which directly refer to class, gender and ethnic issues like being more or less middle or working class, ‘*towny*’ or student, ‘*quillo*’ or ‘*pijo*’, white or black, girly or boyish, gay or heterosexual, and so on.

¹⁰ Pierre Bourdieu would be, naturally, one of the more influential voices feeding this position with arguments, linking the detached aesthetic disposition to social class and tracing back to Kant the opposition between aesthetics and popular cultural dispositions (Bourdieu 1988).

¹¹ As prominent defenders of this position we can name Becker (1982), Bourdieu (1988 [1979]), Hennion (2002 [1993]) or Frith (1983, 1996).

¹² See Zolberg’s *Constructing a Sociology of the Arts* (1991 [1990]) for a development of this argument.

1980: 11)¹³. An excellent example of this is Adorno, who believed that in art it was possible to find a *recorded unconscious historiography of society*¹⁴.

The fact is that when sociology attempts to avoid 'sociologism' by relating the semiotic or aesthetic analysis of music to its social context, the result – from my point of view – is not satisfactory, since it cannot completely avoid some sort of 'aesthetic' or 'semiotic' essentialism¹⁵. I do not intend to repudiate the approach of either aesthetics or semiotics – both of them provide useful insights into the musical experience – but since I am not convinced by the attempts to combine aesthetic or semiotic points of view with sociological ones, and since dealing with music in semiotic or aesthetic terms goes far beyond my capacities, *I will simply pretend that the symbolic form is neutral – which it is not – and focus on the discourses and meanings it originates, mediates and attracts*. I will do so because I do not believe in any essential feature of the symbolic form determining its social experienced consequences, since there are many examples of the same symbolic form being received in radically different ways by different human beings, and also by different collective groupings of human beings in different historical or social locations. I would prefer to 'pretend' that the symbolic form is neutral rather than getting into the difficult and uncertain terrain of connecting its internal features to its social reception, which I believe leads too easily to one or another kind of essentialism. In other words, this thesis is not *about music*, but rather *about 'some' experienced social relations mediated through music*. I am interested in everyday life and everyday social meanings around music, not in the aesthetic experience of music. It is in this sense that the object of attention of this thesis is not musical form but taste in music – understood as a cultural production.

By this reductionism I hope to contribute to the understanding of the way the symbolic form operates as raw material for an important and often hidden process of meaning-making that results in common cultural forms embedded in social

¹³ Bradley (1980) refers, apart from Dilthey, to Simmel, Weber, Adorno or Shepherd as examples of this perspective. For another review on the history of the sociological analysis of music, see Etzkorn (1989), who comments on the approaches of, among others, Dilthey, Schering, Pinthus, Serauky, Mueller, Schuessler, Becker, Kaplan, Nash, Leventman, Meyer, Hostinsky, Zich, Vuckovic, Stanislav, Karbusicky, Kasan, Simmel, Weber, Blaukopf, Adorno, Sorokin and Silbermann. He argues that these authors range from Dilthey's belief in music as an individual experience to Blaukopf's suggestion that changes in musical style must be understood in the light of social history, and that changes in aesthetic attitudes must be viewed as embedded in social, political and economic dimensions.

¹⁴ The expression is used by Zolberg (1991). Adorno believed that music and social analysis should go together in a concrete unity, and not as a juxtaposition: 'Music is not ideology pure and simple; it is ideological only insofar as it is a false consciousness. Accordingly, a sociology of music would have to set in at the fissures and fractures of what happens in it, unless those are attributable merely to the subjective inadequacy of an individual composer. Musical sociology is social critique accomplished through that of art' (Adorno 1976 [1962]: 63).

¹⁵ Two examples are Adorno (1976 [1962]), with his personal aversion to jazz and popular music. Willis (1978; 2000) offers a way out of this difficulty through his understanding of symbolic forms as embedding a set of socially produced 'objective possibilities', that will subsequently be analysed.

geographies¹⁶. Even though I am aware that it would be absurd to deny that different symbolic forms create different ‘effects’ when people interact with them, I firmly believe that ‘music is only more than “meaningless sounds” if it is apprehended as such by listeners and only such reception makes the composer/performer – etc. – role meaningful in turn. And it is not merely hairsplitting to point out that no two audiences are the same’ (Bradley 1980: 9). In other words, even though the symbolic form plays an important role in conditioning the experience individuals have when relating to it, I want to stress the – often neglected – crucial importance of the individuals and their (historical and social) ‘prejudices’ in conditioning this experience¹⁷ – ‘prejudices’ understood here not as ‘wrong’ judgements but as those judgements implied in our social and historical tradition. We will, therefore, focus on how we culturally produce (social) meanings related to musical forms, how we use musical materials – among many other cultural materials – to understand, make sense of, and culturally produce our social relations. My focus of interest is *the production of shared or collective meaning related to music and taste in music*. It is in this sense that this thesis has more to do with the sociology of knowledge than with the study of music, since music will be considered here as a ‘neutral symbolic form’, to the extent that any reference to the aesthetics of music will only be made if it is mentioned by the interviewees during the fieldwork.

As I will explain later, I am interested in the *common cultural production* of everyday social reality, and the aesthetic experience with (musical) symbolic forms will be relevant for this research in terms of their role in this collective cultural production. This means that the aesthetic experience as an experience within a ‘finite province of meaning’ will only be relevant as long as it is translated to the paramount reality of everyday experience in meaningful ways concerning social identities. Paradoxically, and particularly for some young people, the musical experience can sometimes be lived not as a circumscribed ‘finite province of

¹⁶ Within mainstream aesthetics, even though the importance of the social aspects of musical experience might be acknowledged, there is no renunciation of its inherent essentialism. Scruton, following the example provided in a previous footnote, does believe in the importance of differentiating between good or bad, and at the same time laterally recognises the importance of music in the presentation in front of others: ‘although music can be understood and heard in private, we should be entirely at a loss if we did not hear it as a social gesture: an appeal to the community of listeners, to seek out and sympathize with the life that resides in tones. It matters to us, what forms of life we listen to; and the preferences of other people also matter. We cannot exist at ease in a world of aliens; we strive instead to extend and enhance the web of sympathy. Taste in music may be as important as taste in friends, in sexual behaviour, and in manners’ (Scruton 1999: 370). These two arguments, when put together, lead him to claim that taste in music is a sort of moral indicator of individuals, in the sense that ‘good’ taste in music is linked to valuable individuals and the other way around. This (often implicit) linkage with a supposed universal aesthetics and social distinctions is what makes the sociologists of music suspicious of mainstream aesthetics.

¹⁷ In saying this I also assume that I will only partially consider one of the more striking aspects of music, which is the role of music in ordering the human experience and in some sense transcending it, as Anthony Storr puts it (2002 [1992]: 233–4). The only way we will consider how music helps to order, co-ordinate and make sense of human (social) experience is in relation to our talk about music and our taste in music, not our musical experience itself. They cannot of course be clearly differentiated, but it is fair to note that we will not direct our attention to the musical form.

meaning' but as the 'paramount reality of everyday experience'. In these cases, what we normally understand as the paramount reality of everyday life, like for instance family life, school, and general adult obligations, becomes a somewhat secondary and thus finite province of meaning. In any case, we will work with the assumption that the experience of music, however important, continues to be a finite and circumscribed province of meaning that needs to be included in the everyday experience. And here is where we will place our focus of attention: the inclusion of our 'personal experience' with music within the paramount reality of everyday life, with our everyday social relations, and more precisely, the role of taste in music in the 'cultural production' of social geographies.

By 'cultural production' I will understand, following Willis (1993 [1981]: 433-4), the cultural practices that enable us to make sense of our existence, which although focused on what is inherited and suffered by imposition, is nevertheless creative and active. As Willis reminds us, every new generation, group or individual experience those cultural productions as if they were 'new'. What becomes central about this perspective is that it can approach young people's cultural practice from the point of view of 'the relatedness, the energy, the excitement of a culture's members as they find the most productive expressive relation to their conditions of existence, so finding individual and collective feelings of potency, subject senses of dignity and personhood, subjective feelings of authenticity' (Willis 2000: 37).

The furthest I will go in considering the symbolic form will be, therefore, and as I have already stated, superficially identifying some broad criteria that young people verbalize as being important to decide what is 'good' and 'bad' music – as for instance 'repetitive', 'fast', 'hard', 'noisy', 'catchy', 'tacky', 'sweet', 'tralla', 'raya', 'relaxing', and so on. By adopting such a relativistic approach to the musical form we will be able to focus on the everyday and shared social discourses and practices around music, which are an important element of our everyday lives. This relevance of music 'talk' is underlined by Frith when he states that conversations about music and other popular cultural forms

'are the common currency of friendship, and the essence of popular culture (...). Part of the pleasure of popular culture is talking about it; part of its meaning is this talk, talk which is run through with value judgments. To be engaged with popular culture is to be discriminating, whether judging the merits of a football team's backs or an afternoon soap's plots. "Good" and "bad" or their vernacular versions ("brilliant," "crap") are the most frequent terms in everyday cultural conversation' (Frith 1996: 4).

What I will be analysing, therefore, is not the musical form as an isolated entity, but the result of the process of meaning-making around different musical forms – carried out by young people and the political economy of music – within common culture, that is, the grounded meanings resulting from the everyday use of cultural forms. I will understand symbolic forms as what Willis calls 'sociosymbolic forms' (1978; 2000), a term aimed at stressing the importance of both the 'form' and the 'social' incorporated in it. We will later come back to this notion. Now, to justify and clarify the approach to music and young people

proposed here, we will start by focusing on the notions of ‘prejudice’ and ‘tradition’ as the tools that will allow us to focus on the collective, structural and political factors in the experience of music.

Tradition, prejudice and power

Our relationship or dialogue with a symbolic form never grows in a vacuum: it is always carried out from the standpoint of our ‘prejudices’. We have already pointed out that ‘prejudice’ is here not an *incorrect or false judgement*, as the rationalist tradition of the Enlightenment has led us to think, but the judgements implied in the historical standpoint of our ‘tradition’. Hans-Georg Gadamer (1996 [1975]) elegantly traces an approach to ‘prejudices’ that sees them as unavoidable and not mere ‘mistakes’ that we will overcome through reason. *We are what we are*, historically, because of our location in a certain tradition, with certain prejudices. Nowadays, for instance, the belief in reason as a means to criticize tradition is a prejudice that we have inherited through our Western tradition¹⁸.

‘Tradition’, here, is the validity of what has come down to us from the past. In the following pages, we will not follow Romanticism by setting tradition against rational freedom or consider tradition as a historical fact like ‘nature’. Tradition always needs to be confirmed and incorporated in the present moment, and can be a source of truth. Tradition is basically ‘conservation’, and this can be an act of reason, although an act that does not attract attention. The ‘authority’ of tradition does not need to be seen as an abdication of reason but as an act of ‘recognition’ and knowledge. This does not mean that we are the passive receivers of a certain tradition through a clean process of socialization. On the contrary, in order to persist, any tradition requires the individuals inheriting it to re-produce it by adapting it to everyday practical needs. We make sense of the world and our place in it through the process of cultural re-production based on the inherited tradition. Re-production is inevitable not only because tradition must be adapted to the changing times, but also because any tradition is not a closed but an open-ended and plural set of meanings that must be worked upon.

The point is that both the ‘traditions’ and the ‘prejudices’ they contain are inescapable realities, and that what is at stake is not whether one has ‘prejudices’ or is ‘traditional’, but *what is the set of* ‘prejudices’ and ‘traditions’ coming together in each case¹⁹. This will deter us from naïvely believing in any universal validity

¹⁸ The remarks throughout this section are drawn from Gadamer (1996 [1975]), who points out to how scientific knowledge has pretended to exclude any judgement without a foundation. The ultimate source of authority would not be (religious) tradition but reason, whereas tradition becomes an object of criticism, as the impressions of the senses in natural science. Whereas the pretension of excluding any judgement without a foundation might be reasonable in natural science, he claims, it does not make any sense in the sciences of the spirit.

¹⁹ Alfred Schutz put it as follows in relation to music players: ‘the player approaching a so-called unknown piece of music does so from a historically – in one’s own case, autobiographically – determined situation, determined by his stock of musical experiences at hand in so far as they are typically relevant to the anticipated novel experience before him. This stock of experiences refers

of 'reason' opposed to the supposedly tribal and irrational prejudices of tradition. Any rationality must always be sustained in a set of prejudices, and any set of 'prejudices' are the result of the influence of the past on us, that is, of the intersection of our biography within a particular 'tradition' that we appropriate through our symbolic work. We are always located in a specific tradition, which is the culture which we inherit and re-produce in our process of socialization. We can critically analyse our tradition, and try to modify it, but this effort will always be done from this tradition.²⁰

We find an excellent illustration of the importance of tradition and prejudices in the reaction of young people to electronic music during the last two decades. We will see threads of this when analysing the fieldwork in Birmingham and Barcelona, but now it will suffice to pay attention to the general framework within which operate the different tastes in music that will be analysed in these pages. In the late eighties, in both England and Catalonia, the frame of (popular music) aesthetic judgement²¹ inherited through tradition (in this case the tradition of the 'rock age'²²) led many young people to dismiss electronic music as 'manufactured', 'non-artistic' and 'machine-composed' music. This was the dominant 'prejudice' of the time. During the nineties this prejudice embedded in the rock tradition began to change, and quite rapidly the opposition to electronic music was seen by broad sections of young people as an anachronism to be avoided. By that time, therefore, the new prejudice of the new tradition was that electronic music was as artistic and creative as any previous popular music, and started to be perceived as such by young people, popular music critics and other intermediaries. The symbolic form – electronic music – was the same, but in the early eighties it only appealed to a few, whereas by the mid nineties it was appreciated – to a greater or lesser extent – by a broad majority. What had changed was the 'inherited (aesthetic) tradition' of judgement, which made up a different 'prejudice' influencing individuals' aesthetic experience with musical forms.

Considering taste in music in these terms will help us to see the role of power and domination in it. As Gadamer puts it, any claim of *freedom from prejudices* is doomed to *experience at its full the power and domination of prejudices* (1996 [1975]: 437). In other words, and exemplifying it with taste in music, any experience of music is mediated by *what we bring* to the encounter, and what we bring to the

indirectly to all his past and present fellow-men whose acts or thoughts have contributed to the building up of his knowledge' (1971 [1964]: 168).

²⁰ As Gadamer remarks, 'La lente de la subjetividad es un espejo deformante. La autorreflexión del individuo no es más que una chispa en la corriente cerrada de la vida histórica. *Por eso los prejuicios de un individuo son, mucho más que sus juicios, la realidad histórica de su ser*' (1996 [1975]: 344).

²¹ This is naturally a loose use of the term 'aesthetic judgement' in relation to popular culture, which will be later discussed in relation to the notion of 'grounded aesthetics'.

²² Hennion refers to the fact that 'la constitución del rock por sus aficionados como un género clásico se encuentra muy avanzada, con sus críticos, sus categorías, su historia, un fetichismo de la colección de discos tan desarrollado como el del Cadre Jaune o las pequeñas marcas barrocas' (2002 [1993]: 310).

encounter has a lot to do with our previous experiences within a social context, that is, with *our prejudices built within a historical tradition*. And *this tradition is always the result of past power relations*. In the example provided above, the current 'tradition' accepting electronic music is the result of the successful pressure of various entrepreneurs, musicians, journalists, promoters and *punters*, among others, to legitimize this music in the playgrounds, the streets, the clubs, and the media. If the attitude to this music is nowadays positive among a large section of young people in both Barcelona and Birmingham, it is because in the past those defending this prejudice won their fight against the 'rock' prejudice opposed to electronic music. Once dominant, the 'new prejudice' of the 'new tradition' will pass to the next generation of young people. We are not talking about a 'finished' and 'closed' tradition, since this general 'prejudice' valuing positively electronic music is not shared by all the young population and, moreover, could be fragmented in more subtle but also vigorous ongoing fights among different sub-genres of electronic music. Thus, even though a majority of young people might agree on the positive value of electronic music, they still disagree on the value of different styles, DJs or variations within the electronic music field.

If we are not aware of our prejudices, we are not aware of the power relations that make us who we are. It is in this sense that, contrary to common sense, the definition of 'prejudice' is not the 'negative' and somewhat 'irrational' disposition that *some* individuals have, but the inevitable and necessary dispositions inherited from the past that make *all* of us who we are. Being aware of the immanence of prejudice enables us to reflexively analyse it and to try to discern the power relations, so to speak, that *it carries with it*. Denying it, as the majority of us do in our everyday experience of music, and as many analysts from the aesthetics of music do and take for granted, is synonymous with experiencing these prejudices at their fullest, since we will not be aware of their influence.

This is precisely the strength of tradition: unless it is problematised, it is experienced as 'naturally valid', as 'taken for granted', to the extent that its prejudices are not experienced as such. This is the reason why we believe in the uniqueness and originality of our taste in music, because the influence of tradition over it is subterranean. And perhaps this could not be otherwise, since once prejudices and tradition become reflexive, they lose most of their power. In our everyday life, our shared cultural knowledge takes for granted the autonomy of the individual to the extreme of naivety. We need it to keep our social machinery in motion. If such a belief in individual autonomy did not prevail, the social order as we know it would probably be in serious trouble. We *judge* other people's taste in music because we consider them 'responsible' (as autonomous individuals) for them. If we thought their taste – and our judgement of them – was the result of the influence of a tradition of prejudices, the social game would be seriously modified, since the power relations they carry would be made explicit. Cultural distinction, for instance, would not be seen as the result of a personal 'gift' but of

the social distribution of cultural capital and the process of social distinction.²³ In our example, if the fight between the traditions of rock and electronic music prejudices was to be seen as a fight between different individuals and institutions of the past, and if their strategies and assets displayed in this fight were to be made public, it would be hardly the case that young people would believe in the 'authenticity' of their commitment to either one or the other. Their distaste for other music genres might therefore not be as accentuated, and the role of music in their individual identity might become less central.

Communication: the socio-symbolic form and mediations

The view of cultural forms that we propose is not sustained on the idea of culture as 'content', that is, in substantial terms. The notion of 'culture' that lies behind these pages is better represented as 'communication'. We are interested in cultural forms inasmuch as they help young people to communicate to each other in a certain way, making sense of their social world and their social relations. We are using here a notion of 'communication' understood not as transmission of information but in its original meaning prior to the 16th Century, that is, related to the meaning of 'communion' and 'commune'²⁴. The 'context' acquires more importance than the 'content', and the metaphor of the 'orchestra' is regarded as much more appropriate than the metaphor of the 'telegraph'. We will see in communication the social phenomenon of being together, participation and communion (Winkin 1991 [1984]: 25). It is through sharing a culture that we can be together, establish communication and make sense of our social world and our place in it. As Willis points out, 'culture is crucially about identity, but social and positional as well as individual and self-inventing' (2000: 4).

Alfred Schutz, in his piece 'Making Music Together: A study in social relationship' (1971 [1964]), explored the social relationships among the participants in the musical process as a means to 'contribute to clarification of the structure of the mutual tuning-in relationship, which originates in the possibility of living together simultaneously in specific dimensions of time' (ibid.: 162). He identified this 'tuning-in' relationship of performer and listener, or two or more

²³ And this might be linked to the distribution of generalised advantage, in the sense that *coincidentally* those in privileged social positions were to a great extent those with a high level of legitimate culture. Bourdieu's *Distinction* (1988 [1979]) is a crucial work in disclosing this connection. As Gadamer reminds us, the notion of 'prejudice' has the same root as 'judgement', and the history of the concept of 'taste' follows the history of absolutism from Spain to France and England, parallel to the 'prehistory' of the third estate. 'Taste' not only represents the ideal of the new society, but also points to the ideal (good taste) of what will subsequently be known as 'good society', which is not legitimised by birth or rank, but through a community of judgements, that is, through its overcoming of the stupidity of interests and the privacy of preferences in order to be able to pass judgement (1996 [1975]: 67-8).

²⁴ Following the approach of what has been termed the Palo Alto school, that is, Gregory Bateson, Ray Birdwhistell, Edward Hall, Erving Goffman, Don Jackson, Paul Watzlawick or Stuart Sigman, as is recounted by Winkin (1991[1984]). They were all opposed to using Shannon's communication model in social science.

individuals making music together, as enabling communication through the ‘simultaneous partaking of the partners in various dimensions of outer and inner time’ (ibid.: 178). Making music together, he maintained, implies that ‘each cop performer’s action is oriented not only by the composer’s thought and his relationship to the audience but also reciprocally by the experiences in inner and outer time of his fellow performer’ (ibid.: 175). Although he focuses on face-to-face relationships, he believes that this applies to all the other forms of possible communication. Our approach to taste in music – not music-making – and young people is, loosely speaking, a further example of it, in that each individual’s musical experience is co-ordinated in the cultural production of music and youth geographies, that is, the ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ meanings related to music are interlinked. Antoine Hennion also points to this dialogue where real music constantly moves from an external state, in which music exists and appeals to its range of actors, to an internal state, in which it is necessary, on the contrary, to make it exist. Collective excitement, trance, enchantment, the enlightenment of conversion, point to the transitions from the external to the internal model, where ‘mediators’ are put into action (2002 [1993]: 360).

In our example, the conflict between the rock tradition and the electronic music tradition is not important in terms of its ‘essence’, but in terms of the social relations it produces between generations and between individuals of the same generation. Those meanings connected to each of these traditions are useful for young people not only to make sense of their social relations, but to make them possible, so we will pay attention to how such meanings are culturally produced and, as a consequence of this cultural production, produce certain social relations. The musical experience, therefore, would attract our attention only in terms of its inclusion within the outer world of the paramount reality of everyday life. Young people would make sense and take part in society through their ‘culture’, so looking at how – a part of – this culture is produced, we will understand how it mediates contemporary social relations, how it is used in our ‘being together’.

One question needs to be raised here: if prejudices and tradition, as part of culture, are so crucial in determining the relationship between individuals and symbolic forms, what role do we give to both the ‘autonomy’ and ‘value’ of the cultural form? The answer is that the fact that we fix our starting point as the importance of ‘prejudice’ and ‘tradition’ in order to understand the experience of music does not mean that the symbolic form (music) is either superfluous or completely submitted to the ‘social’. Whenever anyone becomes, after hard work and/or special abilities, skilful and knowledgeable in the appreciation of any field, it is obvious that not all manifestations of this field can be considered either ‘equally good’ or ‘interchangeable’. He or she ‘clearly sees’ (and ‘experiences’) more ‘value’ or ‘truth’ in some of them, and considers that different symbolic forms have different ‘effects’. The ‘neutral stance’ in respect to the symbolic form, therefore, can be as useful to the sociologists analysing music as understandably offensive to those strongly involved in music. Nevertheless, we must bear in mind that even when an ‘expert’ *clearly sees more value or truth*, this does not mean that he

or she agrees with other experts, and more crucially, does not mean that he or she understands at all the 'profane experience' of others, which might be entirely different in the sense of bringing into play a completely different experience.

It must be understood, moreover, that this reductionism is not aimed at either 'equalising' all symbolic forms or denying their differences, but at stressing that in the meaning making process of an individual when dialoguing with any symbolic form, the prejudices the individual has in advance, which in their turn have a lot to do with the tradition he or she is located in, play a crucial role in conditioning the result of this dialogue. If there is not, as we maintain here, an ultimate 'essence' of the symbolic form, this means that whatever the influence of the symbolic form in conditioning the result (in terms of meaning making) of the relationship individuals establish with it, prejudice and tradition always play a certain role. There is no such thing as a 'pure', 'clean' or 'authentic' contact with the symbolic form: this contact is always dependent upon the previous prejudices the individual carries when facing the symbolic form. This is why we will consider, in what concerns us, the field of aesthetics of music as a *particular tradition of prejudices* in relation to the musical experience. Alongside this ('serious' or 'fine arts') tradition, there are many other ('profane', 'folk', 'popular') traditions that value music according to different criteria. My argument is that in the field of music an ultimate 'truth' or 'value' is difficult to sustain, and experiencing aesthetic value in music depends not only on the symbolic form, but also on what we are persuaded to hear²⁵. The importance of 'persuading' others to 'experience' what you experience is particularly clear in the musical experience, as it is in the case of religious experience, but we could argue that it is present in any social form of social knowledge.

We will understand the aesthetic relationship between an individual and a symbolic form as a dialogue between a subject (and its prejudices) and an object²⁶. The aesthetic relationship arises when the individual is carried away in their encounter or dialogue with a symbolic form, when he or she 'enters' into the game with it and when, after having entered the dialogue with this symbolic form, the prejudices of the individual are changed in some way. It is clear, therefore, that the 'form' has an 'active' role in conditioning its impact on individuals. Two different 'forms' will have different impacts on individuals, and we only have to think of two

²⁵ In the field of mainstream aesthetics of music, the importance of persuasion is taken into account without giving up its essentialist standpoint. Roger Scruton, for instance, maintains that 'aesthetic values are discerned only through aesthetic experience. To persuade another to notice them, you must persuade him to hear things as *you* hear them. Reasoning in favour of an aesthetic judgement involves mounting on arguments whose conclusion is not a thought, nor an action, but an *experience*.' (1999: 380-1). By contrast, in the field of popular music this same idea is contextualised in a relativistic approach to musical value. Frith points out, for instance, that 'To grasp the meaning of a piece of music is to hear something not simply present to the ear. It is to understand a musical culture, to have "a scheme of interpretation"' (1996: 249), and Hennion remarks that 'No se ama directamente una música desconocida, contrariamente a las románticas elecciones afectivas que se describen retrospectivamente, una vez que se ama o, dicho de otro modo, a partir del gusto del aficionado que la reconoce. Se ama la música que uno está preparado para amar, que ya se gusta amar' (2002 [1993]: 39).

²⁶ This conception is again indebted to (my reading of) Gadamer (1996 [1975]).

radically different 'forms' which have made an impact on us to become aware of it. To solve the problem of combining the respect for the autonomy of the symbolic form while stressing at the same time the crucial role of (social) prejudice, Paul Willis' notion of 'socio-symbolic form' (1978; 2000) will be of great help. The idea is that a symbolic form does not have any 'essential' meaning autonomous from its local and historical cultural tradition, since its effect always depends on the prejudices that individuals carry with them at the time of the aesthetic 'encounter' or 'experience'. The prejudices frame *whether* and *how* the dialogue between an individual and a symbolic form is produced. Willis conceptualises this aspect through the notion of 'objective possibilities' of forms, understood as their 'internal structures capable of bearing a broad but theoretically finite range of potential meanings' (2000: 24). He sees this notion not as an essentialist determination but as the result of a dialectical relationship between human practice and forms, through an 'integral circuit' that traces the life and history of cultural forms. The 'objective possibilities' of forms are not only the product of the form's composition, but also of the history of meanings attached to it.

Going back to the example of electronic music, before the 80s it was difficult for a youngster to be 'moved' by electronic music, since it followed a set of radically different aesthetic conventions with which young people were not 'familiar' and that were not 'socially' and 'critically' valued. Its 'objective possibilities' were different from the ones it has today. Indeed, these prejudices were not merely 'individual' prejudices, but 'social', and they were the result of past cultural struggles that had arrived in the form of a rock tradition. The inherited tradition that builds up the current prejudices is the (current) winning result of the power relations of the past, and it changes the 'objective possibilities' that a particular symbolic form – a particular record – may have. At the same time, however, the symbolic form can always be the source of new meanings not previously existing in the prejudices of tradition. The contact between individuals and symbolic forms can be creative and surprising, and they can subsequently modify the 'objective possibilities' of the form. Those who trace the history of house and electronic music tend to stress the importance of drugs in making new sounds accepted. Once they are accepted, and labelled as 'cool', new 'objective possibilities' are incorporated into the socio-symbolic form. The (socio)symbolic form, therefore, carries its own genealogy of meanings with it. Even though these meanings are located in both the symbolic form *and* the prejudices of the tradition of the people that enter into contact with the form, we often experience it *as if* they were exclusively placed in the symbolic form, in a clear fetishist transfer of an 'authentic essence' from human practice to symbolic forms.

If nowadays a significant proportion of young people like electronic music whereas fifteen years ago this proportion was much lower, this is not only because there is now more electronic music available to the public and electronic music is promoted through the media, but also because the prejudice or rock aesthetics against electronic music has been undermined among young people themselves. The fact that now more young people establish meaningful relationships with

(electronic) musical forms of this kind has not only to do with the forms themselves, but also with the tradition and prejudices they bear with them. And this tradition and these prejudices modify the objective possibilities of (electronic) musical forms.²⁷

As Will Straw notes, 'cultural commodities may (...) pass through a number of distinct markets and populations in the course of their lifecycles [and throughout] this passage, the markers of their distinctiveness and the bases of their value may undergo significant shifts' (1991: 374). In this respect, Antoine Hennion (2002 [1993]) rightly argues that in order to make visible the changing bases of value we need to focus on 'mediations' of the musical experience. He argues that it is only through controversies, polemics, negotiations and compromises among mediators, that we can access, in its most empirical sense, the way through which real usages of music are being defined (ibid.: 369). Mediators push, define and influence the 'objective possibilities' of musical forms, and since all musical forms use intermediaries and require living relations, and they all need objects, instruments, writings, media and the ultimate guarantee of their public, the sociology of music must focus on the crucial role of the mediators in configuring musical traditions.

Grounded aesthetics, knowledge and taste

Since there is no agreement among (young) people as to what is 'good' and what is 'bad', and since I am not really interested in this ultimate essence of the musical form, I will develop an approach that focuses on the process of cultural production that results from the multiple attempts of 'persuasion' between people, the multiple attempts to 'persuade' others to hear things as you hear them²⁸. Because I will

²⁷ It could be claimed that this sort of argument is true when talking about pop music, which is basically my case, but not when analysing 'serious' music. This would indeed be the argument of many scholars of the field of aesthetics, for whom pop music is clearly inferior and not worth of attention. Nevertheless, the same logic applies to 'legitimate' music, although it is probably true that it is more obvious in the field of youth cultures, since it is more dependent on rapidly changing fashions, trends and fads. This position shares a great deal with Howard Becker's (1982), Pierre Bourdieu's (1988 [1979]) or Antoine Hennion's (2002 [1993]) views, just to name some of the better known, who also stress the importance of the 'social' in shaping the aesthetic experience and the reality of art. A beautiful example, parallel to mine but in relation to the change in the pattern of performing and appreciation of baroque music, is provided by Antoine Hennion: 'La destrucción de la credibilidad de un gusto, en suma bastante rápida y brutal, cuyo espectáculo asombrosamente concentrado nos ofrece la disputa reciente, permite captar de manera excepcionalmente clara, táctil, el movimiento habitual de la construcción del gusto' (ibid.: 72).

²⁸ Simon Frith, in his book *Performing rites* (1996: 8) emphasises this aspect of the popular musical experience: '[O]ur critical task, as fans, is first to get people to listen to the right things (hence all these references to other groups and sounds), and only then to persuade them to like them. Our everyday arguments about music are concentrated on the first process: getting people to listen the right way. Only when we can accept that someone is hearing what we're hearing but just doesn't value it will we cede to subjective taste and agree that there's no point to further argument. Popular cultural arguments, in other words, are not about likes and dislikes as such, but about ways of listening, about ways of hearing, about ways of being' (Frith 1996: 8). Frith points out that whereas the importance of value judgment for popular culture seems obvious, it has been quite neglected in academic cultural studies.

not pay any attention to a supposed essence of 'good' and 'bad' music, I will consider 'any experience' of music as fully legitimate. Value will only be considered in what concerns the efforts of individuals to persuade others of the superior or different value of their judgement. This is not to say that all music symbolic forms are equal in value, but rather that I do not find any objective argument allowing us to defend that certain music experiences are of more 'value' than others. When we consider extreme examples, it is obvious that certain pieces of music are more 'elaborated', 'original' and so on, but I am not convinced that this means that they have more 'value'. The field of mainstream aesthetics would argue that they have more 'aesthetic' value, but since my interest depends on the way individuals give value to different musical texts, I will respect the claims of young people's taste as much as I respect the claims of the 'aesthetics of music'. Aesthetics has a different goal and thus operates on the basis of different criteria from that of sociology. From my sociological or anthropological standpoint, instead of talking of 'aesthetics' I will prefer to talk of the 'grounded aesthetics' that can be identified among young people, a notion proposed by Paul Willis:

'This is the creative element in a process whereby meanings are attributed to symbols and practices and where symbols and practices are selected, reselected, highlighted and recomposed to resonate further appropriated and particularised meanings. Such dynamics are emotional as well as cognitive. There are as many aesthetics as there are grounds for them to operate in. Grounded aesthetics are the yeast of common culture' (Willis 1996: 21)

Willis uses the term 'aesthetic' deliberately, to show the differences and continuities of his approach in relation to the *culture and arts* debate. The notion of 'grounded aesthetics' does not look for a 'universal aesthetic' but for the 'grounded aesthetics' that defines what prejudices are brought into play by individuals to 'value' musical symbolic forms – that is, the aesthetics seen 'as qualities of living symbolic activities rather than as qualities of things; as ordinary aspects of common culture rather than as extraordinary aspects of uncommon culture' (1996: 22)²⁹. As has been said, the concept does not refer as much to the field of aesthetics as it does to sociology and anthropology, but at the same time *it retains to a certain degree the focus on the 'universality' experienced by individuals*; not as a real 'universal', but as an experience that can change the particular prejudices or taken-for-granted assumptions of an individual's context³⁰. It is in this sense that the

²⁹ If aesthetics assumes that the analyst will discriminate between what is important and what is not, and tell us what and how we should listen of a work of music (Scruton 1999: 396), the notion of 'grounded aesthetics' leads us to see every single individual as an 'analyst', to treat them with equal respect and to consider seriously their claims about musical value.

³⁰ As Willis puts it: 'A sense of or desire for timelessness and universality may be part of the impulse of a grounded aesthetic. The natural, obvious and immutable become particular historical constructions capable of variation. Subjectivity, taken to some degree out of the particular, is the force which can change it. But we may equally focus on the particular extracted from its context to make sense of the universal (Blake's grain of sand). Such psychic separation may be part of and/or condition for some grounded aesthetics'. (1996: 23). To him, 'universals' do not exist internally in 'art-objects',

notion of grounded aesthetics does not merely lead us to a 'structural' or 'social' analysis, opening up the possibility of respecting the idiosyncrasy of the symbolic forms and individual creativity. The main difference is that whereas 'traditional' aesthetics emphasizes the cerebral and abstract quality of beauty, 'grounded' aesthetics emphasizes the senses, joy, pleasure and desires involved in the experience of it (ibid.: 23-4). The aesthetic effect is not placed in the artefact, but in the relationship between the individual and the artefact. Without an individual's prejudices, without their (socially embedded and worked) sensuous, emotive and cognitive creativities, this aesthetic effect will hardly occur.

The term 'grounded aesthetics', therefore, impels us to analyse with respect any pleasurable musical experience since, instead of trying to judge them in relation to a 'universal' aesthetics of music, we should rather make an effort to understand the underlying 'grounded' aesthetics that make the particular symbolic form 'good' for the listener. This same stance is what led Jason Kubilius, a secondary school music teacher, to focus his teaching not on the so-called 'serious music' but in the understanding of why young people gain pleasure in music. He considers the social, value-laden language that young people use when talking about music as a crucial aspect of their musical experience, which should not be hidden by a supposedly 'neutral' analysis of 'serious' music (1996: 13). This is why he attempts to analyse some of the young people's own grounded aesthetics, focusing on aspects such as 'the importance of the beat; the reusing and mixing of other music; and the centrality of saying something unique within whatever style is chosen' (ibid.: 29). Kubilius criticizes the dominant practice of music education based on the criteria of (mainstream) aesthetic 'value' and 'neutrality' that ignores the (popular) music cultures already existing among young people. Instead, he proposes a music education which makes an effort to dialogue with – and musically enhance – the grounded aesthetics of young people. To him, paying attention to the social context of his pupils does not mean turning away from music, but a possibility to understand why they gain pleasure from it. The practical pedagogical consequence of his stance is that, when assessing or giving advice to his pupils, he will use one or another aesthetic criterion depending on the style of music they are playing.

This stance, pushed to the extreme, naturally replaces the pretension of 'neutrality' of serious music with the pretension of neutrality of 'whatever the kids like'³¹. Both neutralities are arbitrarily built, and both neutralities hide different aspects. The pretension of neutrality of 'serious music', for instance, can hide the class distinction and reproduction of privilege under the 'natural' superiority of

but 'experienced universalism, as a movement out of or re-perception of the particular, may well be a universal feature of heightened human awareness' (ibid.: 23).

³¹ This same disposition towards 'whatever the kids like' can be found in Catalonia in an issue of *Perspectiva Escolar* entitled 'Música moderna a l'escola' (nº 93), which as early as in 1985 discussed and promoted the introduction of modern music genres in school. Among the different contributions, Salvador Cardús suggested that rather than promoting modern popular music in the classrooms, schools should start their musical health policy by implementing an *education of silence and for silence*.

middle and upper class taste in music. At the same time, however, the pretension of neutrality of ‘whatever the kids like’ can also hide the symbolic violence of the teacher over the pupils under the appearance of a horizontal relationship, as well as the power of the market in influencing young people’s taste in music – in some extreme cases it could hide the fact that the teacher had given up in the attempt to ‘transmit culture’ to the pupils further than developing their previously existing taste in music, that is, that the teacher has desisted from exposing the prejudices of their ‘tradition’ to different prejudices of different ‘traditions’.

It is important, therefore, to bear in mind that our embracing of the notion of ‘grounded aesthetics’ and its ‘neutrality’ is not normative, but analytical. If we take an approach that equally respects any empirical grounded aesthetic, this is because we are particularly interested in how disputes about value and taste in music are being fought, how musical traditions and prejudices are being culturally produced and negotiated. When we discuss music, when we negotiate its meaning with others, we are not only talking about music, but about the way of placing it, the way of defining our social field where we can meaningfully be together. As Frith remarks:

‘Musical disputes are not about music "in itself" but about how to place it, what it is about the music that is to be assessed. After all, we can only hear music as valuable when we know what to listen to and how to listen for it. Our reception of music, our expectations from it, are not inherent in the music itself—which is one reason why so much musicological analysis of popular music misses the point: its object of study, the discursive text it constructs, is not the text to which anyone else listens’ (Frith 1996: 26).

In the same sense that Frith argues that we can only hear music as valuable when we know *what to listen to and how to listen to it*, this thesis is about how we produce knowledge about what to listen to and how to make sense of what we listen to. As Frith points out, our reception of music, our expectations from it, are not inherent in the music itself. Moreover, our reactions to music are not merely ‘individual’ reactions to music. Someone that had not been socialised among humans could have a sort of ‘individual’ reaction, but not us. We have all socialised our ears into a specific musical tradition and prejudices, in a given grounded aesthetics – ‘grounded’ in the sense that it does not necessarily value ‘form’ over ‘function’ or ‘sensuous pleasure’. Our social context – and the history it incorporates – crucially affects the way we learn to ‘feel’ music, for it is our social context that gives us the framework to judge and experience it. Even when we build our own taste in music against that of our friends and family, we build our experience of pleasure for some music in relation to theirs, in the context of the same space of musical traditions – what I will call musical geographies.

Different ‘grounded aesthetics’ sum up the diverse space of taste in music, which is not made up of primarily ‘intellectual’ and ‘systematic’ meanings – even though they can partially be so –, but rather ‘practical’³² ones. Taste in music is

³² I borrow the notion of ‘practical’ knowledge from Bourdieu, who indicates that we must suspect both logocentrism and intellectualism when trying to understand taste. He sees ‘practical’ knowledge

not a matter of systematically knowing something, but rather of judging, experiencing and feeling it as a result of our 'embodied practical schemes'. The patterns of appreciation are built and incorporated in the form of practical dispositions and actualised not only in signifying practices but also in sensuous pleasures, the pleasure we feel when listening to some music and dislike and aversion we feel when listening to other music, the familiarity we experience in relation to some forms and uneasiness when facing others. As Bourdieu underlines, 'tastes' are mostly 'distastes'³³ producing visceral intolerance. Such aversions often provoke tremendous violence – aversion to different lifestyles being without doubt one of the strongest social barriers (1988 [1979]: 54); barriers, moreover, affecting us without us being aware of their socially and historically determined character, just taking them for granted, often as incorporated and practical knowledge, as prejudices of our (structured) social and historical tradition.

This practical knowledge involved in taste in music is often embodied through linguistic meanings, even if only partially or secondarily in systematic and reflexive ways – not as much in the literal-analytic side of language, as Willis calls it (2000: 11), but in its figurative side, and understanding by 'language' its broader sense which includes any signifying practice, from language to fashion, dress or rituals. Practical knowledge, moreover, also includes the meaning we find in our experience of music that we might call, following Willis, 'sensuous'³⁴. Since we will pay attention to these distinctions later on, we can now just point out that even if practical knowledge and sensuousness play an important role when making sense of music in our social relations, our objectivations in linguistic, signifying forms, even in their literal-analytical ones³⁵, are also important. As is argued by

as orienting us without concepts, without explicit or systematic principles. Bourdieu's sociology of taste provides a good development of the importance of 'practical' over 'systematic' knowledge through his notion of *habitus*: '[E]l principio de esta actividad estructurante no es, como lo quiere el idealismo intelectualista y antigenético, un sistema de formas y de categorías universales, sino un sistema de *esquemas incorporados* que, constituidos en el curso de la historia colectiva, son *adquiridos* en el curso de la historia individual, y funcionan *en la práctica y para la práctica* (y no para unos fines de puro conocimiento)' (1988 [1979]: 478).

³³ When young people are asked about their taste in music, it is not unusual for them to claim to like 'everything'. In these cases, the best way to learn about their taste in music is just to ask them for the music they *do not like*.

³⁴ I take the focus on 'sensuousness' from Willis's (2000) conceptualisation of the sociosymbolic form as generating not only 'linguistic' but also 'sensuous' meaning, in his discussion of the linguistic paradigm in social sciences. He argues that there is meaning outside language, in the sense that 'although all the material things of the human world signify, not everything has the *sole* purpose of signifying, i.e. sending messages, meaning or information to others. Concrete items have their own 'use values', and human relations to them include their sensuous as well as their signifying uses' (Willis 2000: 19). We will latter analyse, nevertheless, Willis punctualization that this analytic distinction must not make us forget that even if these bodily uses are the 'anchor' providing linguistic meanings their 'there-ness', they cannot be isolated from signifying practices.

³⁵ Even if, as Frith notes, any 'argument' about music can only be built upon previously shared codes: 'Arguments about musical meaning depend on shared understandings of musical codes (otherwise there would be nothing to argue about), and there can be no doubt that Western music listeners in the late twentieth century do take for granted a series of relationships between what they

Willis, 'we need to see social life as containing many different kinds of meaningfulness, incarnate in different practices and forms, layered and overlapping, connecting up in complex ways' (ibid.: 22). As Frith reminds us, 'Popular culture (...) has as much to do with sociability, and how we talk about texts, as with interpretation, and how we read them' (1996: 12-13). This means that in order to make sense of and communicate how our taste in music relates to that of others, we need to use signs and meanings provided by our social context, whether they are strictly linguistic (words, categories, labels) or not (signifying practices such as gazes, gestures, looks, fights, bouncers' decisions or style). I am referring to the fact that we need to learn the language of taste in music. This language is not always systematic, in that signifying practices and patterns of appreciation are often practically learnt and displayed, and can only be understood in localised and situated contexts. We often 'know' how to place and judge a piece of music but we do not know 'why' we know it. Nevertheless, when it becomes objectivated and typified through language, it often acquires a further degree of (perceived) objectivity. The taste in music that we have acquired is partially systematic – the adjectives to talk about and value music on the ground of every grounded aesthetics; the labels of 'genres' that delimit the borders between tastes in music – and partially practical – not only our deep bodily reactions to music but also the complex incorporated homologies³⁶ between taste in music and other aspects of our social world, like social class or gender, or the complex articulation with dress, talk, going out, dancing or toughness. Such homologies and practical meanings are not rules but rather variable judgements.

To understand how we are socialised within specific musical traditions and prejudices, within specific tastes in music and their grounded aesthetics, in a way that makes meaningful communication and being together possible, the perspective of the sociology of knowledge will be of great help. Our social context influences us through the significant others that we want to please or through the importance of the music soundscape – as part of our 'social world' – that we perceive, and more importantly, through the reactions of others not only to music, but to our reactions to music. When listening to music, it is difficult to not take into account, reflexively or not, how others are reacting to this same music and to our reaction to this music. In other words, we invest a considerable amount of symbolic work in managing, even if not reflexively, the 'impression' we cause on others³⁷ by relating to music in one or another way. When we make public our taste in music, an important process of social control is activated, sometimes openly, sometimes subtly, but in any case making us feel uneasy or comfortable

hear and what they feel' (1996: 109). To him, even if feelings *are* caused by the musical elements, they do so through a process of conventional association.

³⁶ We will later discuss the notion of homology as it is used by both Willis (1978; 2000) and Bourdieu (1988 [1979]).

³⁷ See Goffman (1981 [1956]) for a classical analysis of the importance of managing the impression we cause on others in social interactions.

when (publicly) maintaining certain tastes in music within certain social contexts. This means that taste in music becomes part of our social relations and its mechanisms of social control and mutual typification.

As we have already said, far from paying attention to young people's direct (aesthetic or semiotic) relation to music, *we will focus on how prejudices and traditions in relation to taste in music are being culturally produced*. In fact, we will go one step further, in the sense that we are interested in whether these prejudices and traditions *are linked or not to social geographies and experiences of generalised advantage and disadvantage*. This is of course a controversial step, which even sociologists of music are often wary of taking if it is not in microsocial analysis. However risky the task may be, I argue that the attempt is useful in order to gain understanding of contemporary cultural relations. This is not to deny the (autonomous) power of music, but to contextualize it. Different musical forms produce a different impression on us when we listen to them, and the same musical forms produce a different impression on different people. Nevertheless, instead of focusing on the diversity and relative 'autonomy' of music experiences, we will rather focus on the fact that young people, in their symbolic work with cultural artefacts such as music, continuously (culturally re-)produce the meanings inherited through tradition. Cultural artefacts are the raw material of this cultural production, and they mediate meanings not only about themselves, but about the location of young people in social geographies.³⁸

Taste and the social embedding of music

We are interested in the 'social embeddedness' of symbolic forms from the point of view of their connection to social meanings and structures of generalised advantage. Talking about the musical experience in terms of its social embedding is not easy, and as has been already pointed out, in fact goes against our everyday assumption that taste in music is the manifestation of some personal experience of each individual in contact with some mysterious essential features of 'the music'. But the fact is that without generally being aware of it, during our primary and secondary socialization we learn the *social meanings attached to different music (or tastes in music)*, which become part of what we have termed 'prejudices' of a given 'tradition'. We learn *which kind of person tends to like which kind of music*, and we adjust our own musical preferences to the image we feel comfortable projecting to the outside. Taste in music, like taste in any other field, is not socially neutral: it tells something about us. It can operate in a markedly superficial way or in a

³⁸ Willis elegantly synthesises the dialectic relationship between symbolic forms and agency as follows: 'Symbolic work produces the possibility of 'integral circuits' between agency and form. Having itself been confirmed and developed in specific ways, agency continuously reselects and resets the structures of the 'objective possibilities' – so shifting the range of their profane as well as of their intended meanings. This produces further reverse effects on sensibility and feeling and, in their turn, new potentials for concrete human choice and intervention, all in the directions of tightening socio-symbolic congruencies as well as in the direction of producing unprefigurable future possible meanings' (Willis 2000: 26).

profound one. Whereas some individuals barely pay attention to music, and thus are almost immune to all that has to do with it, others experience it in a literally somatic way: they just ‘can’t stand’ the music they do not like, and just ‘love’ the music they like. This incorporated or embodied character of taste in music not only physically affects how we judge certain musical forms, but also how we see the people and groups that like them. From early in our lives, we start ‘learning’ these social meanings or ‘prejudices’ linked to different tastes in music. They are a sort of ‘hidden’ language that helps us to locate and find our way within social geographies. We will expect certain people to like classical music and others house music; we will be surprised when someone in a certain social category likes jazz, or someone in another one likes flamenco music. We learn not only that people who like them are different, but also that liking them is usually linked to some other features, that different musical forms have different social connotations.

Of course these connotations of music are not a merely ‘objective’ and ‘essential’ reality that affects our taste in music, but an ‘objectivated’ reality that we culturally produce through our musical experience. There is a dialectical relationship, or a mutual influence, between individual and collective meanings. We find, therefore, that individuals often resist, negotiate or ignore these institutionalised social meanings and expectations, but when they do so, they ‘surprise’ us, and often they have to ‘justify’ themselves in front of others and deal with a range of social control mechanisms. The fact that they surprise us and often need a justification shows the existence of this objectified reality. The fact that everybody’s taste is peculiarly different must not deter us from seeing that there are regularities and, more importantly, meanings that point to a socially institutionalised reality.

I am arguing for a view of taste in music that as well as merely stressing the notions of personal enjoyment or the aesthetic idea that music is a value in itself, also considers its social embeddings. This view of music, as has already been noted, goes against our modern perception of music and taste in music, and in some sense recalls the experience of music prior to modernity, when it was basically considered a supportive tool with immediate use for collectivistic and social purposes³⁹. Prior to our appreciation – and even toleration – of music as individual expression, musical composition was considered a group manifestation, even when it was played by one individual (Honigsheim 1989). In popular culture these collectivistic and social purposes are particularly obvious, even though they acquire different manifestations from those in pre-modern times. Nevertheless, to focus on the collective aspects of taste in music – and I am returning here to a point which has already been made – goes against the current common sense that considers it a feature of individuals. In fact, it goes against one of our basic principles of social organization: *the taken-for-granted assumption that taste in music*

³⁹ Honigsheim (1989) distinguishes various occasions for the performance of music: ceremonial occasions, music for entertainment, music for work, house music, theatre music, concert music and oratorios.

is a sort of indicator of the moral value of the person that has it. Our social and cultural social relations are based on the assumption of individual responsibility: in the same sense that we are 'responsible' of our actions and because of this we can go to prison if we break the law, we are also responsible, to a large extent, for our taste. The taken-for-granted assumption that each of us is an autonomous, responsible and capable individual, and the fact that we assign inalienable rights to individuals and not to families, social classes or organizations, is according to Gergen (1992 [1991]) part of the historical construction of the modern and romantic self. According to our moral system, he argues, individuals and not their friends, relatives or work mates are made responsible of their acts. Even if we have always had collective explanations at hand, our individualism clearly predominates: *we know* that poverty can push individuals towards crime, but *we do not consider this fact a justification* for any individual crime vis-à-vis the law⁴⁰. If we did, our entire social order would be jeopardised. And the same is true in relation to taste: we assume that the individual is responsible for it, and that it is a sort of indicator of his or her moral value. If we considered the collective influence on individual taste, we would undermine one of the basic assumptions sustaining our social life⁴¹.

Fashion and consumerism crucially stress the importance of individualism. One of the most astonishing paradoxes of fashion and advertising is that they repeatedly encourage us to be original-different-radical-special by getting us to buy and conform to what we are told to buy and conform. Moreover, we are told to be authentic through our involvement with things (commodities) which are inherently subject to fads and trends. We are led to a situation where we 'feel' that we are original by adopting marginal differences in our consumption patterns – the colour of our car, the actual trousers we end up buying from the range available each season. This paradox of consumer culture is beautifully exemplified by Stephen Miles (2000), who found that most youngsters firmly believe that young people are heavily dependent on fashion and what others think, but they do not think that they themselves are. We have the puzzling situation that while all young people *know that* consumer culture is 'wrongly' influencing young people's originality, they think that *everybody else* is affected by this influence.

⁴⁰ From Gergen's point of view, the notion of 'voluntary decision' is undermined by postmodernism, to the extent that crimes must be attributed to both individuals *and* all social relations in which they have been involved (1992 [1991]: 305-6).

⁴¹ Gergen (1992 [1991]), through an analysis of the historical development of the notion of 'self', argues that the 'individual' must be considered an historical construction rather than an essential reality, and that postmodernism is challenging the modern and romantic self based on the idea of a fully responsible individual. Thomas Luckmann in *The Invisible Religion* (1963) identifies the 'autonomous individual' and the 'mobility ethos, self-expression and self-realization' as part of the core *religious themes* of contemporary Western society. 'The prevalent mobility ethos can be considered a specific expression of the theme of self-realization. Self-realization by means of status achievement precludes, of course, a radical retrenchment in the "private sphere." It is significant, however, that the mobility ethos is typically linked to an attitude toward the social order which is both "individualistic" and manipulative' (Luckmann 1963: 111).

This example allows us to point to the paradox that, in contemporary society, the sociological emphasis of structural influence on individuals is incorporated into common sense but at a basically 'rhetoric' level. Collective discourses can be acknowledged and verbalised but at the same time they are only very partially applied to us. We can display an *apparent reflexivity* that would be better described as an *irreflexive reflexivity*, because if we challenged the assumption of individual autonomy, we would put into doubt much of our taken-for-granted knowledge configuring our social reality. During the last few decades, although a rhetorical structural reflexivity has gained ground – parallel to the spreading of politically correct awareness – we have witnessed a marked decline of collective and structural narratives in both public and everyday discourses. Our effort to connect music to its social embedding is, therefore, not self-evident. During the last few decades many social scientists have felt a growing uneasiness when talking about social structure. Concepts like 'class', 'social structure', 'status groups' and the like, popular a few decades ago, are not seen by many as useful in dealing with our contemporary social reality. For some, the old concepts have been always wrong, and for others, they have become inadequate in the light of recent social changes. In any case, the fact is that in social science accounts the link between symbolic forms and social and structural factors has lately been reduced in favour of notions of 'fluidity'. As we will later analyse, 'class' and 'socioeconomic analysis' are not very popular in popular music and youth cultures research, and only gender, sexuality, race and ethnicity have remained at the focus of attention. Paradoxically, it is easier to find general statements about the relationship between music or music crowds and social categories like class, gender or ethnicity among journalists and insiders of the popular music scenes than among sociologists themselves⁴².

In the first half of the 20th Century the distinction, in Western societies, between the working and the middle classes was a widely accepted reality, objectivated in clearly differentiated lifestyles, dress, ways of being paid (wage or salary), and so on. The manual/mental division among the workforce was a main indicator of class position, and the labour movement reinforced the idea that the working class 'objectively existed'. But this has changed during the last few decades. The manual jobs have rapidly decreased and a greater proportion of the working class is now in white collar service jobs, while educational qualifications have sharply increased since the Second World War. The clear-cut separation between working- and middle-class jobs has become somewhat blurred, leading to a gradation of occupations that make the distinction less obvious.

Moreover, consumer culture and the trend towards individualisation through consumption has also blurred the most visible differences between working- and middle-class lifestyles. Consumer culture is changing our patterns of cultural

⁴² Brewster and Broughton's *Last Night a DJ Saved my Life* (1999) is a good example. This book, which explicitly makes fun of academic accounts of dance music, does not hesitate to repeatedly link the rising and development of different music scenes and crowds to structural categories. Oleaque (2004) is another example of a journalistic account openly relating music scenes to social positions.

relations, in that, only a few decades ago, anyone with a distinguished social position would avoid acknowledging his consumption of popular culture. By contrast, nowadays every new generation of young people entering adulthood is less and less afraid of showing pleasure with popular culture. Cultural distinction now is gained with a more subtle combination of 'high' and 'popular' symbolic forms, and it is the omnivore combination of different artefacts that characterizes a distinguished taste⁴³. This is one of the aspects that have changed the way social structures are actualised and experienced in Western countries during the second half of the 20th Century, and it is probably the case that the social sciences have not provided the concepts that can adequately make sense of them.

This, together with the decline of Marxism and the labour organizations and political discourses, has led to a situation where large sectors of the population – including many sociologists – believe that 'class' is an outdated concept that is no longer useful. In other words, the changes have led to a situation where the people, including sociologists, seem to be lacking the conceptual vocabulary to make sense of what Wright Mills (1967 [1959]) described as the main goal of the sociological imagination, that is, the connection between biographies, history and social structures of inequality. I am not arguing that in the first half of the 20th Century this conceptual vocabulary existed without controversy and was clearly shared by all the population, but it is probably the case that the current uneasiness when talking about the influence of historical social structures on individual biographies is greater than it used to be in the past, and this has a lot to do with the inadequacy of our metaphors in making sense of contemporary Western socioeconomic inequality. Sociology can play an important role in providing individuals with (conceptual) tools to tackle the difficulty of connecting their experience to the structural and historical factors influencing it.

Sociological accounts about the so-called processes of 'individualisation' and 'subjectivisation of identity'⁴⁴ argue that they have undermined the awareness of the institutional and collective channelling of our behaviour. The point is that the scarcity of 'collective' explanations of our individual situations in the public arena, as well as the plurality of world views to which we are subjected, push us to an heightened individualised subjectivity. Contrary to the postmodernist assumption that this individualisation reduces the validity of structural analysis because patterns of behaviour and individual life opportunities have lost their predictability in terms of explanatory variables such as class and gender, Andy Furlong and Fred Cartmel (1997) argue that a growing 'epistemological fallacy' is

⁴³ See Peterson & Kern (1996) for a discussion of the changing patterns of social distinction from snob to omnivore dispositions.

⁴⁴ See Furlong and Cartmel (1997) for an insightful adaptation of the notion of 'individualisation' to youth studies, and Berger, Berger & Kellner (1979 [1974]) for a development of the notion of 'subjectivisation'. The two notions must be regarded as distinct, since even if they are strongly related to each other, they focus on different aspects of what we are analysing here.

emerging, that is, a growing disjuncture between objective and subjective dimensions of life:

‘the paradox of late modernity is that although the collective foundations of social life have become more obscure, they continue to provide powerful frameworks which constrain young people’s experiences and life chances. Over the last two decades a number of changes have occurred which have helped to obscure these continuities, promoting individual responsibilities and weakening collectivist traditions’ (Furlong & Cartmel 1997: 109).

Our sociological contribution to the understanding of social structures will attempt to face the complexity of the forms of cultural relations organising, in our contemporary societies, the way we culturally experience and re-produce our social reality. Any attempt in this direction will necessarily be indebted to the important contribution found in Bourdieu’s *Distinction* (1988 [1979]), which, after decades of neglect, located the notions of ‘lifestyle’ and ‘taste’ at the centre of the sociological debate. Since Max Weber and Thorstein Veblen had theorised at the beginning of the 20th Century about the importance of lifestyles and consumption in the understanding of the process of social structuration, these aspects had almost disappeared from the sociological debate. Bourdieu provided a framework for the relationship between taste and social structures through the notion of taste: different social locations imply different *habitus*, and depending on our social location we face a ‘universe of possible’ choices from which we can build our taste. *Habitus* refers to the ‘dispositions’ that generate our *practices* and our *judgement* of our practices and those of others. Each location in social space implies a certain *habitus* that orders both practices and the appreciation and perception of them. From this point of view, taste – including taste in music – is the result of historical relations stored in individual bodies as mental schemes of perception and action (Bourdieu 1988 [1979]; Bourdieu & Wacquant 1994 [1992]). The point of his approach to taste is that it sees it as hiding a process of social distinction that contributes from its very core to the process of social reproduction, pushing further Weber and Veblen’s approaches to lifestyle and consumption as connected to social hierarchies. Taste is, thus, both ‘structured and ‘structuring’, and Bourdieu’s conceptual tools enable us to put this at the centre of the analysis.

Nevertheless, whereas his approach seems particularly clear when dealing with cultural distinctions based on ‘legitimate’, ‘official’ or ‘academic’ culture, it can be more problematic when dealing with the increasingly commoditised emerging popular culture. The process of social and cultural distinction within youth cultures does not directly follow the separation between high and low – or popular – culture. On the contrary, to a certain extent it ‘inverts’ it, in the sense that high culture can become a guarantee of social stigmatisation among many young people and some of the features of ‘low’ culture are glorified. When dealing with the complexities and open-endedness of the everyday experience with symbolic forms, particularly within the patterns of the emerging consumer culture, Bourdieu’s

general approach needs to be complexified in order to include the changing field of popular and consumer culture⁴⁵.

Bourdieu's detailed account of 'enclashed' *habitus* is useful in order to challenge postmodern assumptions about fluidity and the implosion of social structures, but needs to be empirically developed when dealing with music in the context of young people's popular culture. As we will later analyse, 'class' accounts of youth cultures have lost prominence and have often been challenged during the last two decades, so we must find theoretical tools and empirical illustrations to bring them back to youth research. This thesis is an attempt to do so, using a phenomenological and constructivist approach which, while firmly believing in the relevance of social structures in understanding taste in music among young people, also acknowledges the need to critically understand the connections between everyday life and these structures. The focus of attention is, therefore, the dialectical relationship between individual and collective (creative) meanings, on the one hand, and socially structured relations, on the other. Willis' notion of 'socio-symbolic form' will be of much help here, for it enables us to place the necessary importance on the social embeddedness of symbolic forms and, at the same time, pay attention to the spaces of cultural production and creativity. Willis has defended (1993 [1981]) the need to understand the process of cultural production as separate from – and inextricably related to – the processes of cultural and social reproduction. Our theoretical and empirical aim is to understand the relationship between all of them.

'Prejudices' and 'traditions' are inherited through primary and secondary socialization, but they need to be culturally produced again and again by every new generation and individual. In the case of youth cultures, this is particularly obvious since the circuit of change and obsolescence of popular music makes symbolic forms volatile, obliging every new generation of young people to culturally produce and negotiate the inherited plurality of traditions of prejudices, through a numerous set of mediations and mediators, from the music industry to the media, from artists to critics. Socio-symbolic forms, however, are not free-floating signifiers but strongly embedded in the young people's social world. They are used by young people to make sense of their social experience and their material conditions as much as to enjoy themselves and build circumscribed provinces of meaning, and it is in this sense that this thesis *understands young people's taste in music as a process of cultural production*, as an objectivation that every new generation of young people will need to culturally re-produce, that is inherently linked to their experience of material conditions and their social world. Symbolic forms, when socially embedded, acquire social connotations within social hierarchies, and those hierarchies have to do with 'coolness', 'popularity' and 'transgression' as well as with class, gender, ethnicity, academic disposition, and

⁴⁵ As will be later commented, Sarah Thornton's *Club Cultures* (1996 [1995]) is an attempt to use Bourdieu's theory to study youth cultures in terms of what she calls 'subcultural capital', although she is only partially interested in the articulation of class distinctions.

many other aspects of young people's daily life. Music is understood, therefore, in relation to its mediation of young people's experience of their social world, and more particularly, what we call young people's social space.

Youth and youth cultures

Our interest in taste in music is not so much an end in itself but rather a means to analyse young people's cultural production of identity in social and positional terms. This thesis must thus be primarily inscribed in the tradition of youth studies – even though it is also closely related to popular music studies and the sociology of knowledge –, and because of this we will explain throughout the following pages in what sense it might contribute to the field, making explicit how the approach that has been outlined and will be further developed in the following chapters fits the existing literature. Before doing so, it is worth saying that youth studies present a rather clear-cut distinction between an approach that focuses on youth transitions to adulthood and another that pays attention to youth cultures, subcultures and lifestyles⁴⁶. Both trends are also termed the 'structural' and 'cultural' approaches to youth, even though there is quite a lot of good 'cultural' research within the so-called 'structural' approach as well as good 'structural' research within the so-called 'cultural' approach. It is true, however, that the intellectual and academic traditions in which both approaches are inscribed are notably segregated, to the extent that it is not easy to bridge the gap between them.

On the one hand, the branch of youth studies interested in youth transitions tends to deal, through both quantitative and qualitative research, with the so-called 'structural' conditions of young people – namely, education, school-to-work transitions, housing and health – and is related to inequalities in their transitions to adulthood. They often refer to the meanings young people attach to such structural conditions and transitions to adult life, but only marginally consider how the so-called 'youth cultures' intersect with those meanings and practices⁴⁷. On the other hand, youth cultures' research has preferred either the so-called 'spectacular subcultures' or localised groups of young people, but has generally not faced the study of the field of youth cultural forms *as a whole* in a way that could cast light on the impact of those youth lifestyles on transitions to adulthood. The structural dimension has been taken into account in youth cultures research through the analysis of the negotiation in popular culture of identities related to ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class and even territory, but not through the analysis of the *impact* of youth cultures and youth styles on youth transitions to adulthood.

⁴⁶ This is naturally a simplification, and the following account will not review the origins, development and nuances of youth research since the so-called Chicago School took youth gangs as an object of study. For good historical reviews of youth cultures research, see Feixa (1998) and Bennett (2000). For an overview of the youth transitions research, see Furlong & Cartmel (1997).

⁴⁷ Even if this must not be taken literally – in the case of the sociology of education or the study of youth health there are many recent examples that would challenge this statement; it is true in regard to the dominant trend.

In the light of this sharp distinction within youth studies, several voices have argued that an effort should be made to combine research on youth transitions with that on youth cultures⁴⁸. The truth is that it is not only leisure and youth cultures that can be as meaningful to young people as their transitions, but also that both aspects are often experienced as opposed and dilemmatic, so it seems clear that combining these elements when doing youth research could open up new research avenues. If the balance between 'having fun' and 'studying' or 'earning a living' is often experienced by young people as a central dilemma – sometimes tense and difficult to resolve –, it makes sense to include this tension at the core of youth research. If youth studies manage to take it into consideration, it can help to better understand the relationship between youth cultures and structural transitions. This goal demands not only stressing the cultural dimension of the structuring practices as well as acknowledging the structural dimension of leisure and young people's cultural manifestations, which is often done, but also focusing on the link between the structuration of cultural practices *and* transitions to adulthood. This thesis attempts to open up a possible path to overcome this separation through an approach to youth cultures understood in a broad sense, that is, from the perspective of the production and distribution of meaning offered by the sociology of knowledge.

First of all, we must specify how we will use the term 'youth cultures' and to what extent they can be seen as distinct from 'adult' or 'general' cultures, since this is not a self-evident distinction. By 'youth cultures' we will understand, in this thesis, those meanings and practices specific to young people – that is, that make sense to young people and not to adults or children – and transmitted not (mainly) from adults to youngsters, but from older to younger generations of young people. The same could be said about 'child cultures', which transmit meanings across generations without the intervention of adults. The notion of 'youth cultures', understood as collective practices which, while meaningful to young people, do not make sense to adults – they are subterranean or 'sub-cultural' to the general population – is sustained upon two main elements: on the one hand, young people share a similar vital experience, in the sense that whereas they are abandoning childhood and starting to build their adult identity, their final 'social location' is still to be written. They are in transition to adulthood. The generalization (in Western societies) of young people as a specific and institutionalised age between childhood and adulthood implies that in this transition from childhood to adulthood individuals share a 'similar' experience because life has not yet sent them to different destinations. Most of them are at school and living in more or less comparable situations. Even if ethnicity, class, gender and territory segregate and differently affect them, their future is *experienced as* open and they play with – and negotiate – their identity, to a great extent, through lifestyle, which is

⁴⁸ For an expression of such desirability among youth researchers see for instance Hollands (1990; 1995); Gayle (1998) and Shildrick and MacDonald (2006).

perceived as an open-ended space of experimentation⁴⁹. This playing around will considerably narrow down once they become adults and acquire basic adult responsibilities and stable occupational locations. On the other hand, what makes contemporary cultural experience so distinct from that of historical contexts is not only that youth as a specific age of life has broadened, but also that the way young people currently make sense of their conditions of existence could not be conceived apart from consumer culture. Commodities, fashion and the media become indispensable symbolic materials through which young people apprehend and make sense of their social reality, which is a crucial difference in relation to other youth cultural manifestations across history: media artefacts and commodities transform the circuit of change and transmission of youth practices and meanings, since rapid fads and the power of the media make external meanings from the peer group as important as very localised traditions. Young people's symbolic materials are only partially shared with those that previous generations of young people used at their age, and the media become a privileged 'window' to current popular culture. The logic of change of consumer culture through fashions and trends is inherent to what we call 'youth cultures', as are its differentiation mechanisms. This implies that aspects such as 'coolness', 'fashion', 'normative transgression', 'sex', 'commercial', 'underground' and youth styles in general, all mediated by – and signified through – commodities, are central to young people's identities, including their experience of class, gender and ethnicity. In contrast, adult normative expectations concerning schoolwork, professional careers and adult responsibilities in general are often seen – even when respected – as secondary in youth cultural manifestations. They are negotiated to a great extent at a private level.

This tension between the expectations of adults and those of their peers – between adult normative expectations and 'specifically youth' normative expectations – is of great importance. The balance between conforming, negotiating or resisting adult expectations is one of the central dilemmas of young people's transition to adulthood. The way different implications in youth cultures can influence how this dilemma is culturally experienced should be a central focus of interest for youth studies. The difficulty of simultaneously dealing with the way young people adjust to normative expectations of adults, on the one hand, and the field of youth cultures (or young people's social space), on the other, is what has made it difficult to bridge the gap between the study of youth transitions and the study of youth cultures. One possible solution could be, in addition to the study of particular styles, to consider youth cultures from the sociology of knowledge perspective, taking youth geographies as a whole and, consequently, paying attention to their connections with historical, structural and relational features: How do different youth styles relate to location within social structures and the way young people

⁴⁹ We have already referred to the notion 'epistemological fallacy' used by Furlong and Cartmel (1997) to capture the contemporary paradox of being as influenced as always by social structures *but* experiencing biographies as individually ridden.

face transition to adult roles? How do different youth styles relate to other youth and adult styles? How do different youth styles articulate, incorporate and push forward historical cultural developments? Dealing with youth cultures in a broad sense implies focusing on their contextual and relational aspects on top of their specific particularities. It is in this way that we can deal with young people's taste in music as cultural production of meanings making sense of their social world in the light of its historical and social influences.

Young people's social space

The term 'youth cultures' was popularised by Talcott Parsons in the middle of the 20th Century (1972 [1942]). Parsons understood 'youth culture' as a set of patterns and behaviour with a highly complex combination of age grading and sex role elements that was unique and highly distinctive for American society. The dominant male expectation of 'irresponsible' and hedonistic behaviour was not seen by Parsons as a social problem but as a way of structuring age and sex in complex modern societies. For him, there was 'a reason to believe that the youth culture has important positive functions in easing the transition from the security of childhood in the family of orientation to that of full adulthood in marriage and occupational status' (ibid.: 146). Although the term has been widely used since, his theoretical focus on the 'role' or 'function' of youth cultures as facilitating young people's marital and occupational transitions has not been very influential.

The principal source of inspiration of youth cultures' research has been instead the work of Birmingham's *Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies* (CCCS)⁵⁰, which was developed to a great extent *against* the functionalism of Talcott Parsons. The Birmingham approach to 'spectacular subcultures' emphasised class and social contradictions and the relationship between subcultures and both parental and dominant cultures. Even if that approach has remained influential, interest in 'class' has gradually disappeared from youth cultures' research in favour of the axes of ethnicity and gender. During the last decade, moreover, criticisms of the 'subcultural' approach to youth cultures have been interpreted by some as the emergence of 'post-subcultural' theory which, rooted in a postmodern approach, aims to overcome the notion of 'subculture' through concepts like 'neo-tribe' or 'scene'⁵¹.

⁵⁰ The collective book *Resistance through Rituals* (Hall & Jefferson 1998 [1975]) is the key text of the CCCS approach to youth subcultures, although the differences between the work of some of its more well known members are important (for instance Willis 1978, 1996 [1979]); Hebdige 1981 [1977] or McRobbie 1991).

⁵¹ Criticisms of the CCCS approach have been mandatory in any approach to youth cultures since the 1980s, when even members of the Centre pointed out its lack of sensitivity to gender and race issues. Most criticisms, however, were initially made from a critical engagement with the approach. During the last decade, more systematic criticism has been produced around the Institute for Popular Culture at Manchester Metropolitan University (Redhead 1997; Redhead with Wynne and O'Connor 1997) and lately by Bennett and others (Bennett 1999, Bennett & Kahn-Harris 2004). The term 'post-subculturalist' was used by Muggleton in the *Club Cultures Reader* (Redhead 1997), and borrowed by Bennett and Kahn-Harris in *After Subculture* (2004) to loosely define the critiques of the concept of

Regardless of the theoretical approach to youth cultures and youth styles, the fact is that empirical research has generally focused on particular styles and manifestations of youth cultures, and has only secondarily taken a relational approach to them. Different youth styles have been generally studied as isolated entities, or at the most in relation to parent or adult cultures. I argue that to understand any youth cultural style it is not only useful but highly desirable to know *in relation to which other youth cultural styles it is defined and through which processes of social distinction and differentiation it has been culturally produced*. By doing so, I argue, it will be easier to understand its historical and structural aspects⁵².

We will not conceive youth styles as ‘essential’ or ‘self-referential’ realities, but as ‘collective cultural productions’ that exist within the co-ordinates of broader youth and general social spaces. We will later develop the notion of ‘young people’s social space’. For the moment, it will suffice to underline that youth styles exist as long as they are useful ‘resources’ for young people to make sense of their everyday lives, and a central aspect to make sense of one’s everyday life is to know one’s own position *in relation to other positions* in it. Youth styles are the aggregate result of many young people’s symbolic work in their effort to make sense of, and negotiate, their own place within their social relations – an effort that is full of tensions and dilemmas.

In the introduction we have narrowed our interest to *young people’s cultural production of social geographies and their own pathways through them*. Young people’s social geographies are, on the one hand, part of general social geographies, but, on the other hand, there are many aspects which keep them distinct from general co-ordinates – in that they are not recognised by adults or children. We will call ‘young people’s social space’ those specifically youth stylistic distinctions and dispositions held by young people, as well as their subsequent social positions within a social space which is only – or primarily – meaningful to young people. ‘Young people’s social space’ and ‘youth geographies’ are thus an objectified pattern of social distances and proximities between young individuals, in which every style is understood in the light of its ‘relations’ with other styles, which although connected to general social geographies, are notably autonomous from them. The point is that youth styles become, in the context of ‘youth geographies’, a relational reality: a youth style makes sense as long as its differences in relation to other youth styles are understood. Such realities are only partially grasped by those ‘outside’ these geographies, as is the case of most adults and children, and it is in this sense that we can analytically differentiate them.

‘subculture’ in the CCCS approach. The British Sociological Association Youth Study Group conference *Scenes, Subcultures and Tribes. Youth Cultures in the 21st Century*, held on 2003, openly discussed these issues, drawing critical reactions from Hesmondhalgh (2005) and Blackmann (2005). Miles (2000) also offered an alternative to a subcultural approach through the notion of ‘lifestyle’, whereas Hodgkinson (2002) defended the usefulness of the notion of subculture for analysing youth styles like ‘Goth’.

⁵² An example of a relational approach to social space which strongly connects it to historical and structural aspects is, naturally, Bourdieu’s work on social space and ‘fields’.

In what concerns us, music, as a core activity of young people's identity work, plays an important role in organising and negotiating these social geographies, which are not only built through linguistic categorization but also through taste and sensuous meanings. Young people inter-subjectively share the – however open-ended and contested – definition of youth geographies, and this enables their meaningful action in them, that is, communication in the broad sense we have previously established. Mixing systematic and practical knowledge, linguistic and sensuous meanings, young people make sense of – and negotiate – their location in the young people's social world, trying to 'be part' of it and, at the same time, remaining 'different', 'special' and 'original' within it⁵³. This play with positions and oppositions is historically and structurally embedded and not free from the prejudices inherited from tradition.

While modern life has made – individual – differentiation a compulsory practice, individualism often hides collective affiliations⁵⁴ that culturally organize social reality. The ongoing comparison with others becomes a strong pressure in our lives that can be an inescapable and tough obstacle in our search for respect. The insecurity that continuous comparison with others might pose on individuals becomes for many a significant source of stress. Any youth style must be understood in the context of – both individual and collective – mutual comparison, in the same sense that adjectives like 'boffin', 'popular', 'cool', 'quillo', 'kev', 'catalufó', 'empollon', 'fiestero', 'geezer', 'student', 'towny', 'goth', 'rocker', 'garage-head', 'fashion', and so on must be all understood in relation to each other: they mean what they mean to young people not because they contain any 'essence' but because they help to explain the relational reality of young people's social space. Following Pierre Bourdieu's work (Bourdieu 1988 [1979]; Bourdieu & Wacquant 1994), this perspective understands young people's social space as a social field of positions that even if it has a relative autonomy from general social space, is inextricably linked to it.

There are several examples of youth cultures research that open up this pathway. Paul Willis, in his classic *Learning to Labour* (1981 [1977]) not only identified the stylistic differentiation between the 'lads' and the 'ear'holes' but

⁵³ See Simmel (1964 [1905]) for a brilliant analysis of the need to 'be special' in a contemporary metropolis, and Gronow (1997) for a development of Simmel's early analysis of fashion as the modern institution allowing the paradoxical combination of differentiation and communal participation.

⁵⁴ On the one hand, it is difficult to deny the already mentioned heightened 'individualisation' (Beck 1992; Furlong & Cartmel 1997) or 'subjectivisation' (Berger, Berger & Kellner 1979) of contemporary biographies. The decaying strength of structural and collectivistic worldviews in biographical explanations are a good example of it. Furlong & Cartmel's review of youth studies research (1997) shows the fertility of this approach. On the other hand, the taken-for-granted increase of individualism is challenged by Maffessoli's image of raising 'tribalism' (1988) as a sign of the process of disindividualization. Within youth cultures research, Bennett (1999) has strongly advocated the use of 'tribe' or 'neo-tribe' as a substitute for the notion of 'subculture'. 'Individualisation' and 'disindividualisation' do not need to be contradictory, in the sense that the process of individualization in which individuals increasingly perceive themselves as separate from collectives is perfectly compatible with the increasing importance of emotional and volatile communities within contemporary consumer culture – see Sweetman (2004) for a similar argument.

related it to their respective school-to-work transitions. Richard Jenkins *Lads, Citizens and Ordinary Kids* (1983) analysed the different disposition towards the 'respectable' and the 'rough' among different groups of young people as well as the actual social relations among them. Shane Blackman's *Youth, Positions and Oppositions* (1995) also studied the social relations in a secondary school between rockers, mods and *boffins*, as well as their connection or lack of it with class and gender, on the one hand, and academic disposition and achievement, on the other. Robert Hollands' *Friday night, Saturday Night* (1995) analysed the interplay between youth cultural and class identities in Newcastle, paying special attention to the Geordie-student distinction⁵⁵. Sarah Thornton's *Club Cultures* (1996 [1995]) looked at the (relational) play of distinction within club cultures where 'underground' and 'hip' differentiation (from 'commercial' and 'mainstream' stigma) was seen as the club culture equivalent of Bourdieu's high cultural distinction in the general cultural field – although the book did not develop the link of this distinction with socioeconomic advantage. Thornton combined Bourdieu's approach to 'social space' and 'distinction' with the tradition of youth studies, handling the challenge of using Bourdieu's conceptual framework in a social field where 'cultural distinction' is, at least rhetorically, inverted. In her contribution, she brought out the intrinsic role of the media in the structuration of this youth cultural space. Another example is that of Kevin Hetherington's research on New Age Travellers (1996), which explores the relationship between space and identity paying attention to the differentiation from mainstream society through liminoid practices and values. Maritza Urteaga (1998) also paid attention to youth cultures in Mexico in terms of their relational character, as did Erling Bjurström (1997) in Gothenburg, Gävle and Stockholm. In his case, the focus was placed on the taste-game of culture and the play of distinction within legitimate and popular culture. Julie Bettie's research on working-class white and Mexican-American girls in California (2000) is yet another example. In this case, she not only identified the 'general mapping' that all her informants easily provided when asked, but also its relational character. Nadine Dolby's research in South Africa (2000) focused on the youth production of identities through taste, and Pilkington *et. al.* (2002) identified different youth styles in Russia in relational terms.

In Catalonia and Spain there are also examples where relational approaches to youth cultures are present. Carles Feixa's research (1993; 1998) not only described the main stylistic geographies in Lleida and Mexico D.F., but also identified how young people used them to make sense of their social reality, even if he focused on

⁵⁵ Hollands had previously developed an approach to youth stressing its diverse and relational elements in *The Long Transition* (1990), where he for instance criticised Paul Willis's approach for its lack of relational perspective: 'By activating and emphasising one particular cultural form, Willis has implicitly played down the significance of other transitions and identities within the young working class, failing to grasp the interrelationship between groups. In other words, the stress placed on the lads apparently self-made and autonomous culture blocked out any real interaction between groups of young people themselves and their relations with 'significant others' and to other social sites' (*ibid.*: 11).

particular biographies and styles rather than on the relational character of youth styles. Since the mid 90s, several youth researchers have specifically used the notion of 'young people's social space' and a 'relational' approach as the basis for the study of youth taste, leisure, cultural consumption, schooling, young immigrants friendship networks, gender and transitions (Martínez and Pérez 1997; Alegre and Herrera 2000; Martínez 2002; Martínez & Alegre 2002; Bonal *et al* 2003; Alegre 2004; Martínez, Gonzalez & de Miguel 2005). All these contributions share an interest in youth geographies' internal diversity and relational character. Alegre (2004), has developed an approach to youth geographies that analytically distinguishes 'cultural' and 'relational' positionings. In order to analyse ethnic relations in schools he has focused on how ethnic minorities position themselves in both 'cultural' and 'relational' youth geographies. Other approaches to youth, like Pujolar (2001) or Serra (2001), have provided insightful ethnographic accounts of linguistic, national and ethnic relations and identities among young people. Berga (2004), studying female adolescence and social risk also stresses the relational construction of 'counter-school' itineraries within school hierarchies, where transgression was experienced as a capital that provided 'maturity' and 'fame' in front of the others, in opposition to the '*pringats*'. Finally, the last example of this selection is Mejías and Rodríguez (2003), who adopted a quantitative approach to music and young people with nuanced qualitative sensitivity, trying to quantify youth geographies in terms of taste in music. Even if, from the point of view of the present research, the study relies too heavily on factorial data analysis instead of young people's own typifications in order to identify different youth taste geographies, it is nevertheless an excellent example of a general understanding of youth positions and oppositions.

It is obvious, therefore, that there are many good examples of a relational approach to what we have termed 'young people's social space'. Nevertheless, these many exceptions represent a rather marginal or peripheral approach within youth cultures research, and tend to focus on specific groups and styles. This is naturally not a problem in itself but a matter of theoretical interest. Very detailed accounts of particular styles, moreover, can and often do include their relational location vis-à-vis other styles, and can therefore be linked to a general framework, providing insights to their development⁵⁶. We must also take into account that as well as youth cultures research, there are other fields which provide useful accounts of the relational character of young people's social space, for instance in relation to ethnicity and schooling⁵⁷.

⁵⁶ Feixa (1993; 1998) and Hodkinson (2002) are good examples of this.

⁵⁷ See Miquel Àngel Alegre (2004) for a commented review of the literature in this direction (including the work of authors like Adler & Adler, Brewer, Coie, Dodge, Damon, Eisenberg Coleman, Desforges, French, Hallinan, Williams, Hamburger, Hewstone, Brown, LaFontana, Cillessen, Luthar, McMahon, Moody, Rodkin and Rubin).

Internal youth hierarchies

Partially as a consequence of the non-centrality of the relational character of youth cultures within youth research, internal youth cultural hierarchies have not attracted enough attention. The neglect dates back to the Birmingham influence on youth cultures research. Whereas Parsons (1972 [1942]: 137-40) clearly pointed to the importance of 'order' or 'prestige' symbols within youth culture, the Birmingham CCCS was not particularly interested in youth cultural distinctions and hierarchies, since their focus of attention was placed on 'spectacular subcultures' symbolic resistance to parental and dominant cultures⁵⁸. Even if the resistance of some young people or their domination *over other young people* is crucial to their experience, they did not pay attention to it. If bullying is so important, it is because it can cause considerable stress, in some dramatic cases even ending in suicide. And bullying is linked to meanings and practices that are central to youth cultures, related to hierarchies, social dominance and respect, as well as to social injuries within young people's social space – partially related to broader social injuries linked to 'class', 'ethnic' or 'gender' inequalities. For young people, being popular, being called names, being considered cool, being bullied or being fashionable are all crucial experiences that must be taken into account in youth cultures research.

It is not surprising that the CCCS was not interested in internal youth hierarchies. The CCCS members were occupied, in the 60s and 70s, in counterbalancing the moral panics organised around spectacular subcultures and developing a positive approach to young people in a Marxist framework of analysis, with the ultimate aim of transforming society. This, and the fact that youth styles were then conforming to a radically different young people's social space from those that had previously existed or were to come in the near future, explains to a great extent their lack of interest in internal youth hierarchies⁵⁹. They did not pay attention to the relationship between 'spectacular subculturalists' and 'ordinary' young people. The conflictive relation between Willis's 'lads' and 'ear'oles' (1981 [1977]), as well as many of the examples provided above in relation to relational approaches to youth cultures, are good examples not only of the importance of internal hierarchies, but also of their central role in the cultural production of young people's social space. Bringing them to the centre of the analysis, therefore, can help us to better understand the logics of young people's social space.

⁵⁸ This is not to say that they were not aware of them. For instance, in 'Subcultures, Cultures and Class: A theoretical overview', the introduction of the seminal book *Resistance through Rituals*, Clarke, Hall, Jefferson and Roberts mention the importance of 'structured relations' between a subculture's members (1998 [1975]: 47). Nevertheless, they did not include them in the core of their analysis. When they argued that a subculture 'implied opposition to (...) other groups against which its identity was defined [led] to the distinctive visibility of those groups which pressed the 'sub-cultural solution' to its limits' (Hall & Jefferson 1998 [1975]: 56-7), they were not so much concerned with internal youth hierarchies but with the opposition of youth subcultures to parental and dominant cultures.

⁵⁹ The lack of historical approaches to youth cultures up to this moment is surprising, even though there are exceptions like Pearson (1983) or Levi & Schmitt (1997 [1994]).

Internal hierarchies are still secondary in most accounts of youth styles. In fact, it has been in the field of sociology of education and social psychology where internal hierarchies of popularity have been taken more seriously⁶⁰. Within the field of popular music, Simon Frith has also repeatedly taken internal hierarchies into consideration (1983; 1996)⁶¹. Within the field of youth studies, since the mid-90s contemporary youth cultural research emanating from 'younger' researchers – from youth researchers of 'younger' generations – is bringing in new topics like 'authenticity', 'cultural distinction', 'coolness' or 'youth cultural snobbism' that give more prominence to internal youth hierarchies. Even though internal hierarchies and differentiations had been present in one way or another in earlier works (for instance in Willis 1981 [1977]; Jenkins 1983; Feixa 1993; Blackman 1995; or Hollands 1995), Sarah Thornton (1996 [1995]) was the first to introduce them at the core of the analysis, transcending the very localised face-to-face hierarchies and linking them to distinctions within a general cultural field with the crucial mediation of the media. Since then, elements of cultural distinction or hierarchies of 'coolness', 'enrolladesa' or 'popularity' are being used or at least taken into account – as said, most often by a new generation of youth researchers⁶².

All these are good exceptions to the general rule, but youth hierarchies, social dominance and what we might call 'social injuries' are not yet fully incorporated into youth cultures research. The complexity of apprehending internal hierarchies is important, since the overlap or complex articulation of face-to-face hierarchies and typified general cultural hierarchies is difficult to grasp: one thing is to be popular at school – which is in itself not easy to analyse, since fashion, coolness, toughness or physical appearance can all be sources of popularity, as can be being out-going or mature, to name just a few examples – and another thing is the complex articulation of popularity and coolness at a national and even global level. The role of the media, the political economy and broader social hierarchies of

⁶⁰ Examples of this are Connell (1989), Parkhurst & Hopmeyer (1998) and Keltner *et al* (1998).

⁶¹ Commenting on Bourdieu's distinction, Simon Frith states: 'My point is that a similar use of accumulated knowledge and discriminatory skill is apparent in low cultural forms, and has the same hierarchical effect. Low culture, that is to say, generates its own capital—most obviously, perhaps, in those forms (such as dance club cultures) which are organised around exclusiveness, but equally significant for the fans (precisely those people who have invested time and money in the accumulation of knowledge) of even the most inclusive forms—sports or soap operas, say. Such fans certainly do claim, with good justification, to have a richer experience of their particular pleasure than "ordinary" or "passive" consumers, and this is one reason why it is problematic to take fans as ordinary consumers, as models for popular cultural "resistance"' (Frith 1996: 9).

⁶² For instance Bjurström 1997; Martínez and Pérez 1997; Martínez 1999; Bettie 2000; Dolby 2000; Alegre and Herrera 2000; Pountain & Robins 2000; Hodkinson 2002; Martínez 2002; Bonal *et al* 2003; Alegre 2004; Lincoln 2004; Porzio 2004; Berga 2004; or Connell & Gibson 2004 [2003]. I believe that the reason for this shift is generational. Whereas those youth researchers who were young in the 70s and early 80s were still attached to the idea of subcultural authenticity *versus* a phoney mass of conformist young people, those who participated in youth cultures during the late 80s and 90s are suspicious of any pretension to 'authenticity'. The circuit of commoditisation has been running long enough to make young people more aware of the paradoxes of what Thornton names 'subcultural ideologies' (1996 [1995]: 6).

class, gender, sexuality or ethnicity, need to be taken into account. The challenge of youth culture research is to find out how local variations of social hierarchies are culturally (collectively) produced, both locally and globally, articulating in different ways broader meanings and social structures.

Social generalised advantage

Another aspect that youth cultures research has only partially developed is the link between broad socioeconomic hierarchies of social generalised advantage and youth styles. Whereas in the field of youth transitions class differences – or in a wider sense, socioeconomic inequality⁶³ – constitute one of the major concerns, within the field of youth culture research class has gradually faded out as a focus of attention. Even though original cultural studies in Birmingham put class at the centre of their theoretical formulation⁶⁴, the development of the field led to a shift of interest towards the negotiation of ethnic, gender and sexual identities⁶⁵. On the one hand, the CCCS originally understood spectacular youth subcultures in relation to ‘(working class) parent’ and ‘dominant’ cultures. Spectacular youth subcultures were understood as imaginary solutions to class contradictions. Incorporating Gramsci’s concept of ‘hegemony’, they argued that ‘in addressing the ‘class problematic’ of the particular strata from which they were drawn, the different sub-cultures provided for a section of (mainly male) working-class youths *one* strategy for negotiating their collective existence’ (Clarke, J. *et al* 1998 [1975]: 47). On the other hand, the centre identified ‘middle-class subcultures’ as a distinctive social and cultural phenomena that had the same features as postmodern critics claim define ‘post-subculturalist’ youth cultures: being more ‘diffuse’, less ‘group-centred’ and more ‘individualised’. In fact, the CCCS approach was developed to a great extent *precisely against* an extended perception at the moment that class was no longer a relevant category: they argued that even if the improvements in living standards could not be questioned, this ‘*obscured* the fact that the *relative* positions of the classes had remained virtually unchanged’ (ibid.: 22).

The truth is that as the decades and new generations of spectacular young people have passed, this interpretation of youth spectacular subcultures and counter-cultures in terms of ‘class’ has become overtly simplistic. It is not only that the

⁶³ Even if ‘class’ in a narrow sense refers to ‘class theory’ as opposed to ‘stratification theory’, we will use the term in a broad sense that, although it focuses on economic inequalities, it can include both ‘class’ and ‘stratification’ theories. The term ‘generalised advantage’ is borrowed from the Cambridge Scale of Occupations approach, which will be explained later on.

⁶⁴ Two good examples of it are the title of the introduction to the collective book *Resistance through Rituals* (1998 [1975]), which was ‘Subcultures, Cultures and Class: A theoretical overview’, or the subtitle of Paul Willis’ book *Learning to Labour* (1981 [1977]), which was *How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs*.

⁶⁵ Among the youth cultures research focusing on the articulation of ethnic or gender inequalities, some examples are Savage (1988), MacRobbie (1991), Stokes (1994), Holstein-Beck, S. (1995), Ganetz, H. (1995), Back (1996), Urteaga (1996), Miles (1997), Symon (1997), Wald (1998), Bennett (2000), Dolby (2000) or Porzio (2004).

articulation of youth styles and ‘class’ is now probably much more complex – and subtle – than could be imagined in the 70s, but that youth styles themselves are now much more varied than they used to be. What can no doubt also be questioned is the extent to which Birmingham’s assumptions about the direct link between spectacular subcultures and class are empirically consistent⁶⁶, but in any case it seems important to note that when we read both the former CCCS work or another prominent approach to the relationship between culture and class, like that of Pierre Bourdieu’s *Distinction* (1988 [1979]), we must take into account the specific cultural articulation of class *at the moment when they were written*. That probably neither the Birmingham nor Bourdieu’s approaches are directly applicable to contemporary youth, however, does not mean that class can be expelled from youth cultures research. Class or socio-economic inequality remains central in young people’s lives, so youth cultures research must understand how it is articulated in youth cultural experience.

The general assumption that the articulation of class differences within youth cultures has been notably modified during the last few decades can partially explain the difficulties faced by youth cultures researchers in including class in their analysis. In contrast to what happened in the 60s, when youth styles were – assumed to be – more visibly related to class, nowadays this relationship is significantly blurred. Consumer culture has made the relationship between class position and lifestyle much more opaque than was the case just a few decades ago. Nevertheless, the fact is that the claim that its impact has vanished and that it is no longer important is neatly challenged by current research on youth transitions. Although there are voices that defend the dissolution or at least the increasing fluidity of structural divisions, particularly social classes, from a postmodern perspective⁶⁷, what seems more credible is the argument that gradual individualisation has led to a growing invisibility of social structures, not to their modification – which would be, in the terms of Furlong and Cartmel (1997), an ‘epistemological fallacy’. The articulation of class within youth cultures would probably be better understood, therefore, not as necessarily disappearing but as becoming more subtle than it used to be.

The fact is, however, that the opaque and complex articulation of youth cultures and class – which involves other structural axes like ethnicity, gender and sexuality –, alongside the ‘postmodern’ criticisms, has undermined the original Birmingham approach to class. After the ‘gender’ and ‘race’ internal critiques within *cultural studies* put the initial formulation into question, the class dimension was not adjusted and modified but gradually ignored. As Blackman recently remarked, ‘postmodern theories do not address or critique the relations of

⁶⁶ Muggleton (2000), for instance, notes that the assumption that subcultures were exclusively, or even predominantly, made up of working class youngsters is a theoretical conjecture rather than a proven fact.

⁶⁷ Examples of this standpoint, with important differences, are Redhead (1993), Pohlhemus (1997), Muggleton (1997), Bennett (2000) and Bennett and Kahn-Harris (2004).

dominance and subordination exercised through social and cultural structures of society' (2005: 12). The result has been that youth cultures literature generally neglects class as an important variable *and* emphasises the ability of young people to transcend their structural location by negotiating their identity through consumption and youth styles. These approaches not only deny the possibility to directly relate youth subcultures to structural locations, particularly socioeconomic locations, but also emphasise the reflexive creativity of young people in relation to their socioeconomic location. As a result of this trend, the very notion of 'subculture' has been challenged and replaced by others like 'scenes', 'neo-tribes' or 'lifestyles'.

Although I share the discomfort in relation to the way the CCCS dealt with 'class', especially when applying this approach to youth from the 80s onwards, I firmly believe that without a better theorising of the relationship between youth cultures and class we will not fully understand contemporary cultural relations. Youth cultures constitute an interesting laboratory of emergent forms of cultural relations, but if youth cultures research wants to take advantage of this opportunity and contribute to general social theory it must connect youth cultures to broader historical and structural patterns, and 'post-subculturalist' theory – as Bennett and Kahn-Harris (2004) loosely call it – does not seem either interested or ready to do so. One of the underlying goals of the present thesis is to show how with different conceptual tools, the issue of class, understood in the broad sense of socioeconomic inequality, can and should be included in the analysis. By doing this, we could attempt to contribute to the understanding of how in Western society's everyday life we make sense of the inequality that surrounds us. To young people, class or socio-economic identity is important in configuring localised youth hierarchies. Depending on the context, being 'posh' can be an asset or a passport to being laughed at or an indispensable requirement not to be left out, in the same sense that being 'working class' can be a cause of respect or marginalisation. Class location is the origin of strong feelings of inadequacy, superiority, inferiority, condescendence, resentment, self-assurance, shame, pride, respect and sense of dignity. Because of this, it cannot be excluded from youth cultural analysis.

The fact that the field of youth culture research has not paid enough attention to class and internal youth hierarchies naturally does not mean that there are not good examples of it. Willis' classical *Learning to Labour* (1981 [1977]) is of course a clear illustration of an approach that looks at the intermingling of youth internal hierarchies and larger structural inequalities⁶⁸. His portrait of the counter-school culture of the *lads* and its articulation with the mental/manual division in capitalist society and the meritocratic ideology open up a whole road for youth culture research interested in the articulation of class and youth cultures that has not been systematically followed up. Hollands' *Friday Night, Saturday Night* (1995) provides

⁶⁸ His *Profane Culture* (1978) is another example of this orientation.

another hint in its interpretation of the Geordie youth style in terms of its reproduction of 'hard man' archetypes of lost industrial jobs⁶⁹. Richard Jenkins (1983) had previously tried to understand youth styles – he identified what he termed the 'lads', the 'ordinary kids' and the 'citizens' – and their different affiliation to the 'rough' and the 'respectable'. From his point of view, 'It is in the social construction of life-styles that the class system is conjured up as the contingent product of the mundane practices of 'everyday life' (1983: 129). Blackman's *Position and Oppositions* (1995) is another good example of a sensitive approach to the articulation of youth and social hierarchies, as is, more recently, Julie Bettie's (2000) research on young working-class girls, which fights the failure to perceive women as class subjects through a performative approach to class that inextricably links it to gender and ethnic differences. An analogous articulation of class and race variables is carried out in Dolby (2000) and Carrington & Wilson (2004) through the notion of 'racialization'. The latter, after criticising the fact that issues relating to social inequality remain undertheorised, attempt to provide a more nuanced understanding of social class by 'racing the argument', that is, by understanding how 'the processes of racialization mediate taste cultures, give value to certain styles above others, and how these are often used to maintain, and occasionally challenge, social hierarchies' (2004: 71). And yet another example is that of Simon Frith, who in popular music research has also insightfully pointed to the hierarchical organisation of music consumption and its connection to social structures (1983; 1996). Shildrick and MacDonald (2006) have also recently criticized the post-subcultural approach to youth cultures because of downplaying the structural aspects of the youth cultural experience.

In Catalonia, class and economic disadvantage has also been considered in youth cultures research. Feixa (1998) paid attention to the articulation of punk subculture among different social classes in Mexico DF, where it arrived through middle class kids and later was appropriated by working class gangs. Martínez and Perez (1997) analysed the link between youth taste and social class, finding a clear influence of class position on youth taste *as well as* the presence of styles without clear class connotations. In *Gender, Heteroglossia and Power* (2001), Pujolar consistently analysed the articulation of linguistic, ethnic, gender and class identities⁷⁰, whereas Bonal *et al.* (2003) analysed class differences in relation to the

⁶⁹ 'One response by young adults designed to deal with economic restructuring, delayed transitions and the shift towards consumption, is to attempt to reinvent what it means to be a Geordie. In other words, for many youngsters, regional identity has less to do with work and industrial production and more to do with consumption in the city. However, the forms through which some young locals express themselves on a night out while contemporary, may attempt to reproduce elements of a 'mythical' collective past (...). For example, if young adults can never be Geordies in a true occupational sense, such an identity can be derived from a selective borrowing of historical images and traits, which are then combined with present day experiences and realities in other spheres. Examples of this, come from young adults own recognition of attempts by others to rejuvenate elements of the industrial archetype through the image of the 'Geordie hard man'.' (Hollands 1995: 20-21).

⁷⁰ On the contrary, the variable of class is rather marginal in the good study about racism and violence carried out by Carles Serra (2001).

spaces of home, school and leisure. Berga (2004) showed the importance of generalised advantage in the relationship between counter-school transgressive cultures and 'normalcy'. Martínez & Alegre (2002) and Martínez, González & de Miguel (2005) also focused on how youth styles 'articulated' expectations and positionings in relation to social positions: given a certain position, adopting one or other youth style was related to socially upward or downward dispositions and social identities. Thus, even if class position did not determine youth styles, they signified young people's positionings in relation to class locations.

Transitions and 'normative provocations'

The difficulty in building bridges between the field of youth cultures and that of youth transitions has already been noted. By adopting a 'young people's social space' relational approach one might begin to envisage these bridges. Young people's social space, as we will understand it, has to do with how young people make sense of themselves among their peers, and this has as much to do with music, dress and youth styles as it does with schooling, drugs, crime and socioeconomic status. A further signpost for youth cultures research can be the study of the relationship between young people's transitions to adulthood and the complex articulation of 'normalcy', 'normative provocation' and 'transgression' within youth styles.

Paul Willis (1981 [1977]) showed in the 70s that attention to youth cultural styles could help to understand the reproduction of class positions through their cultural production of 'counter-school cultures', linked to an articulation of masculine identities through the opposition to the school and the inversion of the 'mental/manual' division: whereas school and the meritocratic ideology valued mental over manual dispositions, the 'lads' dismissed 'mental' as 'sissy' and praised 'manual' as masculine. This collective resistance to 'official' school definitions of 'mental' work as desirable '*penetrated*' the contradictions of the meritocratic ideology (since not all working-class youngsters could achieve middle-class jobs), but at the same time it had the consequence that individual 'lads' ended up in working class jobs, since they did not pursue the possibility of being upwardly mobile through school qualifications. Underlying class reproduction, therefore, Willis identified a complex articulation of class, gender and sexuality – as well as a complex combination of what Willis termed 'penetrations' and 'limitations'. Around fifteen years later, when youth unemployment had hit the United Kingdom, Hollands (1990) paid attention to the relationship between class, culture and youth training, and identified several distinctive youth cultural practices – or articulations of youth cultures – of 'upwardly mobile' working class trainees, like for instance being openly disdainful of young people hanging around the street – a distinctive focus

activity of Paul Willis's 'lads'⁷¹. José Machado (2000) provides an excellent theoretical combination of youth cultures and youth transitions research, whereas Anna Berga's ethnography (2004) clearly showed the link between transgression of adult expectations in relation to school, training, and transitions to adulthood. Hollands' initial research on night life activity (1995) conceived youth styles in Newcastle as a space where class identities could be negotiated when jobs could not provide an acceptable basis for respect among working class youths. The important point about the ethnographies and theoretical approaches of Hollands, Willis, Machado and Berga is the identification of 'transgression' as a means to achieving 'respect' and 'dignity' in young people's social space. Sennett and Cobb had already identified it as a 'counterculture of dignity' (1993 [1972]: 83)⁷².

Real transgression of dominant adult norms or expectations, particularly school rules, have the dual effect of providing dignity within young people's social space – particularly among the more disadvantaged – and diminishing their opportunities in their future transitions to adulthood. In this direction, different empirical research carried out in Catalonia (Martinez and Perez 1997; Martinez & Alegre 2002; Martinez, Gonzalez & de Miguel 2005) has concluded that youth styles articulate class cultures and, to a certain extent, become autonomous structuration elements that can either reinforce or transcend young people's original class position. The youth report *Geografies i experiències juvenils a Sant Cugat del Vallès* (Martínez & Alegre 2002) underlines the decisive and complex relationship between 'normative provocation' and transitions to adulthood. Whereas most young styles share a 'normative provocation' of adult normative expectations, it is argued, they differ in the degree to which this provocation leads to a real transgression⁷³. On the one hand, adult normative expectations are not homogeneous among the population, in that even if most adults across the social spectrum would probably share their 'ideal expectations' about their children – including good school grades and behaviour, university degree, good job, free drug leisure, controlled monogamous sexual activity, controlled partying and nice attitude –, they have different levels of 'acceptable expectations' (middle and upper classes are not ready to accept the same lowering of ideal expectations as working classes) and 'resources' to ensure them (professional advice, social capital, specialised knowledge, and so on). On the other hand, different youth styles have their own implicit disposition towards a certain level of 'accepted expectations', in that in each style there is a dominating general disposition which is linked to its

⁷¹ The already quoted Jenkins (1983) had previously focused on the differentiation between the 'lads' and the 'citizens' in a similar way, identifying those 'in-between', that is, the 'ordinary kids', as a relevant focus of attention.

⁷² 'Breaking the rules is an act "nobody" can share with each other. This counterculture does not come to grips with the labels their teachers have imposed on these kids; it is rather an attempt to create among themselves badges of dignity that those in authority can't destroy' (1993 [1972]: 84).

⁷³ A good example is Kahn-Harris' research on Global Extreme Metal Scene and its negotiation of transgression and mundanity (2004), although it does not explicitly distinguish between 'provocation' and 'transgression', or between 'rhetorical' and what we loosely call 'real' transgression.

more middle- or working-class composition or even 'style'. This implies that participation in one or another style could implicitly reinforce or challenge working class or middle class levels of 'accepted expectations', thus channelling young people's trajectories in one direction or another.

This matches Holland's identification of complex and diverse articulation of youth styles and upwardly mobile dispositions among working class trainees, as well as Willis's analysis of the counter-school culture as a pathway towards the shop floor, Machado's emphasis on the hidden but strong 'striated space' of youth transitions, or Berga's analysis of young women's hard transgressions in relation to social risk. At the same time, however, it puts at the centre of the analysis the subtle, distinctive and ultimately decisive management of the dilemma imposed by the contradictory pressures of 'normative provocation' and 'ideal expectations' from the fields of youth cultures and adults, respectively. The centrality of normative provocation implied in most youth styles has sometimes decisive consequences for many young people, although the extent to which such provocations become real 'transgressions' is always difficult to elucidate. The point is that young people always start believing that they are in control of their normative provocations, but depending on the culturally defined intensity of such provocations within a particular youth style and their individual commitment to them, as well as differences in adult reactions to such commitments, normative provocation can range from rhetoric identity play to serious transgressions directly affecting the opportunities in their transition to the labour market. In any case, it is important to note that what in adult social space is a provocation or transgression of normative expectations, in youth social space is a normative behaviour. One can get good grades, but if this is to be popular, one must at least 'pretend' that one 'does not study too much', or that one 'is able to have fun as well'. A 'representation' of transgression is at least expected. 'Provocation', therefore, can lead to a real or to a rhetorical 'transgression' of these norms, and can thus have a negative impact on transitions or not, but its normative prominence must be observed⁷⁴.

The importance of sociologically identifying 'alternative' ('subcultural') normative expectations was one of the main contributions of the Chicago school, of which Whyte's classic account of a Chicago slum in *Street Corner Society* (1993 [1943]) is a good example. The significant novelty is that such 'alternative' normative expectations have become the norm, at a rhetorical level, through what we might call the 'cool attitude'⁷⁵ or the 'bohemianization of mass culture' (Wilson 1999) linked to youth cultures and consumer culture in general, which is also

⁷⁴ Pujolar (2003) offers a good example of the use of strong language to negotiate the balance between these two worlds.

⁷⁵ The importance of cool is just starting to be tackled within the social sciences, in works like the speculative but highly suggestive *Cool Rules* (Pountain & Robins 2000) or the very different – written from the history of emotions perspective and with a very different focus of attention – *American Cool* (Stearns 1994).

exemplified through what Rojek (2001) calls 'celebrity culture'⁷⁶. The point is that the particular form through which normative transgression is actualised in particular youth styles, or positions within young people's social space, is closely related to class, gender and sexual identities. Transgression is more central, although not exclusive⁷⁷, to masculine identities, in that 'conformism' is generally perceived as 'effeminate' and 'transgression' as 'masculine'. This is so across the social spectrum; what differs is the way this rhetoric is culturally channelled and represented in each context. A brilliant example of these implications is the ethnographic sociolinguistic research of Joan Pujolar (2001), where the articulation of gender, sexuality, class and linguistic identities and the role of 'transgressive' practices in two cliques of young people is analysed in detail.

Global capitalism, the political economy and coolness

Our understanding of taste in music in the context of those aspects we have reviewed so far – the relational character of young people's social space, the importance of internal youth hierarchies, the articulation of generalised advantage and the link between normative transgression and youth transitions – are not specific to contemporary youth cultures. What is new is the shape that all these aspects are taking through the commoditisation of popular culture and the domination of the cultural realm of everyday life by the commodity production for profit (Willis 2000: xvii), as well as the extension and prominence of youth as an age of life. The logics of young people's social space must not be understood as a local and isolated reality, but as a result of historical changes that are affecting the forms of cultural relations across the globe. The theoretical interest of dealing with young people's social space is that it throws light on the changes in everyday, face-to-face experience of respect, dignity and social injuries in the context of broader social and cultural developments of capitalist social relations and the so-called process of 'globalization'. As Massey reminds us, 'local specificity – such as local variations in youth cultures – can be constantly reinvented even while international influences are accepted and incorporated' (1998: 122).

Our focus of interest, therefore, is not the cultural production of a particular youth style, but the cultural production of meaning throughout youth geographies, that is, the collective cultural production of a web of meanings that keep social hierarchies in motion, reproducing and transforming them at the same time. This goal is not always at the centre of youth cultures research, although it is present in the work of, for instance, Willis (2000) or Miles (2000). Both authors defend a view of popular culture which does not focus on the cultural forms per se, but on their articulation with social structures. And this leads us to the importance

⁷⁶ As Rojek points out, 'To some degree the desire for celebrity is a refutation of social convention. Transgression, one might postulate, is intrinsic to celebrity, since to be a celebrity is to live outside conventional, ordinary life' (2001: 147-8).

⁷⁷ This is less visible and straightforward in the case of girls.

of understanding the articulation between global and local meanings in the context of contemporary capitalism in what I see as a two-folded perspective: on the one side, the global circulation of meanings and its subsequent production of a – to a some extent – global young people’s social space, and on the other side, the difficult and blurred local combination of globally shared structural logics of meaning-making linked to contemporary capitalism (a global creation of locality or, as it has been termed, ‘glocalisation’). The analytical distinction, which I will now attempt to clarify, is not self-evident, but I argue that is useful to provide hints for youth cultures research, and compels us to take into account the centrality of the ‘political economy’ of music (and popular culture), a field of research that has sadly developed autonomously from mainstream youth cultures research⁷⁸.

First, to understand the articulation of global and local meanings we can pay attention to the global circulation of meanings. Popular music is to a great extent a global phenomenon, and each country’s popular music is a mix of local and global bands and artists. The formerly popular idea that globalisation was leading to an increasingly homogenization is being contested by the opposite stance, that is, that it in fact enhances regional and national differences, or what Featherstone and Lasch called the ‘global institutionalization of the expectation and construction of local particularism’ (1995: 5). Internationalisation is double-edged: it simultaneously pushes towards greater homogenisation and fragmentation. When we deal with popular music, it is obvious that the centre of global popular culture is indisputably English-speaking, particularly US- and UK-based. The local popular music of this core becomes generally converted into the popular music of the whole world. Other countries can only very partially or occasionally globalize their local sounds, as is the case of reggae from Jamaica, ‘Latin’ music from Latin America, or ‘world music’ in general, with the important peculiarity that they become global to a great extent through the music industries of the core and not as ‘neutral’ (or relatively ‘placeless’) popular culture but as an ‘ethnified’ one. At the same time, local places produce local sounds for local consumption, stimulating thus local heterogeneity beyond globalised music. The situation is that, on the one hand, major corporations occupy the great part of world popular music space (homogeneization), but on the other hand, the range of sounds available to young people in any locality is more diverse than was the case a few decades ago.

The fact is that the question of the local production of local sounds, the local appropriation of global sounds, as well as the combination of local and global meanings in the appropriation of global youth cultures, is understandably more relevant in those accounts that arose in peripheral countries. Books like those edited by Amit-Talai and Wulff (1995) or Furlong and Guidikova (2001) provide illustrations of this, as do monographs like those of Martinez (1999), Pilkington *et al.* (2002) or, at a more systematic level, Connell and Gibson (2004 [2003]). Authors writing from the core of popular culture, in the US and the UK, tend to

⁷⁸ See McGuigan (1992) for a critical stance towards the failure of cultural studies in articulating consumption to production and its exclusively ‘consumerist’ perspective.

focus on the link between youth cultures or popular music and 'locality' understood as particular urban and regional milieus – Finnegan (1989), Cohen (1991) and Bennett (2000) being good illustrations of it (this last paying attention to the localisation of global sounds when focusing on his fieldwork in Frankfurt).

This growing literature shows how, as Bennett concludes, 'aspects of popular culture, such as music and style, in addition to being understood as global cultural forms, assume particularised 'everyday' meanings corresponding to the differing local contexts in which they are appropriated and which frame their incorporation into forms of social action' (2000: 197). The way 'authenticity' or 'credibility' is locally attributed to both 'folk' and 'contemporary' popular music is the result of a complex process of 'fabricating' it, as Connell and Gibson illustrate (2004 [2003]), in which the increasingly accelerated diffusion of novelty through global media artefacts combines with relatively fixed notions of 'traditional' music cultures.

To understand the global circulation of musical forms and their local embeddedness, therefore, we need to take into account what is known as the political economy of music. In contrast to earlier folk popular culture, with a face-to-face transmission and a slow pattern of change and geographical circulation, contemporary popular culture is mediated by the music and cultural industry, so we need to pay attention to the logics of its production and distribution of symbolic forms at both a global and a local level. The role of major music corporations and small independent record labels, and the way they market music in order to make a profit must be at the core of our analysis, which in its turn must be understood in the light of the technologies which support the circulation of musical forms (and most of all media and recording technologies). As Negus points out, the political economy approach asks: 'How do owners exercise and maintain control within corporations and what are the consequences of this for workers and public life in general? (...) With regard to the music business, this raises questions about the impact of patterns of capitalist ownership on the creative work of artists and the options available to consumers' (1999: 15). Crucially, however, we will consider the political economy of music in relation to its dialogue with young people's appropriation of music in young people's social space, matching views implicitly defended by, among others, Hennion (2002 [1993]), with his emphasis on the role of 'mediators'; Peterson's approach to what he calls the 'production of culture' perspective (see Peterson & Anand 2004); Chatterton and Hollands research on 'urban nightscapes' and what they name 'neo-fordist' organization of the nightlife economy; as well as Negus's two-fold approach to how *industry produces culture* and *culture produces an industry* (Negus 2002 [1996]; 1999). By doing so, we will necessarily put at the centre of our analysis the distinction between 'mainstream' and 'minoritary' musical forms and their place not only within young people's social space, but also in the political economy of music and the global circulation of music. The approach to youth cultures in terms of young people's social space makes it obvious that we cannot ignore the role of the musical and cultural industry in the its cultural production. The power of big corporations and the logics of alternative industries are crucial in the configuration of youth

geographies and their articulation of social structures and traditional prejudices, so we will need to seriously take them into account.

But beyond this focus on the global circulation of meanings and commodities and their local appropriation, there is a second aspect that must be analysed: the already mentioned *globally shared structural logics of meaning-making linked to contemporary capitalism*, by which I understand the way social hierarchies are culturally produced and organised following an idiosyncratic logic of our historical moment. If we look at broader socio-economic structures, the collapse of the Ancien Régime, with a decline of the aristocracy and the rise of the bourgeoisie, meant that during several decades two different systems of stratification – the former differentiation between social orders and the new organization in social classes – coexisted, and the signification of these hierarchies, both through language and other signifying practices, became quite complex⁷⁹.

The way we signify and make sense of social hierarchies in modern capitalism, moreover, has not been stable. With Isaac González we have analytically distinguished⁸⁰ three phases that help to understand the fundamental shifts in the way social hierarchies have developed during the 20th Century. In the first phase, in the first part of the 20th Century, broad social hierarchies were predominantly based on production: the market opportunities. The institutionalised sphere of production and the work ethic as normative behaviour were the main means through which individuals could achieve external recognition and inner sense of dignity and respect. In the second phase, the consumption gained relative importance. If in the 19th Century what Campbell (1994[1987]) calls ‘the spirit of modern consumerism’ only affected the middle and upper classes, and more particularly women of those sectors, during the 20th Century, and particularly after the Second World War – two decades later in the case of Catalonia –, it spread to most of Western society. Consumption began to be increasingly important, and alongside work, leisure and consumption became crucial for the whole population – not only middle and upper classes – as a means to external recognition and inner sense of dignity. The role of fashion and consumption as a codification of status, as well as at the same time a means to feel individual freedom and sense of belonging, spread and developed, provoking the translation of class and social differences into consumption differences in more subtle and complex ways. Consumption opened a wide range of codes that individuals could negotiate to partially escape or transcend the determination of their social origin or location. Mass consumption created a new space for stratification that was relatively – only relatively – autonomous from the sphere of production. This is a period where the importance of ‘celebrities’ decisively increased, thanks to the growing importance of the visual media. Finally, in a third phase developed during the last few decades, the sphere of consumption has experimented a further twist:

⁷⁹ See, for instance, Williams’ analysis (1988 [1976]) of the development of the concept of ‘class’ once old words like ‘rank’ or ‘order’ were no longer useful to make sense of social hierarchies.

⁸⁰ In several talks to parents and school teachers between 2004 and 2005.

there has been a certain popularisation of an anti-gregarious attitude that was previously restricted to the bohemian and underground circles. Among young people, the popularisation of youth cultures and their normative provocation – drugs, going out, sex, informality, slang, spectacular styles, anti-conventional attitudes, etc. – has been crucial in this twist. Consumerism, in opposition to what happened a few decades ago, cannot now appear as ‘conventional’ and merely ‘fashionable’: now any commodity must appear as in some sense challenging conventions. The ‘cool’ attitude is the perfect example of this twist, which further complexifies normative patterns and stratifying codes, as well as the analysis of what the youth cultures literatures have named ‘resistances’.

The three different phases are not a clear-cut chronological reality. On the contrary, the three normative patterns are present during the whole period, even though the relative importance of each of them changes over time. Moreover, reality is always a combination, and individuals must negotiate how to balance the plural expectations that the three normative patterns impose. They are external normative expectations that stratify people in a scale of social value, and at the same time an important source of inner well-being which operates, to a great extent, in ‘sensuous’ ways. The important point in what concerns us is that the articulation of hierarchies in contemporary young people’s social space that we will analyse takes place in this third phase, where normative transgression is widespread and the young people’s social space, where the gradual importance of ‘cool’ attitudes have primarily developed, is even more significant to young people than it used to be a few decades ago. Young people need to position themselves in relation to school and labour responsibilities (first normative pressure), conventional consumption (second normative expectation) and transgression of conventions (third expectation). These three expectations must not be seen as local cultural productions but as the result of a global trend linked to modern capitalism. Therefore, I am not only referring to changing forms of identity, but also to changing ways of connecting subjectivities to the labour and consumer markets, maintaining a reified and mystified differentiation between social groups, as well as structuring access to social respect and individual sense of dignity. Indeed, late capitalism and consumer culture developments are modifying central social mechanisms, and by dealing with youth geographies in a broad sense, these changes can be interrogated.

The way these three normative patterns organize access to social respect and individual dignity mediate the way we make sense of – and signify – social hierarchies and our location in them. The centrality of the distinction between manual and mental labour in industrial capitalism crucially influenced the dominant distribution of respect and dignity, in that ‘expert’ knowledge and mental occupations were considered more ‘valuable’ than manual ones. This basic cultural antinomy opened up individual and collective strategies for those that were denied access to dignity, in the form of individual and familiar investment in upward mobility or

collective cultural resistance to, and inversions of, dominant meanings, valuing manual over mental work⁸¹, as well as function over form⁸². This articulation of meanings is not only related to class but also to gender, sexual and often ethnic distinctions, and can also be linked to a broader civilization process concomitant to the formation of the modern state and an increasing division of labour⁸³.

When I talk about *globally shared structural logics of meaning-making linked to contemporary capitalism*, therefore, I am referring to the way basic antinomies like mental/manual, refined/rude, clean/dirty, white/black, gentle/tough or high/low are related to structural positions in terms of class as well as gender or ethnicity, and how they are articulated in popular culture through distinctions like commercial/alternative, trendy/out of fashion, arty/commercial, modern/old, and so on. In relation to youth cultures, for instance, the importance of the nice/rough differentiation as strongly signifying different positions within the hierarchy of generalised advantage is central in every single country where youth cultures play a significant role: whereas 'class' might be an unusual typification, 'rough' often signifies 'generalised disadvantage' in a euphemistic or indirect way. The articulation of 'rough' with gender and sexual identities also seems to follow a global pattern, as does its link with the mental/manual distinction. The question is thus how these meanings are transferred to tastes in music and their articulation with social structures, that is, whether they circulate or are locally appropriated and produced following the same pattern or, on the contrary, whether local history, tradition and idiosyncrasies must be seen as prevailing. The fact is that the current development of consumption patterns of appreciation based on the normative provocation of a cool disposition, makes this play of oppositions more complex, since ironic turns and symbolic inversions become the common currency not of bohemian 'deviations' but of the commercial core. In other words, since young people's social space *resists* or *inverts*, to a certain extent, the normative expectations, valuing transgression and often romanticising drugs, sex and even violence, paying attention to the articulation of such inverted attributions of value with those of mainstream society becomes a privileged arena of research

My impression is that these aspects have not yet been given the theoretical centrality they deserve in youth culture research. Naturally, and as in all those aspects we have reviewed, there are important exceptions. Willis (1981 [1977]), for instance, developed an analysis of counter-school cultures on the basis of the class origin and destination of his subjects; Sansone (1995) analysed how young Surinamese people in Amsterdam used lifestyles to negotiate and gain status within the Surinamese community *and* within 'Dutch society' by using aspects of their Creole culture as well as materials from global youth cultures, particularly 'black popular culture', and importantly linked these cultural practices to their

⁸¹ See Sennett & Cobb (1993 [1972]) and Willis (1981 [1977]) for a development of this idea.

⁸² To use the focus of Bourdieu's analysis of the social space of taste and cultural distinction (1988 [1979]).

⁸³ See Elias (1989 [1977])

subsequent generalised disadvantage in youth transitions; a third and final example is Liechty (1995), who identified how experiencing modernity 'is to encounter this modern metropole and its space of imagination' (ibid.: 194), which to young people in Kathmandu meant engaging in some way in the consumption of Western popular cultural goods⁸⁴. In what concerns us, the link between this encountering of global popular culture and the class structure of Kathmandu is what makes his analysis important, showing how the middle class uses material or commoditizable forms to imagine itself as a new social entity, promoting a class-privileging ideology of material reality and consumer subjectivity' (ibid.: 193).

In this chapter we have first made explicit our approach to music not as a symbolic but as a sociosymbolic form embedded in the network of linguistic and sensuous, systematic and practical meanings of youth taste configuring youth geographies. This position implies taking into consideration how meanings are culturally produced within particular historical and structural co-ordinates, how prejudices of given traditions are actualised in the context of contemporary popular culture, where rapid change and communication through global commodities introduce new aspects that must be taken into account. As we had pointed out in the introduction, our focus of attention is the *cultural production, through musical commodities, of a certain way of experiencing both social distances and inequalities and our own pathways through them*, and we have now explained the main theoretical point of departure of this goal.

⁸⁴ Liechty calls it 'transnational consumer modernity' as experienced in the forms of film, video, pop music, stars and fashion. He maintains that it produces what he calls a 'transnational public sphere' (Liechty 1995: 174).

2. LIVING DISTANCES AND PROXIMITIES

Once the main theoretical interests and point of departure have been made explicit and contextualised, it is now time to further develop the main conceptual tools to carry out the empirical fieldwork in Birmingham and Barcelona, which must be understood in the light of what we call musical and youth geographies. The Lugbara – as they are portrayed in Middleton’s account – make sense of their social position through locating themselves in an imagined organisation of social distances: they see themselves as close or distant to any other Lugbara depending on their location in ‘physical’ and ‘genealogical’ terms. Like the Lugbara, we also ‘map out’ our social relations in terms of distances and proximities, that is, in terms of an *imagined* ‘social space’, which in its turn is in some way linked to both physical and genealogical geographies. The point is that this ‘social space’ is usually ‘implicit’, that is, we are not even aware that we have it in our mind because we know it ‘practically’ as much as ‘systematically’, ‘sensuously’ as much as ‘linguistically’, ‘emotionally’ as much as ‘rationally’.

We normally do not recognise the importance of spatial representations in the way we conceive our everyday reality. We talk and think about things in terms of ‘up’, ‘down’, ‘left’, ‘right’, and many other spatial metaphors. It is not only the obvious ‘upward’ social mobility or ‘bottom’ of society, but also, for instance, ‘higher’ or ‘lower’ pitch in music, the political ‘left’ or ‘right’, and many others. A good example of the extent to which our spatial conceptualisations of non-spatial elements, as for instance time, is the fact that all or most of us have, at least in Western societies, and without being aware of it, a mental spatial representation of the ‘year’, in which we can locate ourselves at any moment¹. The same happens with our weekly diaries: we can hardly think about the next week without a visual image of Monday, Tuesday, and so on².

What happens in the case of taste in music? Is it not the case that we locate different musical forms and tastes in music – as well as the persons who hold them – as ‘close’ or ‘distant’ from us, configuring an implicit set of ‘musical and social geographies’? I am not referring only to systematic representations like a week in a diary, but also to the sensuous experience of repulsion, remoteness and distance with the music – and the taste in music – that we do not like, and the feeling of familiarity, attraction, and proximity to the music – and the taste in music – that

¹ During my years as a university student, I used to collect these representations from friends and acquaintances. When I asked for their ‘image of the year’, often I had to spend a couple of minutes explaining what I was referring to, but after that, I was never disappointed and always went home with a new graphic representation of the year: some were cyclical, some spiral, some lineal; some were drawn with a line, others with a sum of boxes, others with a multiplicity of points; but all of them had some detail which was idiosyncratic of the person – which would probably change if the sample was broadened. In any case, the point is that practically all of the individuals were amazed *that they had a mental image of the year*. They had never thought about that.

² This point is mentioned by Borr (2002 [1997]).

we like or enjoy. At the same time, these sensuous meanings have implications in the way we make sense of our social world and how we build knowledge about it, how we typify our surrounding social and physical space. Musical geographies simultaneously transcend and depend upon physical and social geographies.

The combination of music and space is, in fact, peculiar. On the one hand, we locate sounds in physical space (far away, close, on the left, on the right); on the other, however, when we focus on the sounds themselves, this feature is of reduced importance. We are not part of the world of sound: when we *enter* a piece of music, we transcend physical space. The world of sound does not contain persons or other objects, since it is inherently 'other' (Scruton 1999: 12-13). By being 'inherently other', music can often transcend physical and social geographies, to the extent that we do not only have the case that punk music, for instance, has been meaningful to young people in London, Birmingham, Barcelona and Mexico DF, but we could also easily agree that a punk fan in Barcelona can in many aspects feel closer to a punk fan in Birmingham than to many of the people living in the same neighbourhood. In any of these cities, moreover, punk music can sometimes be popular among working-class youngsters, sometimes among a middle-class following, and sometimes among a mixed crowd of working- and middle-class young people, allowing a greater mixing among them than would be possible in normal everyday social relations³.

The fact that music can transcend physical and social geographies does not mean that it always does so. The musical experience is socially and geographically embedded. When musical forms are appropriated in everyday life, they are embedded in social and physical geographical terms. In the case of physical geographies, for example, an advertisement about Spain in the UK using flamenco music – a clearly recognisably Spanish sound – will rapidly translate the audience to this country and to an implicit notion of 'Spanishness'. In Barcelona, however, the same 'flamenco' sounds will carry remarkably different meanings depending on the social location and identity of the listener. Complex connotations of 'Spanishness' and 'Catalanness', as well as images of 'cosmopolitanism' and 'parochialism', will be brought into play. For many, flamenco will be opposed to Catalanness and perceived as Spanish parochial music, but for others flamenco will be identified with a modern Catalan cosmopolitan identity. The same music, depending on the context, can acquire not only different but even opposite connotations, but those meanings are clearly embedded. Otherwise, why would be

³ We find a good example of this in Feixa's account of Punk in Lleida (Catalonia) and Mexico DF (Mexico). In Mexico, for instance, punk arrived through middle-class youngsters who could afford imported records, but gradually shifted to a working-class gang following (Feixa 1998). Simon Frith points out this aspect in the following terms: '[W]hat makes music special—what makes it special for identity—is that it defines a space without boundaries. Music is the cultural form best able both to cross borders—sounds carry across fences and walls and oceans, across classes, races, and nations—and to define places: in clubs, scenes, and raves, listening on headphones, radio, and in the concert hall, we are only where the music takes us' (Frith 1996: 276).

shocked if we met an Afro-Caribbean youngster singing and dancing flamenco in an English inner-city neighbourhood?

Other musical sounds, however, seem to have homogenous social connotations across borders, particularly, but not only, in Western countries. Think, for instance, of classical music, which is perceived – within Western countries – as placeless in geographical terms, and socially distinguished – or ‘snob’, depending on the beholder – in social and cultural terms. Another illustration would be English-language mainstream popular music, like the Spice Girls, which are also perceived as relatively placeless and connote very similar meanings within young people’s social space: a girly, young adolescent, commercial taste. These ‘global’ sounds – classical music, English-language popular music – are as socially embedded as is Flamenco music, but the questions are, first, whether they are so in relatively homogenous (‘global’) ways or their meanings differ depending on each local context and, second, whether or not these connotations are neutral in terms of place, that is, if they have geographical connotations as in the case of world music or, on the contrary, are perceived as placeless (taking into account that this neutrality implies an implicit Western and usually American-British taken-for-granted cultural assumption).

The important point is that music is embedded, and different embeddings in different local contexts imply that the same musical form can have different social or intersubjective meanings or connotations. In other words, music is ‘inherently other’ but at the same time it is not isolated from everyday experience but ‘embedded’ in it. Even when we experience music not in ritual or social situations, but in isolated listening aesthetic experiences, we often ‘integrate’ this circumscribed sphere of meaning into the paramount reality of everyday life in one sense or another. This is especially obvious among young people, for whom music is heavily grounded in their social practice, and through music – even though not music alone – they culturally produce strong meanings that help them to make sense of their social world and what we call young people’s social space. As Frith puts it, ‘If the standard sociological position is that (real) social processes determine what music means, now the suggestion is that a musical experience “means” by defining (imagined) social processes’ (1996: 250)⁴. This is true, to some extent, for all of us, even though music tends to be more relevant to young people than it is for adults – or at least more pervasive⁵. If we understand society as *our experience with the*

⁴ Frith further develops this argument as follows: ‘[F]or the best part of this century, pop music has been an important way in which we have learned to understand ourselves as historical, ethnic, classbound, gendered, national subjects. This has had conservative effects (primarily through nostalgia) as well as liberating ones. What music does (all music) is put into play a sense of identity that may or may not fit the way we are placed by other social forces. Music certainly puts us in our place, but it can also suggest that our social circumstances are not immutable’ (1996: 276–77).

⁵ Music consumption is higher during youth than at any other age, and among all young people, it is higher among the youngest. The *Enquesta de consum i pràctiques culturals de Catalunya, 2001*, for instance, shows that whereas 90% of those between 15 and 19 years old claim to listen to music daily, the figure declines to 83% among those between 20 and 24 and to 76% among those between 25 and 29 years old.

people around us (Estruch 1999: 30), and if for all of us music and its discourses and practices are part of this experience with the people surrounding us, to young people this part is generally much more important than for others. Listening and dancing to music, buying it, talking about it – the good and the bad, the fast and the slow, the *cool* and the *cheesy*, the tough and the soft –, feeling its pleasure through their bodies, they not only enjoy music, but also, as an unintended consequence, collectively produce a set of meanings that help them to know *who they are*, *what their social location is and in relation to whom*. Like the Lugbara, they organise their social world in terms of social distances – not exclusively through meanings around music, of course.

Since music offers a privileged space for what we have called *otherness* (it can transcend physical and social space), and at the same time is a clear example of *embeddedness*, a double perspective on ‘musical geographies’ will be adopted. On the one hand, analysing them as an objectified reality, existing independently of individuals’ volition in a situational perspective. On the other hand, as a dynamic reality which is culturally produced by both young people and those working in the music industry in partially creative and unpredicted ways. The first perspective focuses on the objectified and institutionalised or external character of musical geographies. The second one on its dynamic, changing and constructed condition. Both perspectives will lead us to a further understanding of our object of study, *the cultural production, through musical commodities, of a certain way of experiencing both social distances and inequalities and our own pathways through them*.

Popular music and young people in the 21st Century

Before exploring the conceptual tools that will be used in the empirical analysis of musical and youth geographies, we will briefly sketch the historical context of youth, youth cultures and popular music at the beginning of the 21st century. We will focus on three aspects, some of which have already been mentioned: the extension of youth as an age of life, the increasing relevance of commoditised popular culture, and the development of popular music.

Firstly, we need to bear in mind that youth as it is experienced today in Western countries is a historical novelty. In the same sense that Ariès (1962) documented the historical construction of childhood as we know it today, we must be aware that young people had never spent before such a long period of time in their transitions from childhood to adulthood free of adult responsibilities, in a state of semi-dependency, and spending so much time in the company of their peers. In the past, young people certainly often spent long periods of time until

As age increases, the figure keeps declining: 63% of those between 30 and 44 years old, 50% among those between 45 and 64 years old, and 37% among those aged 65 or older. It is important to note, however, that these figures must not be interpreted as related to age alone, since they reflect a combination of age and generation effects. As suggested in Martínez, González and de Miguel (2005), in Catalonia music consumption is now higher and more popular among all the age groups than it used to be a few decades ago, before technology facilitated it as it does nowadays.

they became completely autonomous, but as Schlinder recalls in relation to the 'dawn of modern age', the marked awareness of youth as an independent phase did not understand it as a 'social moratorium' but as a 'transitional phase', a 'rite of passage' through which individuals gradually became familiarised with the adult world (1997 [1994]: 247). At that moment, youth had not become the segregated life-phase that it is today, linked to an extension of schooling and a postponement of work and housing transitions⁶. The universalisation of secondary education after the Second World War and later extension of university education during the 1960s and 1970s played an important role in assigning young people a differentiated status, layering them in fine layers according to school years.

Secondly, we must stress the importance of commodities in signifying this age of life in the context of what is known as increasing economic affluence of the post-war period – or, in Catalonia and Spain, the *desarrollismo* years starting in the late 1950s –, as well as the growing importance of cinema, radio and television. Regardless of the exact moment at which this affluence was first significant⁷, the fact is that consumerism became a new language of everyday life, the youth market being 'an inevitable extension of this new consumer-based society' (Bennett 2000: 12) with the media introducing new forms of visibility. The industry manufactured clothes, leisure activities, films, magazines, records and record players directly marketed at young people. This is important because even if there are many examples of distinguishable youth cultures and styles in the past, what we call youth cultures are idiosyncratic in the sense that they were decisively heightened by their commoditisation parallel to the extension of modern consumerism, youth becoming for the first time a differentiated consumer group⁸.

⁶ Two historical notes must be made here: in the first place, housing transitions to a separate nuclear family are not the historical norm, in the sense that extended families did not institutionalise housing transitions as we understand them now; and second, that the contemporary extension of working transitions until the mid-twenties or even later (particularly in southern European societies like the Catalan) are an added extension to the previous delaying, during the 20th Century, of such transitions from late childhood or early adolescence to late adolescence.

⁷ We are obviously referring to its social extension to the popular classes, not its appearance among the middle classes. In this sense, Fowler (1992) challenged the commonly accepted assumption that consumerist practices started, in the United Kingdom, in the post-war period, by showing the same pattern among working-class teenagers in Manchester in the inter-war period.

⁸ There are many historical realities that closely resemble those of youth cultures but are not considered as part of this historical process of the second half of the 20th Century. Crouzet-Pavan (1997 [1994]: 183) explains how in the 15th Century medieval courts in Italy tried to moderate not only women's fashions but also 'luxurious male clothes'. Schlinder explains the features of juvenile culture, in the dawn of the modern age, as 'an informal group culture, created essentially through *ritual actions*' (1997 [1994]: 247), which were important for policing girls (guarding their sexual morality and protecting 'their' girls from people of other villages) and for organising the carnival and other events. He identifies as typical of juvenile culture ordeals of courage, symbolic challenge to established order, brutality, the play of symbolic bravado, rites of virility and the idea of the division of local territory. Pearson (1983) identified the fear of 'apprentices' in the 18th Century London, where they 'were so numerous that they were an identifiable 'subculture', with its own standards, codes of honour, literature and heroes' (ibid.: 192). During the 19th and 20th Century, we might also identify other youth cultural manifestations like English *Scuttlers* or Germany's *Wilden Cliquen* and *Swing Jugend* (Bennett

First, we can identify the ordinary (basically) middle-class college youth cultures identified by Parsons (1972 [1942]) in the United States in the middle of the 20th Century. Second, we can recall those more spectacular – shocking – youth styles appeared in the 1950s and 1960s that were ‘seen as having their roots in the working class’ (Furlong & Cartmel 1997: 59-60), not only in the US and the UK around rock’n’roll and other popular musics (teds, rockers, mods, skinheads) but also in other countries like France – the *blousons noirs* described by Jean Monod (Feixa 1998). These spectacular styles were described by the so-called Birmingham School as ‘spectacular subcultures’ because of their symbolic opposition to the ‘dominant culture’. Third, during the 1960s, middle-class youths, drawing from minority bohemian youth styles of the past (like for instance the American *beats* which had been imitated in the UK and other European cities like Paris), also started to massively develop their own spectacular styles around ‘progressive rock’ music, radical politics and the ‘hippy’ style. These class differentiations, however, were soon diluted, or at least complexified⁹, and according to Furlong & Cartmel by ‘the late 1960s, musical tastes and youth styles had begun to cross class boundaries’ (1997: 60). The proliferation and revival of styles, the subsequent influence of punk, disco, heavy, rap, rave and many other youth styles, made any simple association of youth styles and social positions difficult. The bohemian and transgressive stance of youth cultures that had initially provoked what were to be termed ‘moral panics’¹⁰ became an accepted feature of mainstream youth lifestyles, in what Wilson (1999) names a ‘bohemianisation of mass culture’. The extension of a ‘cool’ or ‘hip’ attitude, which I have already mentioned in the preceding chapter, from marginal bohemian circles to mainstream youth cultural activities is indeed one of the more notorious social innovations of the last forty years of the 20th Century¹¹. It is, in fact, the attitude underlying the well known expression *sex, drugs and rock’n’roll*.

In the case of Catalonia, youth styles started to develop during the 1960s, with the arrival of the economic development of *desarrollismo*, basically appropriating American and British innovations. On the one hand, as explained by Carles Feixa and Laura Porzio (2004), clearly consumerist youth styles around pop culture were developed, for instance in the form of what was called ‘ye-ye’, or later, and with a very different character, ‘postmodern’. What we encapsulate in the expres-

2000; 2003 [2001]) that would appear very much like contemporary youth styles. In Catalonia and Spain, prior to the appearance of youth cultures, there was a growing concern during the 1950s for what were called *gamberros* (Feixa & Porzio 2004).

⁹ Greil Marcus points this out in the following terms: ‘Punk drew lines: it divided the young from the old, the rich from the poor, then the young from the young, the old from the old, the rich from the rich, the poor from the poor, rock’n’roll from rock’n’roll’ (1990 [1989]: 69).

¹⁰ See Cohen (2002 [1972]) for a development of the notion of moral panic in relation to spectacular subcultures.

¹¹ See the already mentioned, in a previous footnote, Pountain & Robins (2000) for a suggestive approach to the notion of ‘cool’ in the sense proposed here, and Mailer (1992 [1959]) for an analysis of the birth of ‘hip’ in the context of the Beat generation.

sion ‘*ye-ye*’ was developed by ordinary young people using those global musical materials – either imported music or home-grown bands imitating global musical genres – allowed by the authoritarian regime. By contrast, ‘posmodern’ style was a label used in the early 80s, for instance in Lleida (Feixa 1998), for a youth style that combined commercialised leisure with alternative cultural trends. On the other hand, among those politically resisting the Franco authoritarian regime, what we might call a hippie style also imported the counter-cultural spirit of its global namesake, combining global musical materials and home-grown versions, particularly the politicised ‘*Nova Cançó*’. The hippies were the first spectacular youth style to be visible in the early 1970s, whereas the originally working-class spectacular subcultures (rockers, mods, punks, heavies), in contrast, did not appear as visible realities until the late 1970s, once the country started its democratic transition after the death of General Franco in 1975. Before that, working class gangs were just seen as ‘*gamberros*’, without a distinguishable spectacular style.

The third and final element is the role played, in all that has to do with youth cultures and what we call young people’s social space, by the development of popular music – which cannot be isolated from technological innovations, changes in the political economy of music and the role of media like cinema, radio and television. Before rock’n’roll, music was experienced by young people in a radically different way than it is nowadays. It is not only that the lonely listener of music, a modern invention¹², was an unthinkable reality for most youngsters, but also that the appearance of music radio, among other elements, completely modified the experience of music. Before rock’n’roll, popular music on the radio was dominated in the United States by ‘theatre song’, Tin Pan Alley and Hollywood hits, as well as music hall, vaudeville, and crooners. What we can loosely name ‘black music’ had very restricted access to public broadcasting. But the introduction of cheap recording (the audio tape), new plastic 45 rpm records, the transistor radio and TV as a domestic entertainment in the 1940s and 1950s, the changes in the music industry and the sudden significance of rock’n’roll as a distinctive ‘youth music’ among the newly-affluent young baby-boomers, among other factors, created a completely new scenario¹³ that was rapidly spread throughout the world.

In Catalonia and Spain, music on the radio¹⁴ had been circumscribed from its beginnings in 1924 to the broadcast of live concerts and orchestras, even though, starting in 1931, listeners were able to request records to be played, and in 1942 several jazz shows and direct broadcasting from dance halls started to be aired. When rock’n’roll first arrived, in 1960, music radio consisted of zarzuela, bolero,

¹² Storr (2002 [1992]: 233-4).

¹³ See Peterson (1990) for a detailed analysis of the six aspects of the production-of-culture perspective in relation to the advent of rock music: law (especially copyright law), technology, industry structure, organisation structure, occupational career and market. For an account of the historical significance of rock’n’roll, see also Bennett (2003 [2001]) and Negus (2002 [1996]).

¹⁴ See Pedrero Esteban (2000) for an account of the history of radio music in Spain.

tonadilla and small bits of Latin-American folk music (ranchera, merengue, panchanga). The Franco regime made it difficult for foreign sounds to reach the country unless they were in the form of home-grown Spanish-speaking bands doing softened ‘acceptable’ rock’n’roll versions and imitations, although as the opposition to the regime grew, so did the popular music linked to progressive politics – importing the Western youth hippy style of the time and combining it with the home-grown contribution of *Nova Cançó* music¹⁵. With the death of Franco the reception of foreign popular music exploded in the context of new scenes¹⁶, fully joining the international space of youth cultures that had emerged after the recognition of rock’n’roll as a distinctive youth music on a global scale¹⁷.

Since then, the continuous development of the music industry, the unstoppable technological and media development and the succession of stylistic turns have made popular music and youth cultures much more complex. From progressive rock to punk, heavy metal, disco, reggae, r’n’b, rap or house music, just to name a few, all the past developments have made popular musical geographies increasingly diversified. Moreover, these styles and scenes are subject to subsequent fragmentations, revivals, crossovers and hybridisations with traditional local popular music, making the genealogy and cartography of popular music genres and youth styles a difficult task. At the moment, digital technologies (writable CDs, computers, the Internet) are causing yet another revolution in the field of popular music with unpredictable consequences. The fact is that it is difficult to do justice to the tremendous change that the music experience among young people has undergone during the 20th Century. On top of the differentiation between the popular music of young people and adults, the truth is that music has become, thanks to the development of the teenage consumer and the introduction of new technologies, a central activity in young people’s lives, both privately and publicly, individually and collectively¹⁸. This importance has also affected the way young people experience their social geographies.

Musical and social geographies

At the turn of the 21st century, therefore, popular music for young people is much more diversified and complex than that of the 1950s or 1960s, which leaves us with the question of how this musical soundscape is organised in terms of

¹⁵ See Eyerman (1988) for an analysis of the role of music in 1960s social movements.

¹⁶ See Feixa & Porzio (2004) for a general review in the Spanish context and Fouce (2004) for an account of what was called *la movida madrileña* of late 1970s Madrid.

¹⁷ Using Bennett’s expression (2003 [2001]: 17). The importance of rock’n’roll, and subsequently punk, is emphasised by Greil Marcus when he maintains that ‘Elvis Presley and the Sex Pistols changed the patterns of everyday life—raised its stakes—all over the world. If what they did led to no official revolutions, it made life all over the world more interesting, and life continues to be more interesting than it would have been had they never appeared’ (1990 [1989]: 148).

¹⁸ It is true, nevertheless, that those in the music industry are worried that the competition of computer games and other leisure alternatives will undermine the centrality of music among young people.

distances and proximities – both sensuously and linguistically, practically and systematically – in the young people’s attempt to make sense of their social reality. We will start by specifying how I will use the terms ‘musical geographies’ and ‘youth geographies’.

By ‘musical geographies’ I will refer to young people’s organisation of musical forms and taste in music, through practical and systematic knowledge, through sensuous and linguistic meaning-making, in an ‘intersubjective map of meaning’ establishing distances and proximities. Combining and differentiating between sounds, songs, artists, albums, genres, grounded aesthetics, traditions and practices, young people map out their soundscape. Biographically, as soon as they develop *an interest* in music, they start to learn these geographies. At the beginning, the differences or links between soul, blues, or r’n’b can be opaque, as the differences or links between techno, *màkina*, trance and garage, or ska, ragga and reggae, but as they incorporate (to) the common cultural meanings, they gradually ‘learn’ them in more or less detail – either practically or systematically.

Travelling through the city, we find a changing soundscape that clearly connotes much more than merely music: the music in a kebab house, a curry restaurant, a pub, a club, a mall or loudly emanating from passing cars helps us to locate such places in social geographies (what ‘sort’ of people and place we are dealing with), at the same time that it culturally (re)produces them. In general, since we are not interested in music *per se*, but in the articulation of musical geographies with broader social geographies (that is, the mutual influence between the ways we map out music forms and the social world), I will use the expression ‘musical and social geographies’. Whereas ‘musical geographies’ refers to the organisation of distances and proximities between musical forms, genres and tastes in music, the notion of ‘social geographies’ refers to the organisation of distances and proximities between individuals and groups. They are obviously related, but can be analytically differentiated. We will understand distances and proximities between individuals not in strictly physical, material or ‘real’ personal relations, but rather in cultural, represented or ‘imagined’ terms: they do not only refer to ‘personal’ interaction, but also to ‘typification’, ‘representation’, ‘identification’, ‘adscription’, ‘recognition’ and even ‘sensuous experience’ of social distances. It is not strange to experience someone with whom we daily interact as more distant than someone we will never meet living on the other side of the globe. As the Lugbara, who can experience someone of their own genealogy living far away as closer than others of other genealogies living within a closer distance, we build our social geographies through actual personal relationships *and* meaning-making activities. We will thus pay attention to both personal relations and the meaning young people attach to them¹⁹.

As has been stated in the first pages of this thesis, we are interested in the process of ‘cultural production’, understood as *our struggle to survive making sense of*

¹⁹ See the already mentioned research by Alegre (2004) for an interesting approach focusing on the link between ‘cultural’ and ‘relational’ maps in secondary schools in Catalonia.

the world and our place in it (Willis 2000: xiv). By using the metaphor 'musical and social geographies' we will put at the core of our theoretical attention the fact that in our daily life, to make sense of our place in the world we constantly spatially organise musical forms, individuals and groups in terms of 'closeness' and 'distance'²⁰. The point is that these 'geographies' are the result of our daily

²⁰ As remarked by Edward Soja, 'For much too long, spatiality has been relatively peripheral to what are now called the human sciences' (1997 [1996]: 2), more focused on the historical and social dimensions. Featherstone and Lash (1995) also point out the recent 'spatialisation' – in contrast with its prior temporalisation – of social theory.

Nevertheless, the use of spatial metaphors to refer to the social and cultural world is by no means an innovation. Not only is Bourdieu's sociology based on the notion of 'social space' (Bourdieu 1988 [1979]; Bourdieu & Wacquant 1994 [1992]), but the conceptualisation of social 'spaces', 'fields' or 'systems' has been present in key authors like Parsons, Athusser or Foucault, among many others. Moreover, concepts like 'mental' or 'cognitive maps' have also been widely used in the social sciences. Human 'cognitive maps' – a term first used in relation to animals – can be understood as complex and dynamic structures that form a 'model' of the environment: 'Exchanging coherently arranged symbols in a cultural cognitive map, people correlate their behaviours. They adjust their actions to what others expect' (Laszlo *et al* 1995 [1993]: 30). Another example of a spatial metaphor is Robert E. Park notion of 'moral distances' (R. Park *et al.*, (1925) *The City*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press; quoted in Cohen 2000 [1985]: 26). Naturally, human geography is also a source of spatial theory, which has gained momentum with the increasing attention paid to the globalisation process and the cultural production of space and the spatial production of culture.

The early work on youth subcultures of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies by Hall, Willis, Hebdige and others also used spatial metaphors like 'mental' and 'cognitive maps', 'maps of meaning', 'map of popular culture', 'cartography of taste' or 'imagined territories' (Hall & Jefferson 1998 [1975]; Jackson 1989). Spatial metaphors, however, have also provoked critical reactions, like that of Chaney from a 'post-subculturalist' stance within the field of youth cultures: 'While initially an attractive metaphor, the idea of a map has at least two unfortunate connotations. First, maps are, as we have come to realise, instruments of power. They lay down modes of description and use that are necessarily authoritative and suppress alternative modes of habitations. Second, a map implies a distinctive space with recognisable features – in effect, a common terrain. As will have become clear in my account of cultural change, neither of these connotations may seem appropriate' (2004: 48). Such criticism seems to deny the importance of socially institutionalised knowledge and the important role of power in it, as well as the possibility of conceptualising an institutionalised social reality which is contested and changing, which is precisely my point of departure.

A different option is the notion of 'scene', broadly used in post-subculturalist theory, which has important links with the notion of young people's social space. As Stahl remarks, the notion of 'scene' 'acknowledges that different interpretative tools are called for in order to account for the many-layered circuits, loose affiliations, networks, contexts and points of contact determining the socio-musical experience' (2004: 52). Nevertheless, it differs from it in that the young people's social space approach puts a greater stress on the typifications of youth geographies and not on the circuits around the socio-musical experience, which makes it easier to include in the analysis with an equal degree of relevance the intermediate, ordinary, loose locations within it. Thus, the notion of scene, although useful for the development of a young people's social space approach, differs from it in that it focuses on the more socially institutionalised aspects of it in relation to the more diffuse and amorphous symbolic differentiations of those spaces that would not necessarily be experienced nor conceptualised as proper 'scenes'.

Two examples outside the academic literature can help to support the interest of using spatial metaphors to talk about musical forms and their social connotations. One is the <http://www.music-map.com> site, the result of the Gnod experiment, 'a self-adapting system that learns about the outer world by asking its visitors what they like and what they don't like'. The result is a search engine where the chosen band or artist will appear at the centre of a constellation of other bands and artists. 'The closer two artists are, the greater the probability people will like both artists'. The other example is that of those companies which are making money out of identifying and using music's social (intersubjective) connotations, like Candy Rock Recording/Total Sound Group (in the UK), which

cultural production, so every culture and every historical moment has its own coordinates organising them. If we think of musical geographies, we will easily see how each tradition organises its geographies differently and, at the same time, globalised popular culture disseminates a set of more or less common coordinates. Nowadays, with the important amount of cultural materials disseminated through the media and consumer culture across an important part of the globe, many coordinates are globally shared, while many others are not. In this sense, the 'prejudices' of every local tradition are culturally produced around a particular mix of global and local materials and meanings idiosyncratically actualised in every place and historical moment. Thus, every place and every historical moment has its own organisation of musical and social geographies, which implies certain institutionalised knowledge, practical and systematic, about them. It is through this knowledge and its actualisation in practical judgments that we locate some musical forms as close or distant vis-à-vis others, and it is through this knowledge that we judge them as good or bad, as old or trendy, as classy or cheesy.

In 1979, for example, punk music and rock'n'roll were antagonistic musical forms, and as such were judged by young people in both Birmingham and Barcelona. Twenty years later, however, the tradition of prejudices had changed and most young people saw them as being relatively close to each other in their common opposition to, for instance, house music. Musical geographies are thus in constant modification, and the fact that musical and social geographies are to some extent objectified does not mean that they are static or fixed. The example shows the relational and historical character of musical geographies, since tradition, far from being static, is culturally re-produced by each new generation. Every generation receives, modifies and hands on a tradition. Tradition, understood in this loose sense, is the validity of what has arrived from the past, as something which is 'out there' and helps us to make sense of the world and our place in it, although in the very action of incorporating a tradition, we re-produce, adapt and modify it. In this context, a view of popular music as being opposed to tradition(al music) would be obviously mistaken, since we are using the term 'tradition' to refer to the social geographies that, at any historical moment, are received from previous generations as 'valid'²¹. When an older sister tells a younger brother or friend about young people who are 'posh', 'kevs', 'quillos' 'garage-heads', 'makers' or 'gothic', she is socialising him in a meaning-system that can be understood as a

among other things provides different businesses with compilations 'that reflect the business's image and customer profile' – as stated in one of its advertising brochures – made 'through the evaluation of demographic and lifestyle profiles alongside all music genres'.

²¹ In a similar sense, Eyerman, in his book *Music and Social Movements* (1988) uses the term to refer to those 'beliefs and practices that are passed on from one generation to the next' (1988: 27), even though he narrows down his use of the term to exclude custom or habit: 'We want to claim that it is the conscious articulation – the process of naming, defining, and making coherent – what distinguishes tradition from custom or habit, which are similar in that they all deal with recurrence. Custom, for us, refers to beliefs and practices which are less articulated than tradition, less durable and more short-lived, and thus more easily altered. Habits, on the other hand, refer to individualized forms of behavior and not to the ideas, beliefs, or practices of groups or entire societies' (1988: 27).

particular popular cultural tradition (the validity of what arrives from the past, in this case a certain categorisation of youth geographies). By calling the common cultural meanings related to popular culture a 'tradition', and not a 'custom' or 'habit', I wish to challenge the taken-for-granted ahistorical and socially disembodied character assigned to popular culture. I argue that the meanings that are negotiated in popular culture are more historical than is usually thought, and that if we take them seriously, we will bring to the surface some subterranean aspects that in spite of being neglected by public discourses and a great part of social sciences alike, crucially and seriously participate in the structuration of our everyday lives²².

It is clear that every person maps out his or her own particular version of 'musical and social geographies', but it is also true that we collectively build intersubjective and thus 'external', institutionalised geographies that appear to us as more or less 'objective'. A particular individual can ignore them, but this may make it difficult for him or her to interact with others, in the same sense that anybody can build his or her own language, as couples tend to do, but unless they use the language known by all it can be difficult for them to communicate with the rest of society, to take part in a common experience with others. Sharing the same geographies is about being able to communicate with others, to share common ground in which meaningful interaction becomes possible.

I am not saying that the objectivated musical and social geographies resulting from the process of cultural production at any moment are a 'unified cultural set of meanings' configuring a fixed 'tradition'. This view would be as mistaken as that of seeing musical and social geographies as merely fluid, multiple, chaotic and undifferentiated reality. The correct position will be somewhere in between: any tradition configures an objectified reality, but one which is more or less – depending on each particular case – plural, heterogeneous, contested, disputed and diverse. It is not that every individual is mechanically 'socialised' in a 'culture', but that they have to culturally produce their own version of their experience of it, and that this process is both socially constricted – in the sense that an individual's versions of tradition must enable them to communicate, interact and live with others – and inescapably creative – whether reflexively or not. The unavoidable creativity of our socialisation within a particular tradition is particularly obvious with music, since its combination of social embeddedness and 'otherness' opens up spaces of individual and collective creativity.

We must bear in mind, however, that as a result of the aggregation of these individual cultural productions, which imply power relations and struggles for domination, both material and symbolic, there are certain meanings that become 'dominant' and almost universally shared (even if contested), and many others that

²² I am not entering here into another, suggestive account of the popular culture links with the past developed by Greil Marcus in *Lipstick Traces: A secret history of the twentieth century* (1990 [1989]), where he explains 'the drift of secret history, a history that remains secret even to those who make it, especially to those who make it' (1990 [1989]: 184–5).

become shared by certain sections of the population, some at a local level, others at a global level. The differentiation between rock and classical music, for instance, is broadly shared by all sectors of Western society, whereas the differentiation between *màkina* and ‘trance’ music might be only meaningful to some sectors of Catalan youth, as the differentiation between ‘two-step’ and ‘US’ garage might mean something to many (not all) English young people but nothing to young people in many other countries.

To sum up, our attention to musical geographies will provide an example of how cultural commodities understood as symbolic forms mediate our social experience. When young people *talk about music and experience it through their bodies*, they do more than strictly relate to music. When everyone’s experience of – and talk about – music is aggregated (including those of the cultural industries, journalists and the like), the result is a lived cultural production that affects the next generation of youngsters that incorporate (embody) it. Since we will not look at music as a symbolic but as a socio-symbolic form, *we will consider musical and social geographies as a cultural production that mediates our social experience. If society is our experience with the people around us*, the way we experience it is through ‘culture’, understood as our shared meanings enabling meaningful communication, our *living together*.

Personal and anonymous relations

I have argued in Chapter 1 that young people’s experience of socio-symbolic forms is socially embedded through their participation in the intersubjective field of taste in music. To approach the production of social knowledge about our surrounding social reality, and the role of music in it, I will follow a phenomenological approach that takes as a starting point our everyday experience of this process. Following Berger and Luckmann, by ‘reality’ – in our case the reality of social and musical geographies – I will understand the ‘quality appertaining to phenomena that we recognise as having a being independent of our own volition (we cannot “wish them away”)’ (1989 [1966]: 1). By ‘knowledge’, I will understand the ‘certainty that phenomena are real and that they possess specific characteristics’ (ibid.: 1), in what concerns us characteristics related to music and social distances.

To approach the process of our experience of social reality it will be useful to take into account the distinction between what Alfred Schutz calls ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ experience of others. He points out that we experience the world of daily life through our relations with others, which include our face-to-face relations with our ‘fellow human beings’, our typical relations with ‘contemporaries’ with whom we do not directly interact and with ‘predecessors and successors’ who are neither actually nor potentially accessible to direct experience (1971 [1964]: 22–3). Our relationship with ‘artifacts’ represents one of the more anonymous types of indirect social relation²³.

²³ Schutz identifies a whole range of possible indirect relations with contemporaries, with different degrees of ‘directness’ and ‘anonymity’: ‘[T]he broader world of contemporaries itself contains various

In personal relations I experience others ‘directly’, in a face-to-face relationship through which I establish a ‘We-relation’ that ‘closely resembles the inward temporality of my stream of consciousness’ (ibid.: 26) in a community of time and space. There are, however, important variations in the degree of intimacy, intensity and ‘directness’ of personal relations. In our biographical incorporation into social reality, we firstly locate ourselves in relation to others with whom we have face-to-face relationships of great intimacy (our immediate and primary experience of others is carried out through the ‘significant others’, mainly close relatives and friends). As we grow older, we gradually become incorporated into a broader social life, and increase the number of people that we ‘personally know’ but with whom we might have a lower degree of emotional attachment: teachers, school mates, neighbours, and so on. Needless to say, our personal relation with others can vary over time.

From early on, we also learn that, as well as those whom we personally know, there are many people who are contemporary to us, and we apprehend them not through ‘personal’ direct experience but by means of ‘typifications’²⁴. Our ‘knowledge of the world of contemporaries is by definition typical knowledge of typical processes’ (ibid.: 44). When we enter the broader social world, this ‘typical knowledge’ becomes more and more important to help us to make sense of – and map out – our complex social reality, and to locate ourselves in it. Typical knowledge, however, is also important in direct relations, since when we engage in personal relations we bring into the encounter a ‘stock of preconstituted knowledge which includes a network of typifications of human individuals in general, of typical human motivations, goals, and action patterns. It also includes knowledge of expressive and interpretative schemes of objective sign-systems and, in particular, of the vernacular language’ (ibid.: 29-30). The important difference is

strata: My partners in former We-relations who are now mere contemporaries but who are restorable to face-to-face situations; partners in the *former* We-relations of my *present* partner in a We-relation who are potentially accessible to my direct experience (your friend whom I have not met yet); contemporaries of whom I have knowledge and whom I am to meet shortly (Professor X whose books I have read and with whom I have an appointment in the near future); contemporaries of whose existence I am aware, as reference points for typical social functions (post office employees involved in the processing of my letters); collective social realities which are known to me by their function and organization while their personnel remains anonymous – although I could, under certain circumstance, gain direct personal experience of the individuals in question (the House of Lords); collective social realities which are by their very nature anonymous and of which I consequently cannot gain direct personal experience under any circumstances; objective configurations of meaning which are instituted in the world of my contemporaries and which are essentially anonymous in character (the Articles of the Constitution, the rules of French grammar); and, finally, artefacts in the broadest sense, which testify to some subjective meaning-context of some unknown person, i.e., the sense which the artefact “had” for its creator, user, beholder, etc. All these strata of the large domain of indirectly experienced social reality are characterized, in a graduated series, by different degrees of anonymity and by transitions from relative nearness to direct experience to absolute detachment from it’ (Schutz 1971 [1964]: 41).

²⁴ The importance of typifications is also present in many other works, some of them deeply influencing this text, like the ‘categorization’ theory of Tajfel (1975, 1981) and Turner (1990), Becker’s work on ‘labeling’ (1991 [1963]), Goffman’s theorisation of ‘stigma’ (1990 [1963]), and Cohen’s book on moral panics (2002 [1972]).

that in the We-relation, ‘the typifying schemata are swept along and modified by the unique Thou apprehended in the immediacy of a shared vivid present’ (ibid.: 46). Even if when we encounter someone we bring to the encounter our stock of typifications, in our personal relation we can adjust or change our impression. This may or may not lead to a change in our typification. As Berger and Luckmann (1989 [1966]) point out, following Schutz, ‘no other form of social relating can produce the plenitude of symptoms of subjectivity present in the face-to-face situation. Only here is the other’s subjectivity emphatically “close”. All other forms of relating to the other are, in varying degrees, “remote”’ (ibid.: 29). Because face-to-face interaction is the one producing the plenitude of symptoms of subjectivity²⁵, our network of direct social relations remains crucial, and it is there that typifications are finally negotiated. The more we depart from the directness of the face-to-face situation, the more this decreases the richness of symptoms by which we apprehend others and the greater is the role played by ‘anonymous’ typifications. Even less direct face-to-face interactions that we could categorise as mere ‘observation’, or personal relations mediated by communication technologies – letter, telephone, e-mail, chat, videoconference –, do not provide the same plenitude of symptoms of subjectivity and therefore incorporate higher degrees of anonymous elements. The point is that typical knowledge is obviously reductionist, and even mistaken, although very useful to make sense of broad social reality and our location in it. We learn to make sense of our social space through social interaction (our experience with others), including direct and indirect, face-to-face and ‘anonymous’ relations. ‘Indirect’ or ‘anonymous’ social interaction provides ‘typical knowledge’ by definition, whereas in face-to-face interaction the relation can more easily modify and adjust typifications.

The distinction will be useful in our empirical approach to musical and social geographies, in the sense of differentiating the way we learn or come to ‘know’ the music which is listened to and liked – as well as the music which is disliked and experienced as distant – by our parents, siblings, relatives and best friends from the way we learn the music which is liked and disliked by many of our school mates, neighbours and acquaintances (which is often grasped through observation rather than through deep personal relations), or that which is liked and disliked by contemporaries – that is, what ‘people out there’ like and dislike, which is accessible through magazines, newspapers, radio, TV or the Internet, as well as from our talk about contemporaries in personal relations. These different spheres of experience are characterised by an increasing degree of anonymity, and it is through anonymous relations that we learn to typify what the rest of the social world like

²⁵ Berger and Luckmann also point out that ‘it may be argued that the other in the face-to-face situation is more real to me than I myself. Of course I “know myself better” than I can ever know him. (...) But this “better knowledge” of myself requires reflection. It is not immediately appresented to me. The other, however, *is* so appresented in the face-to-face situation. “What he is,” therefore, is ongoingly available to me. This availability is continuous and prereflective. On the other hand, “What I am” is *not so* available. To make it available requires that I stop, arrest the continuous spontaneity of my experience, and deliberately turn my attention back upon myself’. (Berger & Luckmann 1989: 29).

and dislike, and how our own taste relates to it. By doing so, we are working out – making sense of – our location in relation to musical and social geographies.

Let's think about young people and music, the latter understood as an important element of youth cultures and styles: young people's experience, when leaving childhood, shifts from a world primarily based on immediate experience and personal relations – defined in terms of relatives, neighbours and classmates – to a broader one where anonymous experience and typical knowledge gain importance, becoming central tools to make sense of broad 'young people's social space' (in similar terms, when leaving childhood we also broaden our knowledge of the physical world in which we live). Indeed, young people use 'typical knowledge' to *broaden* their social world, and one of the most visible 'sign-systems' – to use Schutz's concept – of this social world is that of youth cultures, styles or tastes, in which music plays a prominent role alongside fashion and going out, among others. Young people can 'categorise' their social reality through youth styles²⁶, and these categorising practices are an important part of the meanings conforming what we call 'young people's social space', in the sense that this typical knowledge is shared by young people at a certain place at a certain moment, becoming an intersubjective reality which, in its turn, is mostly unknown to both children and adults. Typifications about styles and tastes become, at this moment of identity crisis – the transition from childhood to adolescence subverts all previous parameters²⁷ –, very powerful in providing an albeit irreflexive navigation map and compass. Children's typifications of social space are rare and rudimentary, because their focus of attention is personal rather than generalised and anonymous. By contrast, adolescents and young people experience a discovery of the broader social reality and need such typifications to make sense of it – to make sense of social geographies and, more importantly, their place within them.

We can agree, therefore, that the complex interplay between personal and anonymous relations is important because it enables us to conceptualise the relationship between our everyday life and broader social geographies – in what concerns us, with the mediation of music. Since everyday life is the paramount reality, and music is of great importance in young people's everyday lives, it will be interesting to pay attention to how personal and anonymous relations are combined in the cultural production and circulation of knowledge about music, which compels

²⁶ In the field of youth cultures research there are many empirical accounts that include such maps. Carles Feixa, for instance, explains in *De jóvenes, bandas y tribus* (1998) that at first he did not consider the phenomenon of spectacular subcultures particularly relevant because it only involved a minority of young people and due to its mixing of the imaginary and the real in confusing ideological constructions. He changed his mind, however, whilst collecting life stories in Lleida (Catalonia). Firstly, there was the relevance of the labels that the actors used to identify themselves and other young people: some of them referred to old class or ethnic elements, but others to the categories of youth cultures – 'hippies', 'mods', 'punks', 'postmoderns'. For the interviewees, these labels and the idea of 'urban tribes' were important in defining their generation's identity. Through his life-stories about punks in Lleida and Mexico, he offers a very rich description of his informants' typification of youth geographies.

²⁷ As set out by Erikson (1980[1968]), youth always implies an identity crisis since the transition from a child to an adult identity unavoidably shakes the individual's sense of self.

us to take into account the crucial role of the media – an aspect remarkably downplayed in both Schutz’s and Berger and Luckmann’s accounts – in the circulation of, and access to, anonymous typical knowledge. My aim is to stress both the ‘creative’ and ‘coercive’ aspects of the relationship between young people and knowledge about musical and social geographies. Focusing on their process of ‘cultural production’, we stress the socially constructed character of those geographies, whilst focusing on ‘musical and social geographies’ we stress the objectified character resulting from this cultural production. Typifications are something we create and modify and, at the same time, something that are imposed on us.

In the following pages we will pay attention to both the objectivated reality of social space – broadly understood through existing typifications – and the process of cultural production of this space – how typifications are locally and globally contested, negotiated, resisted, developed, struggled and changed. We will see how typical knowledge, defined as ‘broad generalisations’ used by both young people and those working in the cultural industries to make sense of the complexity, is a key aspect in understanding their cultural relations. Those typifications are important pillars of musical and social geographies. The way young people and club managers generalise in saying that those who like garage or *màkina* music are ‘this sort of people’, and how young people and club owners deal with and negotiate these generalisations at the level of both personal and anonymous relations, will be a useful tool to understand the *cultural production of musical and social geographies*, which is another way of saying *the cultural production of a certain tradition of prejudices*. Any typification or generalisation does not need to be ‘true’, or ‘essentially true’, to have ‘true effects’ on how social interactions are organised. An ‘urban legend’ about a rape in a certain place, whether true or not, will certainly deter many women from walking through that place. The same is true for any typification in young people’s social space – as W.I. Thomas put it, *if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences*²⁸.

Linguistic and sensuous meaningfulness

Focusing on typifications and their role in the way we make sense of social reality, including the musical and social geographies around us, means taking into consideration the central role played by language and linguistic meanings in the cultural production of social reality. At the same time, however, we will take into account what we have termed ‘sensuous’ meanings, and thus not assume the stronger or narrower versions of the so-called ‘cultural’ and ‘linguistic turn’ in the

²⁸ The origin of this sentence, which is known as the ‘Thomas Theorem’, is only rarely quoted and this has caused some debate about its origin since it first appeared on page 572 of the collaborative work with Dorothy Swain Thomas: *The Child in America: Behavior Problems and Programs*, published in 1928 by Knopf - although there is now little doubt about Thomas’s authorship of the concept (Merton 1995).

social sciences during recent decades. In other words, we will not assume that 'culture' and all social practices *work like language*²⁹.

Berger and Luckmann argue that language, understood as a system of vocal signs, 'is the most important sign system of human society' (1989 [1966]: 37). The common objectifications of everyday life are maintained, from their point of view, primarily by linguistic signification, and musical and social geographies do not need to be an exception. Language, even if originated in face-to-face situations – where it makes my subjectivity *more real* to both my partner and myself – can be easily detached from it (a possibility accentuated by the communication technologies). Language primarily refers to the paramount reality of everyday life, although it is capable of transcending it to refer to experiences of what we have called finite provinces of meaning. As one of its qualities we must underline its typification of experiences, 'allowing me to subsume them under broad categories in terms of which they have meaning not only to myself but also to my fellowmen' (ibid.: 39). Moreover, as it typifies experience, it also anonymises it.

In our approach to music and youth geographies, music 'genres' and 'labels' will organise the conglomerate of linguistic typifications about them. Music genres and labels, and their linkage to adjectives and discourses, are the main coordinates of the map of distances and proximities that will be our object of attention. In Birmingham house music is close to what is called US garage, but distant from Brit pop, which in its turn is close to 1960s pop and distant from flamenco music. In Barcelona Brit pop is typified as not distant from *rock català*, a typical association that will naturally be unknown to *Brummies*³⁰. Through language, we label different genres and cut (musical) reality organising it in an imagined musical space. It is important to note that this (linguistic) labelling of musical forms is not a spurious activity. On the contrary, it has practical implications, since it is one additional element conditioning social interaction.

Genres are important because they organise the complexity of music sounds, not only for young people but also for journalists, artists and those employed in the music industries. These genres have to do with the music itself, but also with the social relations organised around the music. Along with Negus, I see 'genres' as operating as social categories, and 'genre cultures as arising from the complex intersection and interplay between commercial organisational structures and promotional labels; the activities of fans, listeners and audiences; networks of musicians; and historical legacies that come to us within broader social formations' (1999: 29-30). These genres are largely the base for organising shared expectations and building typical knowledge about the social connotations or social em-

²⁹ For an approach focused on symbolic representations and the idea that social practices work like language, see the Open University textbook edited by Stuart Hall *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (Hall 1997).

³⁰ Colloquial term for the inhabitants of Birmingham.

bedding of music³¹. When we analyse the fieldwork, we will see many examples of the way in which musical categories and systems of classification mediate the experience of music and its formal organisation by an entertainment industry. Genres constitute one of the 'units' or 'materials' that can be thought as different, and therefore distant. They organise expectations on the part of the industry, the audience and musicians themselves. And as Frith points out, 'once we start looking at different musical genres, we can begin to document the different ways in which music works materially to give people different identities, to place them in different social groups, but also with experiences of alternative modes of social interaction' (1996: 275). Apart from music genres, any categorisation and linguistic typification – from 'artists' to 'records', from 'songs' to youth and social lifestyles – used to organise musical and social geographies, in fact, can be seen as the material of identity, of mapping out and placing ourselves in musical and social geographies.

Since we will later pay attention to the notion of 'identity', I will now concentrate on the limits of linguistic typifications. On the one hand, we find that even what we have termed 'grounded aesthetics' is subject to linguistic typifications, in the sense that young people's talk about it becomes part of its existence, for instance talking about the importance of the 'beat' or the quality of being 'loud', 'nice', 'romantic', 'new', 'trendy' or 'fast'. On the other hand, grounded aesthetics probably cannot be reduced to either its linguistic 'typification' or its signifying elements. There is something in the experience of music that has more to do with the body than in signifying to others. And this poses the question of whether 'linguistic' meanings and 'signifying practices working like language' cover the whole spectrum of meaning-making in relation to musical and social geographies. By focusing on 'typification' and 'typical knowledge' we are clearly stressing the linguistic approach to social reality, but this does not mean that we deny the relevance of non-linguistic 'sensuousness' as an important source of meaning. As we have previously argued, following Willis, we need to look not only at the symbolic realm of language, but also at the sensuous practices outside language (2000: 14-33)³². Even if in the following pages the centre of attention will be linguistic

³¹ See Keith Negus's (1999) analysis of the importance of genres in organising what he calls 'the production of culture' and 'the cultures of production'. He shows how 'the music industry shapes the possibilities for creative practice and how this intersects with broader historical, social and cultural processes [and thinks] about 'genre cultures' as involving far more than aesthetic debates within the 'genre worlds' of musicians, fans and critics.' (1999: 29).

³² See DeNora (1997) for an approach to music as a resource for the configuration of bodies/minds. From a different perspective, Laszlo *et al* (1995 [1993]) see the joint influence of 'sensuous stimuli' and 'linguistic descriptions' as follows: 'When humans map their social interactions cognitively there is a double representation. On the one level, sensuous stimuli are mapped; on the other level, the *linguistic descriptions* of interactions also appear. This dual representation makes human cognitive maps characteristically complex. Their information is communicated through linguistic pictures, skilled behaviors, technologies, and other artefacts. To preserve this information, human cognitive maps introduce "values." Values are symbols that record phenomena and catalyze reactions to them. By internalizing values, humans build their cognitive maps, for values encourage repeating behavioral sequences, forming stereotypes, and performing rituals. Much of the information in these media, information on which individual human cognitive maps depend, is transferred from others. Thus,

typifications, I believe that the sensuousness linked to our experience of music through the body, to laughter, to emotions resulting from our position in social hierarchies of generalised advantage or coolness, are all sources of meaning which are not completely reducible to language and signifying practices (of communicating meaning to others). The grounded aesthetic experience with musical forms and the individual experience of social hierarchies and relations of domination have as much to do with representations as they do with the ways our body reacts to sounds or social situations through emotions like anger, well-being or fear.

If we focus on music, we can agree that it has to some extent a 'use value' that transcends its signifying meaning. Through music, we 'experience' and 'produce' meaning through the body and its sensuousness – even when we do it without signifying anything to others – for instance raising pleasure and emotions. It is true, however, that 'these bodily uses take place within a communicative social world, so signification is never far away as precondition, medium, outcome' (Willis 2000: 21). Moreover, when those meanings are integrated in one way or another into the paramount reality of everyday life, language and other signifying practices are our main tool to do this.

If we focus on the experience of social hierarchies, we can also appreciate that they raise feelings that cannot be reduced to their linguistic typification or their related signifying practices, since to make sense of them we need to take into account our biological emotional responses. As pointed out by Barbalet (2001: 25-6), a power relationship which results in the dispossession of a participant will provoke his or her anger, whereas a relationship where the esteem of a participant is raised by the other will stimulate his or her pride. These sensuous meanings are to some extent culturally shaped, channelled and expressed, but cannot be equated with their linguistic typification: 'these emotions themselves give meaning to situations irrespective of the prevailing culture' (ibid.: 25), they are part of our human body's equipment.

The truth is that it is not easy to differentiate between 'linguistic' and 'sensuous' meanings (both linguistic and sensuous meanings are part of our meaning-making). 'Sensuousness', nevertheless, is what allows us to pay attention to the situated character of knowledge and meaning-making practices, since its concreteness can be understood as the 'anchor' – in contrast to the mere 'free-floating signifier' of the linguistic paradigm – that connects it to the physical, social and historical location of the experience.

Young people will therefore conceive different musical forms, artists and genres as close or distant from each other depending on how they talk about them, but also depending on their bodily reactions to music at home, in clubs or listening on their MP3 players on their way to school, as well as in relation to their location in social hierarchies and the emotions, pleasures and repulsions it raises. Many of

human cognitive maps can be constructed without direct experience. The nature of these learning processes contributes to making our cognitive maps *socially constructed realities*' (Laszlo *et al* 1995 [1993]: 6).

the meanings culturally producing musical and social geographies are not necessarily signified, but experienced in the flesh through pleasures, articulated emotions and sensuous experiences. 'Manliness', 'pride', 'coolness', 'class resentment' or 'self-confidence' are experienced in the flesh. They are also linguistically channelled and signified, but without understanding their bodily and emotional experience they cannot be properly understood. As Barbalet points out in his reflection on the role of emotion in social theory and social structure,

'In our day-to-day experiences (...) we tend to ignore those emotions which the prevailing cultural conventions do not designate as "emotions." The constructionist approach cannot assist us in uncovering those emotions which are crucial to social processes, such as implicit trust, or bypassed shame, when they are not given social representation in the prevailing culture, along with love and hate, for instance, as emotions'. (Barbalet 2001: 24)

From this point of view, pleasures, feelings and emotions become central to the production of meaning: shame, fear, pride, confidence, resentment, vengefulness, hatred, love, desire, boredom and excitement, all of them are important in organising distances and proximities, and even though these feelings and emotions are often symbolically signified, and linguistically shaped, they cannot be reduced to language. As has already been said, it is not that these feelings and emotions, and sensuousness in general, are independent of language. On the contrary, they are to a great extent socially codified and represented through language and other signifying practices. It is through such codified representations that they are shaped, so they are inextricably interlinked with the world of representations. However, I believe that they cannot be merely reduced to language, or *as if* they worked like language, since we experience them because we have our biological equipment that enables us to do so. The pleasure we feel with music or the anger when humiliated probably do not need to be signified to exist. The bodily experienced excitement and enjoyment of many practices, or the emotions derived from conflict and power relationships, are as meaningful as their signified aspects. Therefore, although these elements are to a great extent 'socially and linguistically shaped', and although to some extent they are also signified to others, they are often just experienced by individuals sensuously – even if language and previous signifying practices are a precondition for their existence, or at least of their existence as we experience them. The point is that even when they do not signify to others, their relevance for meaning-making makes them important for social interaction³³. Sensuous meanings seem crucial in shaping the local embedding of symbolic forms in geographical, historical and structural terms.

³³ Mike Featherstone (1992[1991]) distinguished between three approaches to consumption. The first approach, focusing on the exchange of commodities, is that of classical and neo-classical economics; the second approach, focusing on consumption as a way to build social bonds and distinction, could be identified with Veblen and Bourdieu's classical works; the third approach, pointing to the importance of the individual's emotional pleasures of consumption has only recently been developed. In this third approach, the sensuousness – and bodily implications – of consumer culture is being underlined.

Difference, power and social bonds

Musical and social geographies ‘out there’, that is, the intersubjective social ‘reality’ that we incorporate as ‘knowledge’, through linguistic meanings but also intermingled with sensuous ones, can be more or less complex depending on the degree of social differentiation. In ancient tribes – both past and present – with a limited division of social labour, social geographies are easily identified and unitary, in the sense that all members share a mainly coherent view of them. However, in contemporary Western societies they are extremely plural and diversified, with many segregated subuniverses of meaning which are only known by partial groups of the population. In these societies, ‘a variety of perspectives on the total society emerges, each viewing the latter from the angle of one subuniverse’ (Berger & Luckmann 1989 [1966]: 86), and knowledge about the whole society or specific institutional parts of it are very unevenly distributed. With this complexity, we cannot sociologically describe the social reality in a clear-cut representation of impeccable coordinates as we do with the physical space on a map, since this reality is nothing but a multiple, contested and unstable aggregation of particular views and meaning-systems. We are talking about an ongoing and unfinished process of changing objectivations and struggles for legitimation of different views of social reality. What I call social geographies, therefore, is a metaphor that does not assume or represent a fixed and well delimited image of what our social experience looks like. Its aim is, instead, to help us understand the same process of cultural production in a very particular sense.

To understand this process, the link between social geographies and social differentiation needs to be clarified. Gradual social differentiation is an inherent feature of what is known as ‘modernity’ or ‘modernisation’. The founding fathers of sociology, like Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim or Max Weber, paid special attention to it through concepts like ‘division of labour’, ‘division of social labour’, or the ‘rationalisation process’. However confusing the concept of ‘modernity’ might be³⁴, it is still useful to point out the immense change that occurred throughout the last few centuries of rapid technological change, that is, not only the already mentioned *increasing differentiation* but also the acceleration of social change, the urbanisation process, the industrialisation, and many other concomitant cultural processes as increasing cultural pluralism and the spread of individualism linked to the Enlightenment and Romanticism. These developments are crucial in changing the way we organise and make sense of both social geographies and our individual identity. Increasing differentiation and rapid social change has shaken the way we socially produce social distances and proximities, and therefore problematised individuals’ attempt to make sense of this complexity.

The paradox is that in contrast with what we tend to assume, increasing differentiation does not necessarily imply the loss of social bonds, but their

³⁴ See Berger (1982 [1977]) for a critique of modernity which refers to the analytic problem derived from the normative implications of the usage of the term.

modification. The sociological classics, indeed, while they identified different ways in which modernity disconnects individuals from collective social relations – as shown by concepts like ‘alienation’, ‘anomy’, or ‘disenchantment’ – were able to identify the (new) bonds implied in the emerging forms of social organisation. Durkheim, who was particularly concerned with solidarity, argued that the differences that apparently divide people can in fact be bonds of interdependence uniting them. Marx related the increasing division of labour to the relations of production and the way economic exploitation was socially organised and legitimised. Weber studied the logic of rationalisation that pervaded the process of modernisation, and its impact on a disenchanted consciousness. All those accounts are important to our understanding of modern society, but it was Georg Simmel who pointed to the ways in which modern society was dealing with the paradox of combining increasing differentiation with solid social bonds through aesthetic pleasure. His work might not be as impressive as that of Marx, Durkheim or Weber in providing a holistic account of modernity, but it certainly points to particular aspects of what we have called ‘consumer society’. In his insightful piece ‘The Metropolis and Mental Life’ (1964 [1905]) he argued that the modern urban form of life combines a structure of the ‘highest impersonality’ and the promotion of a ‘highly personal subjectivity’, what leads to a blasé attitude and reserve that makes it difficult for individuals attempt to assert their own personality. In this context, individuals are tempted to ‘adopt the most tendentious peculiarities, that is, the specifically metropolitan extravagances of mannerism, caprice, and preciousness’ (ibid.: 421), which are not important because of their content but in their way of ‘being different’, of standing out and attracting attention. This 19th century individualism was not based on freedom from social bonds, but on distinguishing them from one another, and was the result from his point of view of the economic division of labour and the impact of Goethe and Romanticism. Simmel was quick to identify the crucial role of ‘fashion’ in enabling individual sense of differentiation and individualisation and, at the same time, a sense of collective belonging. In other words, whereas Marx’s theorisation of commodity fetishism, Weber’s attention to life-style and consumption as the basis of status, and Veblen’s study of conspicuous consumption were clearly important attempts to understand the role of consumption in modern society, Simmel’s insights about fashion and urban life complemented them in not merely linking consumption and economic exchange, on the one hand, and social bonds and distinctions, on the other, but relating them to new forms of individual subjectivity that could – through the institution of fashion – combine individualism and social solidarity and also rapid change and the sense of stability. Fashion enables us to feel ‘different’ and ‘individual’ at the same time that we ‘belong’ to a collective³⁵, and incorporate rapid change as an inherent part of our sense of collective belonging.

³⁵ In his *The Sociology of Taste*, Jukka Gronow argues that Simmel saw this duality as ‘the greatest problem facing modern human beings’ (1997: xi), and he himself attempts to develop Simmel’s insights in relation to it.

In this thesis, we will not take an interest in the complex web of 'differences' for their own sake, but because these differentiations and complex interplay of social distances and proximities have an impact on power relations and our experience of them. By analysing the cultural production of social geographies, we will be studying the cultural production of social differences. A reflection on the notion of difference will be useful to clarify two aspects: first, the link between difference and power, and second, that differentiation is not synonymous with the undermining of social bonds.

Difference and hierarchy

Social and cultural differentiation have implications for the organisation of power relations, in that every difference is always likely to be converted into a hierarchical difference or distinction³⁶, and consequently it is important to distinguish between 'horizontal' and 'vertical' differentiation. In fact, modernity has not only implied a marked differentiation, but also a shift in the way these differences relate to the social structuration of inequalities, or to put it differently, to the social organisation of power relations. At the centre of this shift we can refer to the historical development of what we call individualism, equality and liberty.

During the Middle Ages, an unequal order existed as God's will, and the belief in any 'natural equality' between individuals was a fool's madness unless it was limited to their final judgement in the eyes of God. Generally speaking, individuals were born 'lords' or 'vassals', and as such they expected to die. Both the Enlightenment and Romanticism spread the idea that we are individuals, different from each other as atoms rather than organic parts of a broader whole. Moreover, the idea was that however different they might be, individuals were free and equal to each other, and it was possible to build one's own destiny through the marketplace. Instead of having a personal relationship of obligation with a lord, people were born 'free' to do whatever they liked. Instead of having a 'rank' or 'order' primarily given from birth, individuals were thought of as getting their social position basically through their merits in the marketplace.

The point is that in spite of the ideals of equality (of opportunities) and liberty, modern society, alongside with increasing differentiation, presents an undisputable and pervasive inequality. On the one hand, as said above, any social difference and differentiation is likely to create a hierarchical differentiation, and social differentiation has sharply increased, but on the other hand we must acknowledge that the power relations that organise social interactions have become more complex as well. Social distinctions and dominations are more pervasive than usually acknowledged, but always in the context of strong common bonds. What is new is the combination of a strong discourse on formal equality with the empirical evi-

³⁶ As Thornton puts it, 'Each cultural difference is a potential distinction, a suggestion of superiority, an assertion of hierarchy, a possible alibi for subordination. In many circumstances, then, the politics of differences is more appropriately cast as *discrimination* and *distinction*' (1996 [1995]: 166).

dence of inequality, which makes the way we socially and culturally produce and re-produce inequality less obvious and recognisable. Differences are strong, but it is not easy to differentiate substantial and marginal ones because the difference is often not whether one has a car or not, but the exact model of car one chooses. The process of social differentiation makes our social experience more complex. When it leads to cultural pluralism, it eliminates, or rather conceals, a unified worldview shared by all members of a certain community: our 'knowledge' of 'social reality' is plural and partial. Moreover, modernity's social differentiation and complexity also make our social relations less and less 'personal' (relating to people we *personally know*) and more and more 'anonymous' and 'typical' (relating to people that we experience as *types with typical features*) – social relations of domination as well.

This is one of the most important changes of modernisation: the domination shifts from the personal to the anonymous level. The feudal lord knew his vassals *personally*, they had a personal relationship of domination. The employee and the employed do not necessarily have a personal engagement, but rather an abstract one, in the (legal) terms determined by the State. Domination, therefore, becomes 'abstract' or 'anonymous', since those who dominate do not directly use physical violence as their ultimate resource: it is the state that does this. At the same time, the crucial institution in structuring access to resources – and, as a consequence, social hierarchies of advantage and disadvantage – is the market, and it does so through regulating 'anonymous' social relationships (the *invisible hand*) in a way that structures inequality in a much more complex way – structured and anarchic at once – than any other known institution. It makes possible a society where it is difficult to make sense of the strong constraints and inequalities we experience, since we also feel free and equal – some more than others. A society where we know that unequal social positions exist, but where we collectively believe that there is something like an equality of opportunities, makes it difficult to make sense of social hierarchies and domination. Indeed, a world where the abstract and complex webs of domination continually have to be actualised through the market, regulated and defended by state monopoly of legitimate violence, is a very different world from that of feudal society, where the lord was born a lord, and because of that had the personal right to the surplus of certain vassals.

This sharp shift inevitably required and provoked a change in the metaphors used to make sense of social hierarchies, to build knowledge of, and typify, social reality. The concept of 'class' did not exist before the industrial revolution³⁷. The terms used to refer to social hierarchies were 'order', 'rank' and the like. It is only during the 18th and 19th centuries that the term 'class' began to be used to refer to 'classes of people' and, finally, to 'social classes' as we understand them today – or at least until a few decades ago –, that is, as 'high', 'middle' and 'lower' classes or as 'working', 'productive' or 'useful' classes. The terms 'rank' and 'order' were

³⁷ See Williams (1988 [1976]: 60-9) for a historical analysis of the usages of the term in English.

taken over by the term 'class' because the way social positions were structured was changing. The concept was culturally produced to make sense of this change, and this concept had to be linked to the modern ideas that were backing the changes – liberalism, democracy and individualism – and for many years Western societies combined the 'old' and 'new' metaphors to talk about the social order, to make sense of social hierarchies and social locations. This cultural production was not an easy task, since the intellectual and political disagreements were violent: Adam Smith and Marx, or the conservative and the socialist political standpoints, did not use the same metaphors in the same sense. Nor was it a story with an end, since even now there is an on-going process of contested cultural production concerning how we make sense of social hierarchies. During the last decades, for instance, the term 'class' has become old fashioned, since there is a growing belief – which I do not share – that it is not useful in making sense of our contemporary society.

I will use the notion of social geographies – which includes the organisation of social distances in relation to class, gender and ethnical hierarchies, but also hierarchies organised around attributes such as 'coolness', 'undergroundness', 'aggressiveness', 'popularity', 'trendiness' and so on – in order to attempt *to make sense of how we ordinarily make sense of* the way economic and all kinds of social hierarchies intermingle in our everyday life. All these social differentiations are subject to hierarchisation, and in fact tend to relate in complex ways with each other. Differentiation, moreover, must not be understood in a space-less or time-less sense: being 'trendy', 'fashionable', 'ground-breaking', 'cutting-edge', 'modern', or 'cosmopolitan', as well as being connected in one or another way to genealogies that go back in time, are important aspects of hierarchical differentiation that connect social and musical geographies to space and time in complex ways. And some differentiations concerning youth styles not only relate to broader structural hierarchies, but can often also blur their social perception, their conversion into 'social knowledge'. The spatial metaphor, as mentioned above, aims at incorporating in the approach to structural inequality the confused and opaque way we experience social hierarchies in our relationships with others, and the way we 'typify' this experience, in terms of social distances and proximities. We will later develop this point a little further, but for now we will simply point out that we are interested in the institutional and cultural shape that social hierarchies and inequality take in our everyday life.

Institutional and relational structures of inequality

Although social geographies imply both horizontal and vertical – that is, hierarchically organised – differences or distances, as we have already noted, every difference is always susceptible of being converted into a hierarchical difference or distinction implying inequality and domination. When discussing the notion of 'inequality', we can analytically differentiate between privileged access to 'material' or 'symbolic' resources – even though they tend to be intimately related. From this point of view, 'material' domination would be the privileged access to scarce economic resources, and 'symbolic' domination the privileged access to

representations about the world and oneself. An important difference between 'material' and 'symbolic' domination is that the former mainly relates to scarce and palpable resources: what one person wins, another loses. The latter, on the contrary, does not necessarily work in the mode of a zero-sum game, since cooperation can increase the total amount of symbolic resources. This is naturally not as simple as that since what I have called 'scarce resources' are in fact 'socially valued resources', and therefore dependant upon their symbolic or cultural definition. In the same sense, symbolic domination is often built, in our competitive societies, *as if it was* a scarce resource or zero-sum game, since we tend to believe that we 'compete' with others for the same positions. The distinction is nevertheless useful, since it helps us to differentiate, for instance, a school class with one aggressive leader where he or she can be highly symbolically rewarded with pride and well-being and the rest of the class be threatened and feel miserable, from another school class that instead of one aggressive leader has several cooperative leaders that respect their schoolmates. In this case, the total amount of well-being and respect will be much higher. In the case of material domination, on the contrary, what one gains the other loses, and even if it is true that greater sharing of scarce resources can increase the total amount of well-being, because of the decreasing utility of those resources when accumulated in a few hands, there would be no increase in the resources themselves.

The analytical distinction, however fluid in empirical terms, will be useful in order to conceptualise musical and social spaces. Symbolic domination is difficult to grasp, precisely because one of its main characteristics is that it makes domination invisible. In our contemporary society, material domination is mainly worked out through the state and the market (property and market situation), leading to a position of generalised advantage or disadvantage: a higher or lower share of the social surplus (always relying on the state's monopoly of legitimate physical violence). A position of generalised advantage, however, tends to lead to a position of symbolic domination, since the economically and legally powerful have more resources to impose or produce those representations that are to their benefit, and to make domination invisible. Authors like Marx, Weber, Gramsci, Berger, Luckmann or Foucault, just to name a few, have discussed this central issue in social thought, differing in the extent to which they believe that symbolic domination is a direct result of material domination, but sharing the view that the most effective power is that which is not seen as such³⁸.

Claiming a perfect overlapping between the two would imply assuming either a deterministic base-superstructure model or an implicit functionalism – also present in many Marxist accounts – that would only be acceptable if the particular causal mechanism connecting them is explained. Even though the following pages will, where necessary, establish some broad generalisations about the influence of economic on symbolic domination, and even though I believe in the causal promi-

³⁸ Notions like 'ideology', 'false consciousness', 'legitimation', 'reification', 'fetishism' or 'hegemony', among many others, directly point to this issue.

nence of material over symbolic domination, the point of departure is a conception of the 'symbolic' as relatively autonomous, open-ended, fragmentary, complex, diverse and unpredictable. If we accept that symbolic domination is characterised by its invisibility, we are forced to see the picture in its whole complexity.

Moreover, it must not be forgotten that the distinction is analytical, since material domination is always actualised through language and symbolic practices. Legal and economic pressure, for instance, are not merely 'material', in the sense that they directly refer to the distribution of, and access to, scarce material resources, but also 'symbolic'. Economic pressure is only possible when the belief in private property *makes sense* to an important section of the population. Otherwise, we would share our economic resources, or we would just 'take' other people's property. In the case of the law, the belief in the state and either its law or its police must *make sense* to the great majority of those around us. Otherwise, the state will not be able to enforce the law, since the number of people breaking it would be just too large to deal with. Even in the extreme cases of war, symbolic domination plays an important role. In the case of all these examples, although it is true that they are closer to what I call 'material' domination, since they clearly enforce the social distribution of material resources among the population, they have – they *need* – the ultimate backing of (legitimate) violence to make sure they do.

A way out of this complexity, as well as many other problems faced by the study of social stratification, is that offered by the CAMSIS project (Cambridge Social Interaction and Stratification Scale). What we are calling (hierarchical) 'social geographies', or what in sociology is usually referred to as 'social structure', could be seen as the sum or the result of the combination of all existing material and symbolic dominations. As Ken Prandy states, from the point of view of the CAMSIS approach to social stratification,

'Resources and rewards constitute a hierarchy – or a set of strongly related hierarchies – of inequalities, of relative advantage and disadvantage, which will be reflected in a (complex) hierarchy of lifestyles. The social space of social interaction will, in turn, reflect this hierarchy, simplifying it through a process by which different inequalities come to be evaluated relative to one another, through everyday practice' (Prandy 1998: 1).

This means that all the different inequalities and dominations are continuously evaluated relative to one another, and as a result of this comparison a single – though complex – hierarchy of generalised advantage and disadvantage is achieved and reflected in a hierarchy of lifestyles. Since this hierarchy of lifestyles will lead to a higher social interaction among those with a similar lifestyle, if we measure the frequency of social interaction (for instance friendship and marriage) among individuals in different occupations, we can know the ranking of occupations in a supposed hierarchy of generalised advantage and disadvantage. We can thus appreciate social space (Prandy 1998). This is what the CAMSIS project has done, with the result that this scale explains unequal access to resources and rewards with more accuracy than other classifications of occupations. The originality of the CAMSIS approach is that its point of departure

is social interaction, not any theoretical assumption about social classes, a classification or stratification of occupations, or a hierarchy of status groups.

In this sense, it is built as what López and Scott (2000) call 'relational' structure, but assuming the existence of an ongoing evaluation of different inequalities in relation to one another, which is a process in which symbolic work and domination play a crucial role. We can analyse 'relational' structure from the point of view of 'objective' or 'material' relations (production relations in the case of Marx, or social interaction in the case of the CAMSIS approach), but such an analysis will be partial unless we also take into consideration the role of the symbolic or cultural realm – the institutionalised structure, as López and Scott call it – in the social construction of such relations. And this is where the approach to social geographies, understood as the cultural production of social distances and proximities (as well as its connections with musical geographies), can be useful, in that it combines an interest in social interaction distances and proximities with the main focus on imagined or typified cultural distances and proximities.

Nevertheless, whereas we have talked about the relationship between material and symbolic inequality or domination in terms of economic and cultural hierarchies, what happens with young people, whose social geographies are built to a greater extent independently of occupation and distribution of material resources? In the first place, it is clear that economic position still plays an important role, although it does so mainly through their parents' occupations, lifestyles and spending possibilities. It is also true, however, that since most young people share a rather similar condition – life has not yet made them as different as they will be –, the realm of the symbolic plays a particularly important role in configuring social geographies. The absence of a clear social location that occupation will later provide leads young people to look for their social identity in the symbolic realm. Even if they are initially located in neighbourhoods, schools and networks of social relations which are strongly dependant on their parents' positions of generalised advantage, they negotiate their identity, to a great extent, through the symbols provided by popular culture, making them an incomparable laboratory of the present increase in importance of what we call consumer culture in social relations.

Respect, dignity, recognition and identity

Focusing on the interplay of material and symbolic inequalities is important because domination does not only relate to distribution of 'material' resources, but also of 'respect', 'dignity' and 'recognition'. We are moving now into the realm of 'identity', which has to do with our 'place' within social space and its hierarchies and the functioning of mutual recognition and respect. As Woodward points out in her discussion about the concepts of identity and difference, 'Discourses and systems of representation construct places from which individuals can position themselves and from which they can speak' (1997: 14), in that they mark difference and make identity possible. From this point of view, to understand identity we need to focus on 'the ways in which culture sets boundaries and marks out difference' (ibid.: 30), which points directly to what we have called 'typifications' of

social geographies. Nevertheless, our difference must be recognised as potential material for identity. We all look for respect and recognition from others³⁹ – even ‘dignity’, which points rather to an inner quality, needs to be socially recognised to be feasible. Jenkins puts it as follows:

‘Social identity is our understanding of who we are and of who other people are, and, reciprocally, other people’s understanding of themselves and of others (which includes us). Social identity is, therefore, no more essential than meaning; it too is the product of agreement and disagreement, it too is negotiable’. (Jenkins 1996: 5)

I am interested in the cultural production of distances and proximities, differences and similarities, and young people’s locations within them, particularly as these relate to social hierarchies. The question is whether we can understand such distances merely in terms of their typifications, or whether we must also consider what we have called material inequalities as well as *sensuous* meanings. We will approach this issue from the broad perspective of hierarchies of generalised advantage and disadvantage.

As we have already noted, we live in a world where the ideals of ‘liberty’ and ‘equality’ are rhetorically taken for granted but at the same time the reality of inequality and hierarchical difference is not only an everyday reality, but a naturalised one. This paradox enormously complicates the search for ‘respect’ and ‘dignity’ among those who are in a position of generalised disadvantage, since their position of disadvantage in the supposedly ‘equal’ social relations are often seen as nothing else but ‘their fault’. Everyday epithets like ‘loser’, ‘winner’, ‘successful’, ‘capable’, ‘intelligent’, ‘dumb’, etc., illustrate the pervasive symbolic violence of the representations we use to make sense of our social world, and we can easily guess the importance of the feelings they raise in individuals, even if they do not show them. The importance of these epithets in the way we conceive our social relations is a good example of the fact that, as Richard Sennett argues, modern society lacks positive expressions of (democratic) respect and mutual recognition (2003: 13). We are imagined as ‘equal’ and ‘free’, but as a result of our ongoing mutual comparison, the fact is that we continuously establish hierarchies of value. The practice in contemporary society is that we value individuals depending on their abilities and their position in social hierarchies – which we explicitly or implicitly believe to be related elements. We continuously compare ourselves with others, and know that in our social world more respect and recognition are given to those with more ability or a higher social position. We might feel this idea to be unfair, but even if we ‘resist’ it, we will find it extremely difficult to ignore in our everyday life.

The experience of respect and dignity, however, has not always been seen exactly in the same way. Middle Age vassals were personally attached to their Lords, who in exchange for protection would take part of the product of their

³⁹ See Sennett & Cobb (1993 [1972]), Sennett (2003) and Cardús (2004) for an analysis of many of the ideas that follow.

labour. It was, thus, a 'personal' domination in a considerably static world. Vassals, however, were 'sons of God', and the social order was, ultimately, God's will. With the breakdown of this religious and traditional legitimisation of inequality, and the spread of the belief in liberty, equality and fraternity, a position of advantage or disadvantage becomes a consequence not of God's will but of human actions, either one's own actions (or 'abilities') or those of others (or 'social structures'). Depending on where we locate the 'causal' explanation of our position, we will place more responsibility on us or others, and thus feel more guilt and shame or angst and resentment. To put it differently, depending on the way we typify and make sense of social geographies, we will experience them in one way or another.

The important point is that both in the *ancien régime* and in modern capitalism, 'the 'humbling' of inferiors is necessary for the maintenance of social order' (Sennett & Cobb 1993 [1972]: 247). Although the ideals of liberty and equality seemed to prepare the terrain to finally achieve equal dignity for everybody, the reality has shown that capitalism did not have a viable image of human dignity that could be equally distributed among the population, as Sennett and Cobb (*ibid.*) poignantly remark. Equality before the law and freedom for personal enterprise in the market were the mechanisms through which the promises of liberty and equality were to be achieved. The idea was that through the market, everybody – mostly men, since women, if possible, looked for their social position through marriage – could find their dignity, but the stubborn reality showed an obviously unequal world, which makes clear that the modern liberal political project does not provide a viable image of human dignity. When we compare with each other through the lenses of dominant meanings, those who are not at the winning end of society find it more difficult to be considered as – and feel like – persons with dignity. In the eyes of dominant meanings, they have less 'value'.

People in subordinated groups, if they want to feel dignified, have two options: either climb up the social ladder, or invert, challenge, resist and fight dominant meanings. It is important that this challenging of the dominant meanings cannot be individual: it needs to be collective, since this is the only way an alternative pattern of values can be 'recognised' and, thus, maintained. If alternative 'features' are to be valued, an alternative collective must recognise and respect these features as valuable. Such 'alternative' views on dignity can be identified in social theory and everyday life. Marxism could be an example of the former, and many working class cultures are a good illustration of the latter. Marxism attempts to turn the hierarchy of dignity upside-down, giving higher dignity to manual workers and lesser value to capitalists. Marxism transfers the responsibility for social location from the individual and his 'ability' to the social structure and its perversity and organised exploitation and alienation. Many manual working class subcultures make the same inversion giving higher value to manual labour (*making real things*) than to mental labour (*not real jobs*, not 'producing real things', and living off the real labour of the working class).

This is, as we have already remarked, what Paul Willis (1981) argues that working class cultures do: the young working class kids with a counter-school culture can be seen as the output of working class resistance to dominant meanings, whereas the middle class meritocratic worldview values upward mobility and all the steps needed for a successful career. It is clear that not all working class kids can get middle class jobs, even if they all follow the necessary steps set up by the meritocratic worldview. This means that if all working class kids believed in it, those who could not get middle class jobs would feel 'less valuable' with their location in social hierarchies. The counter-school culture is, from Willis' point of view, a collective answer to this problem through an inversion of dominant values that is inextricably linked to certain notions of masculinity: it praises (manly) 'manual' and diminishes (effeminate) 'mental' work; it values (manly and sincere) rough language and manners and puts down (sissy and opaque) distinguished ones; or, in other words, it 'gives alternative grounds for valuing the self and a solid, sometimes formidable, presence' (Willis 2000: 43). This search for respect is what Willis sees as being at the core of counter-school culture: 'They develop their own cultural pursuits and identities, at least avoiding the double oppression of living out subordination in the bankrupt terms of the official routes mapped out for them' (ibid.: 39).

Counter-school culture is obviously not the only way of finding respect when in subordinate positions. Sennett showed that even though his working class interviewees in low status jobs felt that they had failed to make something of themselves through their jobs, they achieved a sense of respect because they had provided for their families. When this respect was not recognised by middle class people, it was felt as an insult (Sennett 2003: 58). Sennett, however, does not think that such solutions to the lack of respect are successful in making people feel better, because individuals got caught in contradictory situations where they did not feel comfortable. With the expression *hidden injuries of class*, he and Cobb (1993 [1972]) clearly captured the often subterranean existence of those meanings structuring individuals' hierarchical locations in social geographies. As we have noted above, these are often related to feelings which are not directly signified, but sensuously experienced – even if they are experienced (as they are) as a result of the linguistic meanings and social structures in which individuals are located. This means that whereas symbolic forms and representations are crucial to understanding the way individuals negotiate their identity and get respect, dignity and recognition, we have to take into account that some aspects of this negotiation are not signified but sensuously experienced.

We argued in the preceding chapter that during the last few decades, as a result of a process of increasing 'individualisation', the collective and structural explanations of inequality are gradually disappearing from everyday life and the public arena. Following Furlong & Cartmel (1997), we have argued that individuals increasingly see their social location as their own responsibility, and fail to connect it to social structures and collective processes. I believe that this heightened individual responsibility, combined with the increasing visibility of middle

and upper class lifestyles through the visual media, is provoking greater feelings of 'shame' and 'frustration' among the socially disadvantaged. Individualisation prevents individuals from attributing their social position to the unfairness of the structural context. The articulation by working class political movements and public representations of the feelings of 'angst' and 'resentment' seems to be diminishing. This decline is linked to the rising prominence of the realms of what we have called 'consumerist' and 'cool' dispositions as arenas where social recognition and personal sense of dignity are being contested. Through consumption, particularly in its cool anti-gregarious variation, we come to signify social positions as partially disconnected from structural positions⁴⁰. And it is in this sense that our study of young people's social space becomes a privileged object of research, since it is a subcultural milieu where particular and often 'alternative' notions of 'respect', 'dignity' and 'recognition' are being worked out. Instead of 'occupation' or 'generalised advantage', in young people's social space, the distribution of respect and recognition is a matter of the way different individuals and groups deal with matters not only related to 'school' and 'work', but also to 'toughness', 'sex', 'locality', 'language' and also 'music', among many others. This is how we can understand how young people culturally produce their particular location within social hierarchies and make possible the negotiation of identities.

Moreover, it is interesting because, whereas young people's social space includes typifications of structural locations in terms of generalised advantage, it does so in very opaque and often contradictory ways, only indirectly linking them to deep structured feelings of dignity and respect. What I mean is that instead of tackling the lack of respect of the socially disadvantaged, the fields of consumerism and coolness create an alternative or even 'subcultural' world of meanings where identities are being negotiated. These alternative spheres of meaning – what we term young people's social space – not only avoid direct or simplistic references to hierarchies of generalised advantage, but also hide and dissimulate what Sennett and Cobb (1993 [1972]) call 'the injuries of class'. Even if these injuries and the subsequent 'resentment' and 'anger' of those in positions of generalized disadvantage are strong, 'coolness', understood as a broad emotional style, is based, according to Stearns (1994: 1)⁴¹, on disengagement and nonchalance operating as an emotional mantle shielding the whole personality. In

⁴⁰ See Willis' conceptualisation of the 'quasi-modo commodity' (2000) and the specificity of the cultural commodity: '[I]ts particular kind of usefulness not only must permanently coexist with fetishism but also is profoundly and contradictorily transformed, altered and stressed by it. In no other commodity form are usefulness and fetishism so unifyingly opposed. De-fetishization works against fetishism, and fetishism works against de-fetishism, producing a stable instability in the cultural commodity. This is the elusive quality I have been pursuing, the *particular* nature of the cultural commodity: the quasi-modo commodity' (ibid.: 58).

⁴¹ Stearns uses these expressions in relation to avoiding embarrassing excess. Even if Stearns refers to a middle-class American twentieth-century emotional style, I argue that we can broadly generalise its normative influence to Western society as a whole, particularly in relation to young people's social space, although with many inner variations depending on the particular place within it.

his formulation, the emotional mantle protects individuals *from embarrassing excess*, but in my broader consideration of it, not as a middle-class emotional style, but as a general youthful normative attitude that would mix emotional restraint with bohemian anti-gregarious dispositions, it also protects individuals from revealing class and structural injuries. This is, naturally, a mere theoretical conjecture that would imply that in the imagined space of cool consumerism, individuals pretend to attribute respect and dignity transcending the dominant 'industrial' or 'modern' definitions of them identified by Sennett and Cobb. By doing so, they would normatively keep class and structural injuries subterranean and culturally produce a social space with the pretence that class is not present.

Nowadays, public displays of intense emotions, and particularly negative emotion, are regarded as signs of vulnerability (Stearns 1994: 260), and this can be seen both in everyday emotional life and public manifestations like the declining emotional edge of political debating. Whereas intense emotions are generally discouraged, there is one sphere where they are not only allowed but even encouraged: leisure. Through fiction, sport, commodities and popular culture in general, passions become means in the new quest for excitement that Lacroix (2005 [2001]) calls *a world of emotions without sentiments*. The way these passions in leisure are channelled and structured, therefore, is a central object of sociological inquiry, since they probably articulate in one way or another the hidden injuries of class (and structural relations), even if this is not obvious to the individuals. It will be our task, therefore, to bring to the surface how deep feelings of respect and dignity linked to generalised advantage are articulated in the production of musical and social geographies and the process of recognition and identity negotiation, even if they are often subterranean, opaque or at least subtle and irreflexive, and even if they are often felt at the level of sensuousness without being linguistically signified or typified.

Social control

Even if we are interested in the way we typify and culturally organise our experience of social geographies, this does not imply that we are talking about mere representations. On the contrary, they are relevant meanings structuring our everyday relations. It is true, however, that the notion of social geographies and their way of organising social differences and hierarchies is not at all self-evident, since we rarely conceptualise them in this way in everyday life. Paying attention to the 'social control' mechanisms that are socially displayed when these geographies are not respected will probably be the most efficient way of illustrating their existence. Identifying such mechanisms sustaining 'musical' and 'social' geographies will reveal how their borders and coordinates are enforced, and therefore how they have an 'objectified' existence *out there*. It will also facilitate the understanding of their deep influence on our personal and intimate experience, and how they are conformed, contested or negotiated by individuals.

The mechanisms of social control are aimed at the maintenance of our institutionalised reality, that is, our expectations about the world and the

behaviour of individuals. One of the aspects of institutionalised reality is the unequal distribution of resources and social respect, dignity and recognition, which I will relate to music and social distances and proximities. This is not to say that we permanently perceive the burden of social control enforcing the social order, since through socialisation we ‘interiorise’ social norms so that we end up taking them for granted, that is, we do not even dare to think that they might be different. I will come back to this aspect in the following sections. Because of the taken-for-granted character of institutionalised reality, it will be useful to focus on the mechanisms used to enforce the social order *when it is not followed*, that is, to keep its members in line⁴². I will focus on the social order of musical and social geographies, which is the institutionalised reality I am trying to analyse.

According to Berger (1986 [1963]), the more obvious, definitive and clear types of social control enforcing social distances and proximities are violence and the economic and legal pressures that we experience. Violence is the ultimate and oldest mechanism of social control. Order in modern societies is also based on physical violence, but in contrast with other historical contexts, its legitimate use is monopolised by the state. Personal violence is legally forbidden, and only the state, through the police and the army, is legitimised to use it. Violence is what lies at the end of the legal system regulating our living together and exercising a strong social control over our behaviour. We *need* to be at peace with the law, because otherwise we will feel its pressure, and if we try to escape it, we will feel its violence through the police. The fear of this violence is a crucial mechanism in making people accept the social order, including unequal distribution of both material resources and symbolic recognition. It might sound strange to call this a mechanism of social control when dealing with music, but we only have to think of legal and police actions against musical manifestations like rave parties, clubbing activities, playing music in the streets, exchanging records through the Internet or doing live performances⁴³ to understand that it is absolutely relevant. Copyright laws and night-life regulations are clear restrictions on the cultural production of musical geographies.

Mention must be made here of the important fact that among young people, as we will see, there is an important in-between space between everyday life violence and state monopoly of legitimate violence. In broad terms, young people’s sociality is subject to the law of the state, but there are many interstitial spaces where personal physical violence, autonomous from the state’s monopoly, acts as a mechanism of social control and domination between young individuals – as is the case in other social spaces, like that of crime. Fear of being mugged, beaten up and

⁴² What follows is deeply rooted in Peter Berger’s account of social control in his introduction to sociology (1986 [1963]).

⁴³ In 2003 and 2004, for instance, Fermín Muguruza, a Basque musician, saw that many of his concerts – and concerts of a joint tour with Manu Chao – were censored because of his political ideas, after a campaign by the Association of the Victims for Terrorism (AVT) that insisted in relating him to ETA, the Basque Country terrorist organisation.

even shot – in the case of Birmingham – is an important component in configuring young people’s social geographies, and as such it has an important presence in musical geographies. I am referring to violence at school, in the streets and when going out, as well as male-female violence. ‘Toughness’, as we will see, is a relevant element in culturally producing young people’s social geographies.

Besides violence and the law, there is another crucial mechanism of social control, which is economic pressure. Unless we want to be in trouble, we *need* money to survive. If we don’t have any, we will feel to the full the social control exercised by economic precariousness. The fear of this precariousness is a strong motivation to conform to what is expected of us. In capitalist societies, the economic arena is central not only to ‘earning a living’, but also in the struggle for social position and respect. In contrast with times when inherited ‘status’ was central, now the market is the principal – though not the only – institution structuring social positions. Depending on our market position, we can experience clear barriers separating us from others: in what we can buy, in what we can do, in where we can live, and so on.

Apart from physical violence and economic and legal mechanisms of social control, there are other powerful but less obvious forms that belong to the symbolic realm, in that instead of relying on the fear of violence, the law or economic pressure, they are based on the loss of respect, dignity, and recognition that can result from other people’s gossip, ridicule and lack of approval or acceptance. The mechanisms of shame and guilt, for instance, are extremely powerful in controlling human behaviour. The power of these mechanisms of symbolic violence is that they are only partially regulated by the state, and therefore offer a broad arena where we culturally negotiate the meanings that make sense of our social order and our position in it. Among these mechanisms we must consider the distribution of recognition, a basic issue for identity. Symbolic fights are crucial in mapping out social reality and our place in it, and our sense of place is achieved through the navigation map offered by our stock of knowledge. Identity, our sense of place within social geographies, cannot be understood without the game of symbolic recognition and negotiation in the social arena. We will develop this issue later in this chapter. For the moment, it will be enough to point out the relevance of this aspect in the case of young people and adolescents, when their *normative* ‘identity crisis’⁴⁴ and the resulting insecurity leads to a stronger importance of what is known as ‘peer pressure’ and the search for social acceptance and self-confidence. One of the main elements of the identity crisis implied in leaving childhood and entering youth is the pressure to find an identity that is accepted and recognised by others, particularly by same-age significant others. As we will see later, during early adolescence, young people feel an ‘urge’ to conform to what they perceive as being others’ expectations, and only a few

⁴⁴ I am referring again to Erikson’s classic formulation (1980[1968]).

years afterwards they tend to claim that they have ‘matured’ and do not care that much about what others think of them.

The social logic of normality

Talking about ‘musical and social geographies’ does not mean understanding them as a unified, well delimited and coherent social or cultural reality. We have portrayed young people’s social space as an alternative set of meanings within general social space, but both youth and general social spaces are certainly contested, plural and complex realities. Whereas dominant meanings attribute respect to certain practices, alternative and minority positions might attribute respect and recognition to the very opposite ones. Whereas dominant categorisations – for instance through moral panics – might typify young people and other social minorities in certain ways, young people and other minorities will probably use a very different set of typifications to make sense of their social reality. To understand the complex way in which we will understand the combination of dominant and alternative views on musical and social geographies, we will start by discussing the notion of ‘normality’.

Taken-for-granted normality

In order to depict social geographies, we have focused on the social control mechanisms that sustain them. We have said, however, that even though social control is crucial to keep individuals in line, we do not usually feel its presence as a suffocating coercive burden. This is possible because we internalise social norms and take them for granted. Indeed, the more important aspects of our social reality are precisely those to which we do not pay attention, or even do not see when we look at them, because we *take them for granted*. When considering social geographies, we are only partially aware of how our everyday typifications are configuring social distances and proximities, in the same way that we are only partially aware of how our sensuous meanings and dispositions concerning social hierarchies, on the one side, and musical experience, on the other, are structuring our social experience.

One of the more important aspects we take for granted in our social interactions is what we consider ‘normal’. We repeatedly judge persons and situations as ‘normal’ and ‘not normal’, but only exceptionally do we reflexively analyse our notion of normality. In general, we just consider ourselves and our perception of reality as ‘normal’ – even when we transgress social norms, we do not consider our behaviour as ‘strange’. Every individual sees the social geographies from his or her point of view, and ‘reads’ social reality from the parameters of such location. The closer it is, the more ‘natural’ and ‘normal’ it appears to our eyes. The furthest it is, the more ‘strange’ and ‘peculiar’ it seems. Remember the Lugbara and how they considered the people living further away

from them to be 'inverted' beings⁴⁵. Once we reflexively consider our taken-for-granted knowledge about what is 'normal', we destroy its invisibility and thus jeopardise its power to structure everyday life.

The point is that 'normality' is not an 'essence', but a 'relationship': we culturally produce what we consider to be 'normal'; moreover, *the 'normal' person is normal in relation to someone*. In other words, by identifying the 'different', the 'other', we know who we – the 'normal people' – are. Normality, therefore, is closely linked to the negotiation of identity. Considering oneself 'normal', when it implies to some extent 'stigmatising' the other (as non-normal), also implies a power relation, in that stigmatising the other can have a strong impact on this other's self-identity. Carrying a stigma can imply non-acceptance and lack of respect, a difficulty in establishing satisfactory social relations.⁴⁶

Since in our everyday life we continually use the adjective 'normal' to judge things, behaviours, persons and situations, and we do it without paying any attention to it, the adjective is a powerful tool in culturally producing social geographies: it plays with the social borders of 'normalcy', which are always socially situated in that they are relative to every location (what is 'normal' for someone can be quite 'strange' for someone else). In fact, 'normality' is a powerful weapon both in producing social geographies and in making them opaque, since our irreflexive use of the term builds the false perception that society is composed of one 'normality' and several extreme, rare or even stigmatised positions outside it. And this is false. This is closely related to our usage of the terms 'we' and 'they', through which we constantly delimitate the borders of our affiliations within the coordinates of social geographies.

Once social differentiation has shaken and diversified our cultural milieu, any reference to 'normality' becomes highly problematic. In contemporary societies more than ever, many 'normalities' coexist, and they are continuously cohabiting and negotiating their contribution to the representation of a 'dominant normality', which in its turn is not an objectified and clear-cut reality but a combination of contested views which, depending on the outcomes of the negotiations, produce an unstable, diverse and fragmentary 'dominant representation of normality'.

Even if different locations imply different visions of normality, there are some aspects where the definitions of 'normality' are mainly shared by all members of our social context. Through the process of symbolic domination, some definitions of what is normal become 'dominant', and to a great extent legitimised. In each place and time, there are some meanings which are clearly known and enforced as 'normal' and other as 'deviant' by a whole community. Research on 'deviant'

⁴⁵ Social psychologists Tajfel (1975, 1981) and Turner (1990) have studied through experimental research how we tend to stress the similarities with the groups or categories to which we 'belong' (indogroups) and, in contrast, stress our differences with what we consider 'other groups' (exogroups).

⁴⁶ See Goffman's *Stigma* (1990 [1963]) and Becker's *Outsiders* (1991 [1963]), two key works analysing the logic of stigmatisation and labelling. Many of the ideas that follow are taken from these works.

young people like the homeless, delinquents or drug-addicts, for instance, shows that most of them have, in the long run and in one way or another, a desire to 'normalise' their situation. The symbolic violence of a dominant definition of normality will imply that subordinate 'normalities', even when considering their surrounding reality as 'normal', will probably assume and even interiorise their 'abnormality' or 'stigma' in relation to the dominant view. They will be, in one way or another, 'outsiders'. This view is important because it breaks with the taken-for-granted assumption that 'outsiders', 'deviants' or 'stigmatised' persons are so because of their features or behaviour, when this is never enough to understand their position. We must always look as well at the *enforcement* of such 'otherness', since it is ultimately created by the social space as a whole.

An example of a dominant normality would be the way we maintain and produce material inequalities in a liberal and capitalist context. Our material or economic organisation needs individuals to compete with each other and struggle for social resources and social status through the worlds of production and consumption. In contemporary society, we assume as 'normal', as taken for granted, the need of competition within a capitalist organisation of production and consumption. Someone who tries to escape these *taken-for-granted* aspects of modern life will be perceived as 'strange' or 'deviant'. This is an example of a dominant 'normality' shared by nearly all members of society (even when lamented or contested). Alongside this, naturally, there are circumscribed 'normalities' only shared by part of society's members, depending on their location in social geographies. In this sense, what is normal for a young woman is not so for her parents; what is normal for a young man regularly involved in nightlife might not be normal at all for another youngster who rarely goes out. Differentiation and cultural pluralism guarantee not only that many normalities coexist, but also that 'dominant normality' can be resisted.

Nevertheless, in order to be sustained, any 'alternative' normality must be taken for granted by a collective of individuals. Any new objectivated reality, when it becomes routinised and institutionalised, becomes 'normal' as soon as it is taken for granted by a group of people. This process has a lot to do with what sociologists term the 'process of legitimation', that is, of building ways in which the institutional world can be explained and justified (Berger & Luckmann 1966: 61). It is difficult to find a better justification for an institutional reality than its 'normality'. Every time we use the adjective 'normal' we are stating that whatever we define as such is what it should 'naturally' be.⁴⁷ And this is ultimately a matter of political and economic power, the result of a negotiation among all members of society.

⁴⁷ Even though this approach is not based on Gramsci's idea of 'hegemony' as it was adopted by Cultural Studies, it could be easily related to it. Hegemony was understood as the situation in which dominant classes ruled not only through violence but also by obtaining consent. This consent implied that the power of the ruling classes appeared as legitimate and natural, as if it could not be otherwise. I am strongly concerned about the relationship between the cultural production of 'normality' and social hierarchies, but even if I consider Gramsci's notion a stimulating and challenging concept, I prefer to use instead Berger and Luckman's formulation.

It is important to point out that in contemporary urban societies, the very idea of 'normality' has become quite complex. Whereas in traditional small communities the 'normal person' without eccentricity was the norm, nowadays eccentricity is often praised and admired. Indeed, the current relationship between normality and eccentricity is paradoxical: we stigmatise those who are not '*normal enough*', but at the same time 'being different' is a compulsory attitude for modern individualism.⁴⁸ This means that the managing of 'normalcy' and 'differentiation' becomes a subtle and complicated task in our search for respect and recognition. It is difficult, for instance, to establish a clear-cut distinction, in relation to social norms, between 'conformist' and 'eccentric', 'resistant' or 'transgressive' behaviours. This is so because there is not one set of clear-cut social norms, but a plurality of them, and any behaviour can be 'conformist' in relation to a set of norms and, at the same time, 'transgressive' in relation to another set. 'Conformity' to social norms is enforced through social control, but this does not say much, since on the one hand such norms and mechanisms of social control can relate to specific social groups and subgroups, and on the other hand some social norms push individuals to break with (some other) social norms. We must bear in mind, for instance, that breaking (some) social norms is often a way of acquiring social respect among particular groups.

We can see this difficult equilibrium among young people, who feel a social pressure to be 'transgressive' in relation to their parents' expectations, particularly in ritualised practices of going out, drinking, smoking and taking other drugs, having sexual relationships or adopting a spectacular appearance. All of these are practices that respond to the social norm of what we have encapsulated under the label of a 'cool' normative disposition. At the same time, there is a great pressure to 'conform', to 'be normal', not only on the part of their parents, but also emanating from a majority of young people who find 'eccentricity', or many manifestations of it, inappropriate. The fact that young people need to negotiate both 'adult' and 'young' normative expectations, and that each of them is in fact a set of different, plural and coexisting normative expectations, means that what for one observer will be transgressive or even resistant, for another can be conformist. Like normality, transgression and conformism are relational and situated realities. The complexity is even greater because the prominence of the norm of eccentricity leads to a situation where challenging adult expectations often becomes mere – and in some sense 'conformist' – 'provocation' rather than 'real transgression' (even though, as we have just said, 'transgression' cannot be essentialised and must always be seen in relational and situated terms). As a result of all this, every youngster and every generation of young people need to find their own

⁴⁸ As Robert E. Park put it ninety years ago, 'The small community ... tolerates eccentricity. The city, on the contrary, rewards it'. (Park 1997 [1915]: 26). As we have previously seen, as early as 1905 Georg Simmel also drew attention to the importance of 'being special' and 'extravagance' in contemporary urban life (1964 [1905]). What we have called 'normative provocation' and the 'cool' disposition would be contemporary extensions of this phenomenon.

equilibrium between conforming, provoking, negotiating and resisting adult expectations. A great deal of young people's talk and cultural practices deals with this dilemma. The relative and socially constructed character of transgression is best illustrated by a school teacher in Iran who commented on the changing culture of his country as follows:

'When I was growing up, in the shah's days, the way to rebel was to become a Marxist or, even better, an Islamist. Now the way to do it is to dance, use drugs and go to secret parties'.⁴⁹

As Goffman points out, we all, at least at some moment in life, deviate from the 'norm' implied in 'normality', so 'stigma management is a general feature of society, a process occurring wherever there are identity norms' (1990 [1963]: 155). He points out that there is a general pattern of stigma management, and that any individual is able to play both parts in the drama of the 'normal-deviant'. The normal and the stigmatised are not persons but rather 'perspectives' of a social process in which every individual participates in both roles. The point is that

'The stigmatisation of those with a bad moral record clearly can function as a means of formal social control; the stigmatisation of those in certain racial, religious and ethnic groups has apparently functioned as a means of removing these minorities from various avenues of competition.' (Goffman 1990 [1963]: 165)

It is important to understand that such meanings are part of our real world: as Hebdige pointed out in his book *Subculture*, the maps of meaning cutting across complexity 'think' us as much as we 'think' them (1977: 14). In this research I will look at the process of cultural production of 'normalities' and 'deviations' in what I call youth geographies. Through the cultural production of 'normalities' in relation to both musical and social geographies, I will attempt to understand how youth styles, social structures and identities intermingle in this process. Since certain aspects of 'normality' are, in youth geographies, quite different from 'adult' notions of what normal is, we can understand youth geographies as a sort of 'alternative' normality – which in its turn has its internal diversity of normalities – and this poses the question of how we understand the interplay of different 'normalities' in a given cultural environment.

Cultures, subcultures, resistance and transgression

Because social geographies are not a clear cut reality and there is no such thing as well-established systematic coordinates of social distances and proximities, sociologically conceptualising them is not an easy task. In our everyday life we materialise social distances through personal face-to-face relations but, more importantly, through our pattern of interpretation of social geographies, that is, through 'culture'. The point is, however, that 'culture' is not a homogenous reality:

⁴⁹ Appeared in *Newsweek*, 9 May 1997: 11.

there is no such thing as a 'finished' culture identically shared by all members of a community of people. In fact, we won't find two single individuals sharing exactly the same cultural frames of interpretation. If there is no such thing as a 'normality', this is because there is no such thing as a homogenous 'culture' defining – making sense of – what is normal. This means that whereas some cultural meanings are broadly shared by the majority of the population, like the importance of economic status in locating individuals in social hierarchies – even though the importance we give to it varies from individual to individual – other cultural meanings are only shared by a particular portion of a broader community of people. This would be the case, for instance, of the importance of taking drugs or *tuning* cars as sources of respect among certain groups of young people. One way of dealing with this complexity is talking about culture as communication, as we have defined it in the previous chapter.

From this point of view, social geographies are the coordinates that structure, organise and enable communication, that is, our living together. These coordinates certainly have to do with material interaction and cultural frames of reference. Different locations imply different frames of reference, different perspectives through which individuals perceive social reality – and, of course, 'normality' and the attribution of respect. Moreover, each individual does not directly inherit his or her own frame of reference depending on his or her social location, but needs to culturally re-produce it in relation to his or her own biography and experience, that is, in relation to his or her particular practical problems and social experience with others. Every frame of reference may imply a different social construction of 'normalities'. Some of them might be shared, or at least acknowledged in some sense or another, by a whole population. Others might be known just to a small groups of individuals. And both of them organise meaningful communication within social geographies in one way or another.

'Normality', therefore, is always relative to a specific collectivity. There are some broad normative patterns that are shared by a whole community of people. In contemporary Western societies, for instance, we universally share the importance of money, occupation and consumption in socially attributing value to individuals. Even if many of us might challenge it, we 'know' that this is how our social world is organised, and that other normative patterns giving value to individuals are only acknowledged in specific sub-groups or spaces of interaction. These 'minority' normalities might oppose the broader normalities or not. For instance, people involved in many amateur circles of music making, or amateur sports, work out minority sets of attribution of respect that do not necessarily coincide with the dominant ones. This means that these alternative meanings are not necessarily downplayed or stigmatised by dominant 'normality', which in its turn implies that they do not directly challenge it. Youth geographies embrace many normative expectations that would fit this type of 'minority' normalities. Nevertheless, other minority normative patterns do challenge or resist the dominant ones, and are thus often the object of social control and stigmatisation, and thus labelled as 'non-normal'. Delinquent, drug or working-class subcultures

are all often labelled as deviant and stigmatised by dominant meanings, and all build alternative patterns of appreciation which to some extent challenge the dominant view on social hierarchies and the distribution of respect. There is an inversion of social meanings that enable these particular groups to neutralise the lack of respect that the dominant meanings assign to them – a strategy to avoid incorporating the social stigma with which the dominant culture dismisses them. We could include here many aspects of youth geographies, particularly those which are perceived as ‘extreme’ or ‘transgressive’ dispositions in relation to sex, drugs, swearing, (counter)school attitudes and many others.

The distinction between these ‘dominant’ and ‘minority’ normalcies is empirically fluid and complex to analyse. Subordinated normalcies, for instance, often have their own internal dominant and minority normative expectations. Afro-Caribbean normalcy in England or immigrant-Spanish normalcy in Catalonia present many aspects which are subordinate to dominant meanings, but at the same time can be understood as configuring among large numbers of society dominant normalcies with their subordinated counterparts. We are dealing here with the organisation of what Berger and Luckmann call systems and sub-systems of meaning, all of them with their own logics of integration. Individuals, moreover, are not necessarily restricted to one or another system of meaning, but rather inhabit a combination or articulation of them, which obviously makes the picture quite complex. When normative provocation has become the norm in youth geographies, distinguishing between ‘conformity’ and ‘resistance’ or ‘deviance’ becomes a difficult task.

The point is that we are interested in the cultural frames of reference of individuals in relation to the way they enable and structure communication, their living together. The cultural frames are the key to the solutions to their problems, since they configure their dispositions for understanding, judging and acting. If the dominant frame of reference is not useful in providing respect, the communications it enables might easily be unsatisfactory for many individuals, and this situation can lead them to look for some alternative solution to overcome this lack of recognition, and this solution can be the cultural production of an alternative normalcy structuring communication in a different way:

‘The crucial condition for the emergence of new cultural forms is the existence, in effective interaction with one another, of a number of actors with similar problems of adjustment. These may be the entire membership of a group or only certain members, similarly circumstanced, within the group. Among the conceivable solutions to their problems may be one which is not yet embodied in action and which does not therefore exist as a cultural model. This solution, except for the fact that it does not already carry the social criteria of validity and promise the social rewards of consensus, might well answer more neatly to the problems of this group and appeal to its members more effectively than any of the solutions already institutionalised. For each participant, this solution would be adjustive and adequately motivated provided that he could anticipate a simultaneous and corresponding transformation in the frames of reference of his fellows. Each would welcome a sign from the others that a new departure in this direction would receive approval and support.’ (Cohen 1997: 48-49)

Once a different normalcy has been culturally produced, communication can take new forms that modify our living together. If we focus on the cultural solutions to the problem of 'respect', as I do in this research, we can easily understand that subordinate groups whose social identity is stigmatised by the dominant culture, or the dominant culture of young people's social space, can attempt to change the criteria for evaluating people. The point is that this solution can hardly be individual, it must be collective. It is difficult to individually challenge the pressure to conform. To be maintained, the solutions must be acceptable to – at least some of – our significant others. We need satisfying social relationships that take for granted this solution, that is, this different view of social geographies. We need some consensus that rewards our behaviour with acceptance, recognition and respect, and that works out as the most important criterion of the *validity* of the frame of reference (Cohen 1997: 47). As Willis remarks, culture 'is crucially about identity, but social and positional as well as individual and self-inventing' (2000: 4). Even if cultural identity is about the maintenance of the self as a separate and viable force, he argues, 'the meaning-making involved is not free and open but intrinsically framed and constrained, as well as enabled, in specific and contingent ways' (*ibid.*: 4). He is referring to external structural determinations that include material conditions and inherited formations of sedimented or textual meanings, and this forces us to pay attention to the combination of individual and group creativity.

Whereas the *individual* solution to the lack of respect of those in socially disadvantaged positions generally is to compete for social mobility, the *collective* one can be – besides political struggle –, to change the cultural pattern of appreciation, to move towards an appreciation of the characteristics they do possess and the kind of conduct they are capable of. This collective change is a complex sum of what Cohen terms 'exploratory gestures' which, as long as they are accepted by a collective, can lead to a new cultural form that configures a new disposition to social geographies and even a new organisation of such geographies. This new pattern of appreciation can contradict and challenge the dominant cultural pattern. If this occurs, winning respect within the subcultural group will imply losing it outside the group, which naturally poses a new problem for individuals. If we think of young people, it is obviously true that very often what is acceptable to parents is not to their peers, and the other way around – which is a difficult dilemma they need to negotiate. Each of our roles implies a set of implicit norms to which we are expected to conform if we do not want to be subject to social control.

Alternative cultural solutions are what Cohen and initial cultural studies termed 'subcultures'⁵⁰. Hebdige defined subcultures as 'expressive forms and rituals of those subordinate groups' (1996 [1979]: 2), and stressed that the meaning of subculture is always in dispute. The truth is that the definition of 'dominant' and 'subordinated' or 'alternative' cultures or subcultures, as well as

⁵⁰ See Gelder & Thornton (1997) and Blackman (2005) for historical reviews of the use of the notion of 'subculture' within youth and popular culture research.

that of 'resistance' and 'conformity', are far from easy, since society at large is diverse and differentiated enough to make any substantial definition of them difficult to specify. The question is where the limits are to be drawn. The Birmingham approach rejected the – at that moment – mainstream notion of 'youth culture' because it suggested a homogenous, class-less view of youth cultural manifestations and appropriated 'the situation of the young almost exclusively in terms of the commercial and publicity manipulation and exploitation of the young' (1998 [1975]: 16). The fact is that their interest in working-class youth subcultural forms as resistant to the dominant culture and its cultural hegemony, as well as offering young people an imaginary solution to structural contradictions of post-war British youth, was sharply opposed to Talcott Parsons' (1963, 1972) interest in (mainly middle-class) youth culture as a functional set of meanings helping young people to deal with the uncertainty and complexity of modern youth transitions to marriage and adult status.

In the introduction to *Resistance through Rituals*, Clarke, Hall, Jefferson and Roberts referred to subcultures as 'sub-sets – smaller, more localised and differentiated structures, within one or other of the larger cultural networks' (1998 [1975]: 13). Their approach to spectacular youth subcultures focused on the 'symbolic resistance' to both 'dominant' (understanding by this the overall disposition of cultural power in the society as a whole) and 'parental' cultures, and explicitly specified that 'just as different groups and classes are unequally ranked in relation to one another, in terms of their productive relations, wealth and power, so *cultures* are differently ranked, and stand in opposition to one another, in relations of domination and subordination, along the scale of 'cultural power' (1998 [1975]: 11). Those with more power in society, they argued, are able to impose more legitimacy on their definitions of the world. The subordinated groups, however, always negotiate, resist or contest dominant meanings, so

'the relations between a subordinate and a dominant culture, wherever they fall within this spectrum, are always intensely active, always oppositional, in a structural sense (even when this opposition is latent, or experienced simply as the normal state of affairs – what Gouldner called "normalised repression"). Their outcome is not given but *made*. The subordinate class brings to this 'theatre of struggle' a repertoire of strategies and responses – ways of coping as well as of resisting. Each strategy in the repertoire mobilises certain real material and social elements: it constructs these into the supports for the different ways the class lives and resists its continuing subordination.' (Clarke *et al* 1998 [1975]: 44–5)

By 'repertoire of strategies' they understood working-class politics, working-class crime, etc. From this perspective, spectacular subcultures – which took shape around distinctive group activities and focal concerns – would be one of the many possible responses of young people to the situation in which they find themselves. In this thesis, however, I will complicate the reading of any cultural practice as 'resistant' to the dominant culture, since even if I share the original cultural studies interest in the structural embeddedness of youth cultures, I will take into account the structural influence through the particular localized norms in each

context of interaction, and thus show the ambiguous, relational and situated character of resistance and conformity⁵¹. In consequence, I will not assume any subcultural supposed authentic opposition or resistance to dominant and commercial culture and its assumed coherent, well-defined, fixed and differentiated character, as well as its inherent connection with working class structural location. Although by doing so I share many of the criticisms to the initial CCCS approach to subcultures from what has been recently called the 'post-subculturalist' approach to youth cultures⁵², my goal will be to focus on the way young people position themselves *in opposition to* different 'normalcies', on the way they negotiate and culturally produce the different normative pressures in their everyday life, and on the role of material and structural hierarchies on all these aspects - all of them questions more similar to the ones asked by the CCCS approach than by many of those defending the 'post-subculturalist' critique.

In this sense, the notion of young people's social space is an attempt to view this problem in a different way from both the CCCS and the 'post-subculturalist' approaches to youth cultures. With Hesmondhalgh, I believe that even if CCCS subculturalists exaggerated the fixity and boundedness of group identities, we nevertheless 'need to know how boundaries are constituted, not simply that they are fuzzier than various writers have assumed' (2005: 24). Paying attention to the cultural production of cultural and social boundaries is important because it will enable us to understand how cultural and structural differentiations relate to each other, and this implies taking into consideration not only both fluid and fixed youth cultural identifications, but also the way they relate to each other in youth geographies. As Hodkinson correctly proposes, we need to differentiate 'predominantly fluid elective amalgamations from those displaying greater levels of substance' (2004: 142). In this sense, the usefulness of the young people's social space approach is that it not only includes both of them, but that it takes into consideration their relational interdependence, in the sense that fluid and substantive identities within youth cultures are what they are in relation to each other. Young people's social space is a relational reality that structures and organises young people's living together – that is, communication –, as well as

⁵¹ See Baron (1989) for an early contribution pointing to the link between resistance and marginal socioeconomic circumstances (he argued that subcultural theory needs to differentiate between consequences and levels of subcultural resistance), and Hodkinson (2002) and Bennett & Kahn-Harris (2004) for a review of many of the criticisms that the CCCS model of subcultural resistance has received.

⁵² This perspective uses postmodern arguments to emphasise the reflexive, diverse, unstable and fluid youth cultural affiliations and to discard the CCCS approach to youth cultural forms, claiming that contemporary youth cultures are not constituted around mutually exclusive subcultures but made up of individual and fluid combinations of a multiple and plural range of commodified materials and styles. To replace it, terms like 'tribes', 'neo-tribes', 'scenes' or 'lifestyles' have been proposed. Among the more prominent critics and promoters of new terms to refer to youth cultures, - although among them we find a wide range of different theoretical positions-, we find Straw (1991); Hetherington (1996); Redhead (1997); Redhead (1997); including contributions from Muggleton and Polhemus); Bennett (1999); Miles (2000); and Bennett and Kahn-Harris (2004).

young people's living together – communication – with adults, and it is from this point of view that different meanings will be analysed here.

Young people's social space as a whole is, to some extent, 'subcultural', in the sense that young people culturally produce, generation after generation, a set of meanings configuring their social geographies which are partially opaque to adults, and thus organise communication with adults in terms of *social distinctions* and active differentiation. In fact, as soon as young people enter adult life, they rapidly cease to 'be in the know', to possess the decoding capacity to perceive youth geographies, and thus to participate in youth activities and meaningful interactions. At the same time, however, these geographies and the youngsters experiencing them are mainly integrated within the overall functioning of society, so they must be understood as a different but integrated part of the larger social geographies: whereas they build alternative and subordinate 'normalities', implement through resistance, transgression or provocation, social differentiations and even physical segregation from adults, they also take part in the market economy, their families, their neighbourhoods and their schools, as well as in media representations. Youth social geographies are thus related to adult geographies even when they spectacularly resist, transgress or provoke some of their norms and meanings⁵³. To put it in other words: youth geographies are subcultural productions in that they are, to a some extent, a collective cultural production modifying some of the dominant meanings and building up segregated spaces of communication, but at the same time these cultural productions are heavily embedded in dominant meanings, and in fact strongly influence – and are strongly influenced by – dominant culture. Because of this, it would be naïve to consider them as isolated subcultural normalcies. The way of dealing with this complexity will be the analysis of what I will term the imbrication of (adult and youth) social hierarchies in young people's social space, which will not only take into account 'spectacular' manifestations of young people's meaning-making, but also the cultural production of 'normalcy'. By doing so, I will understand the interplay of conformity and resistance, acceptance and transgression or provocation, in its multiple manifestations, that is, in relation to those normalcies of the broad society, the home, the schoolmates, the group of friends, the neighbourhood or the nightlife premises. This means that in order to link them to general social structures of inequality, I will focus on how these general structures were experienced and imbricated in everyday interactions.

To recapitulate, in this chapter I have developed the conceptual tools to deal with the object of study of this thesis, that is, *the process of cultural production, through musical commodities, of a certain way of experiencing both social distances and inequalities and our own pathways through them*. The approach I have developed focuses on musical forms as mediators of the cultural production of social

⁵³ The CCCS approach to spectacular youth subcultures was well aware of it – see for instance Clarke *et al* (1998 [1975]) – , although in general terms no much attention was paid to this everyday relationship with 'adult' society.

geographies. The object of this study, as I have already mentioned more than once, is not music itself, but the social meanings and practices organised around music – understood as cultural forms. The cultural forms I will analyse, therefore, are not musical forms, but young people’s meanings, experiences, discourses and practices around musical forms. Although I presuppose young people’s aesthetic experience of music, I will focus not on their experience of music, but on the way they make sense of their experience with music in relation to musical and social geographies, in relation to their effort to make sense of their social reality and their location in it. From this point of view, music is not seen as a tool just to *make sense* of their social relations, but as one that actively culturally produces such social relations. Focusing on social differences and hierarchies, and the way musical forms are related to them and participate in their production will open the way to understanding contemporary forms of experiencing and culturally mediating inequalities and hierarchical relations.

To do so, we will need to take into consideration the role of the political economy. Young people do not culturally produce youth geographies from nowhere. On the contrary, they need materials which are generally commodities, and the economic structure providing those commodities has a decisive – though not overriding – influence on the shape musical and youth geographies take. However, before starting to empirically develop our object of study, we need to make explicit how the fieldwork has been approached and carried out.

3. ASKING FOR MUSIC IN THE FIELD

Theoretical and empirical work are not separate phases, but are interlinked in the process of building both scientific and common knowledge. Our attempt to understand the *process of cultural production, through musical commodities, of social geographies and our own pathways through them* is sustained on the ground of the theoretical framework developed in Chapter 1 and 2 and on empirical research carried out between October 1999 and July 2001 (plus a few interviews carried out in 2005 and 2006). This chapter details how the fieldwork was accomplished with the aim of allowing the analysed ‘subjects’ to both *object* and *contribute* to what is said about them, as well as to facilitate the intersubjective judgement of the scientific community. I will first reflect on the implications of dealing with the process of cultural production – in this case of musical and social geographies – from the perspective of the social sciences. Second, I will briefly describe the place and sites of the fieldwork, as well as the actual fieldwork that was carried out. Finally, I will detail how each methodological instrument was used and discuss the way in which the data has been interpreted to make sense of the cultural production of musical and youth geographies.

Cultural production and the social sciences

This thesis attempts to develop approximate conceptions to (sociologically) make sense of young people’s cultural practices. This will be achieved by taking into account young people’s own conceptions of their cultural practices, that is, those conceptions that help them to make sense of their lives. We will try, therefore, *to make sense of how young people make sense of their everyday lives*. In the same sense that young people’s cultural productions are a meaning-making process trying to make sense of their world, this thesis can be seen as making meaning about young people’s meaning-making, as well as a translation into scientific knowledge of everyday meaning-making processes.¹ This is why, even though my approach is clearly placed in the field of social scientific conceptions, an effort will be made in the following pages to seriously take into account individuals’ conceptions about their everyday lives. I believe, as Paul Willis puts it, that ‘well-grounded and illuminating analytic points flow only from bringing concepts into a relationship with the messiness of ordinary life, somehow recorded’ (2000: xi).

I will argue for a methodological individualism, in the sense of taking into account, as a unit of analysis, individuals’ meanings and practices. At the same time, however, since the object of analysis is young people’s collective cultural produc-

¹ Paul Willis developed this point of view in a PhD course at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona in 2002, which he also encapsulated under the sentence *my own story about others stories*. Bourdieu also refers to this question in his more scientific jargon by arguing that researchers need to construct the interviewee’s discourse ‘scientifically, in such a way that it yields the necessary elements for its own explication’ (1996: 21).

tions, that is, the sphere of their intersubjective production of meaning, understood as a – frequently unintended – consequence of individual actions, my focus of interest will be not only young people’s practices and accounts of themselves and their surrounding reality, but the aggregate and often non-reflexive result of their individual practices and meaning-making – which does not mean, however, that we can understand music and youth geographies as clear-cut, complete ‘belief systems’, ‘ideologies’ or ‘universes of meaning’, but as fuzzy, dynamic aggregations through permanently contested intersubjective processes. The fact is, therefore, that we will not only reconstruct individual meanings, but also attempt to find the ‘hidden’ logics (structures) of social processes, to see the regularities and idiosyncrasies of an individual’s meanings, to understand – however imprecisely – processes through which they have been developed, to analyse their relation to their material contexts. And this, indeed, always places the researcher on difficult and dangerous ground, since it can easily lead to the implicit stance where something or someone is to be ‘saved’ by revealing an assumed hidden reality that actors cannot see, by presenting music and youth geographies as ‘totalities’ which, rather than being an aggregation of those of individuals, are ‘an outcome of typification by the sociologist’ (Billig *et al* 1988: 157).

Focus of interest

The musical forms themselves – both their musical and lyrical aspects – will not be the object of systematic attention. The focus will be placed instead on the linguistic meanings and practices organised around music. I will be interested, therefore, in how individuals make sense of music and its lyrics², but without either trying or pretending to establish any direct link between those forms and the meanings they have in young people’s everyday lives. As I said above, this thesis could be understood as dealing with the sociology of knowledge rather than with the sociology of music, in the sense that it strictly focuses on how young people and those working in the music industry make sense of – and build knowledge about – music and social distances and proximities: how they perceive, negotiate, creatively appropriate, learn, resist, modify, manage and experience them. In the case of young people, the main focus of attention will be placed on *how they biographically learn and deal with musical geographies at each moment, and how they relate them – reflexively or not – to broad social geographies*. In the case of those working in the music industry, the main focus of attention will be *how they decide what music to select and how to market it in their attempt to make a profit, as well as how they perceive the relationship between music consumption and broad social geographies*.

² In this respect, even if not relevant to my argument, it is noteworthy to recall that ‘There is, in fact, no firm empirical evidence that song words determine or form listeners’ beliefs and values (any more than there is really much evidence that they reflect them). The few sociological investigations of teenagers’ response to song words show either that they don’t understand them (as American researchers soon found to be the case with 1960s “protest” songs like “Eve of Destruction”) or that they “don’t really notice them” (semantically, that is).’ (Frith 1996: 164).

This goal is obviously difficult to reduce to actual fieldwork. The object of study is so broad that it can hardly be compressed into – or covered by – one set of research tools. This means that in this research I do not pretend to offer a complete, definitive or ‘truthful’ account of either this topic or actual musical and social geographies in the localised social milieus where the fieldwork was carried out. On the contrary, my aim is simply to offer empirical data that brings to the surface the process of cultural production of these musical and social geographies and helps us to think about it, to pose more lucid questions and to open new ways of looking at it. I do not pretend to offer big answers or comprehensive empirical descriptions, but to use empirical evidence to test and develop a theoretical approach perhaps enabling us to put forward better, or at least good, questions about the object of attention.

The *process of cultural production of music and youth geographies* will be analysed through three different but closely related interests. The first area of study will be the subjective and intersubjective knowledge through which young people make sense of musical and youth geographies, particularly the way they map them out through their linguistic typifications. Collective regularities and personal idiosyncrasies will be identified by comparing all individuals’ typifications in an attempt to identify, however clumsily, ‘intersubjective knowledge’ shared by all or certain sets of interviewees. In this sense, it will be important to find out the relationship (or absence of it) between musical and social geographies and hierarchies.

The second area of interest will be young people’s pathways through musical and youth geographies, with the aim of recording how they gradually make sense of them as they grow up. Special attention will be paid to a) the role of the different ‘carriers’ of such meanings, that is, to the different actual ways through which such meanings are made accessible to young people: from significant others to media consumption, from school interaction to musical artefacts; and b) the way young people conform, resist or negotiate in different social spheres the meanings and social control mechanisms they face in their process of growing up.

The third and final empirical focus will be the way those working in the music industry not only make sense of both musical and youth geographies but also take decisions when trying to adjust to them in order to make money by providing commodities. Particular decisions and their implicit ‘logics’ will be analysed.

Since our goal, as mentioned above, is not to produce a finished account making sense of individuals sense-making, but to provide tools to partially understand the process of cultural production in broad terms, the results must not be understood as an *actual description* of musical and social geographies ‘existing out there’. That is not the aim of this thesis. The aim is rather to use the way those participating in the fieldwork make sense of musical and social geographies to *throw light on the way meaning making efforts and cultural production processes are individually and collectively carried out*. By trying to identify how a very circumscribed handful of individuals make sense of and experience musical and youth geographies, as well as their own pathways through them, I intend to raise empirical and theoretical insights about the way they are culturally produced in

contemporary society. The goal is to produce an account that creates what Willis terms an 'aha effect' on the reader, in the sense of offering new ways of seeing things – of making sense of things.

Typifications and sensuousness

In order to obtain empirical inputs about the production of youth musical and social geographies, we will basically rely upon statements made by young people themselves, as well as by those working in the music industry. What I mean is that the main tool to access such geographies will be the analysis of how young people and those working in the music industry make sense of music and their practices around music primarily *through language*. Since our material will be their 'words' about musical and social geographies, there is no guarantee that it will accurately describe their real experience. They might lie, they might forget, they might distort, and they might also be unaware of important aspects of their experience. For instance, when young people explain violent interactions they have witnessed, they can easily exaggerate their account; when those working in the music industry explain the reasons for their decisions, they can often reflexively or unreflexively hide crucial information; when young people explain their location within youth hierarchies, they will hardly be objective and sincere. Moreover, it is not unusual for interviewees to have no systematic or reflexive knowledge to be put into words, but a practical and sensuous sort that is 'experienced' but not 'verbalised'.

The meanings of our experience with musical and social geographies that are not linguistic but sensuous naturally pose an important difficulty for empirical research. They are not always signified or communicated to others but just experienced. They make sense to individuals in sensuous terms, when they experience joy, excitement and pleasure, feel cool because of being in contact with commercial music, sense shame and uneasiness when out of place or resentful of their generalised disadvantage. The ethnographic imagination is crucial to grasp such 'sensuousness' and translate it into linguistic (academic) meanings. The researcher, by using himself or herself as an 'instrument' can attempt to 'understand' and 'make sense' of this sensuous meaningfulness. Through interviews, the researcher can also attempt to push individuals to linguistically signify their sensuous meanings, with the obvious risk of biasing the whole research. In any of these cases, when the researcher interprets meanings which are both verbalised and not verbalised, the epistemological problems and dangers of interpretation – present in any comprehensive perspective – are fully manifest.

The truth is that without deep ethnographic research it is difficult to seriously take sensuous and practical meanings into consideration. In this thesis they will be only superficially incorporated into the analysis in the form of small hints obtained through interviews, observation and participant observation. Even if the sensuous aspects will be less consistently included in the research, they will nevertheless have their theoretical and analytical importance, since the centrality of sensuous meanings in the local embeddedness of the musical experience must not

neglected³. The sensuous experience of 'coolness' in a particular social situation, of joy at a concert, of belonging in a particular bar, or of laughing at a joke in a particular context, all are indeed important aspects of the meaning-making process of young people, precisely because even if they are not signified, they strongly locate individuals in socially situated realities through emotions, feelings and sensuous experiences. The realm of linguistic representations cannot be understood without paying attention to them. All of them are to some extent part of the communication – our living together – resulting from our 'humanity', fundamental in attracting people together, in fostering social cohesion, in the same sense that the experience of '*nerdiness*', meaninglessness, boredom or aversion, are all part of the same, not necessarily signified, meanings that set young people apart. We not only typically learn and signify that we are different from others, but we also experience otherness through our body and inner experience. As Pierre Bourdieu makes explicit with the notion of *habitus* as 'practical' knowledge, those non-systematic aspects of the process of meaning making are not only present but extremely important in culturally producing social geographies. Even if the border between systematic and practical knowledge, as well as between linguistic and sensuous meanings, is empirically fluid, we will try to analytically distinguish between them.

Places and sites

The empirical fieldwork was carried out in two different cities in two consecutive academic years (1999-2000 and 2000-2001). The chosen cities were my home town, Barcelona, and the English city of Birmingham, with the aim of comparing musical and social geographies in two different countries in order to highlight the fact that similar musical forms could both have similar meanings in two localities *and* acquire completely different meanings when appropriated in different social contexts. By comparing two different cities and countries, therefore, I intended to throw light on the tension between local difference and global regularities. Birmingham was chosen because, like Barcelona in Spain, it is Britain's second city and the similar in terms of its size.

Birmingham and Barcelona

Birmingham has been traditionally considered an industrial city with important manufacturing and engineering industries, which by the turn of the 21st Century had already reconstructed their activity into service industries, like many other British cities during the 1980s and 1990s. Birmingham city centre had been redeveloped and transformed into popular commercial and leisure spaces –

³ Frith, commenting on this tension, argues that 'Music constructs our sense of identity through the experiences it offers of the body, time, and sociability, experiences which enable us to place ourselves in imaginative cultural narratives. Such a fusion of imaginative fantasy and bodily practice marks as well the integration of aesthetics and ethics' (Frith 1996: 275).

although in Britain, as pointed out by Holt & Griffin (2003), 'Brum' is still largely seen as being unable to escape its industrial past and it is 'associated with a much derided 'Brummie' regional accent and brutal, unsympathetic, postwar urban developments' (2003: 407). According to the 2001 Census⁴, Birmingham had almost 1 million inhabitants (15% of them between 15 and 24 years old), and the West Midlands conurbation as a whole had a population of almost 2.3 million inhabitants. Since the Second World War, immigration of Asians and Afro-Caribbeans from the Commonwealth has made ethnic diversity part of the city's defining traits. Slightly over 70% were white, over 19% Asian (around 60% of which were Pakistani, almost a third Indian, and a small minority either Bangladeshi or other Asian), over 6% black (80% of them Afro-Caribbean and the rest either African or other black) and almost 3% mixed. There was also a small minority of Chinese (0.5%) and other ethnic groups (0.6%). Post-war immigration of Afro-Caribbeans and Asians had given rise to conflict, which had sometimes even ended in violent riots in the city.

Barcelona, the capital of Catalonia and Spain's second city, also has an industrial past. Its population in 2001 was 1.5 million inhabitants (11.4% of them between 15 and 24 years old)⁵, while the whole metropolitan conurbation had 4.4 million inhabitants⁶. Barcelona began and developed its industrialisation during the late 19th and early 20th Century, whereas in many areas of Spain this process was not fully undertaken until the 1960s and 1970s). As a leading industrial region within Spain, the city received during the 20th Century, and particularly during the 1960s, a high number of immigrants⁷ from other parts of Spain (Andalusia being the most frequent origin). In a territory that had less than 3 million inhabitants in 1940, an estimated 1.4 million people immigrated to Catalonia between 1950 and 1975 (Pujolar 2001: 11). In 2003, only one in three inhabitants had been born in Catalonia into families with both parents also born there. As generally happens in places with significant flows of immigration, '(t)he immigrants occupied the unskilled levels of the job market, while the autochthonous working-class was gradually pushed up to skilled and managerial posts in industries and services' (ibid.: 11).

⁴ The demographic data on Birmingham is taken from Office for National Statistics (2003) *Census 2001. Key Statistics for local authorities in England and Wales*, London: The Stationery Office (http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/census2001/KS_LA_E&W_part1.pdf, consulted in November 2005).

⁵ Data extracted from Ajuntament de Barcelona's website (<http://www.bcn.es/estadistica/catala/dades/tpob/pad01/llocna/llocna14.htm> and <http://www.bcn.es/estadistica/catala/dades/tpob/pad01/edat/edatg14.htm>, consulted in September 2005).

⁶ http://www.idescat.net/cat/idescat/publicacions/anuari/aec_pdf/aec-cap2.pdf, consulted in January 2006.

⁷ Although movement of population within a given country is technically named 'migration', in Catalonia it is always referred as 'immigration' since its strong cultural, linguistic and national identity perceived the arrival of thousand of Spanish-speaking individuals which were nationally identified with Spain as such.

During the last decade, there has been a further growing flux of immigrants from developing and Eastern European countries, who have occupied the unskilled levels of the job market, thus moving the former Spanish immigrants to higher levels in the scale of occupations. Until the late 1990s Barcelona had been an overwhelmingly 'white' city, with only small groups of gypsies. As we will see, although in Spain as a whole gypsies constitute less than an estimated 2% of the population, they have a rather important symbolic impact on the configuration of youth geographies. There were even fewer Moroccans, Latin-Americans and sub-Saharan (black) Africans but this has radically changed over the last 15 years to the extent that in 2005 in some neighbourhoods almost 50% of residents were non-Spanish nationals. Official statistics – always under-recording the true state of affairs – show a rise in Barcelona residents born outside Spain from 3.2% in 1991 to 8.3% in 2001⁸. This 8.3% was made up of 1.4% from Europe, less than 1% from Africa (around 70% of these from Morocco), over 3% from America (basically Latin America and in descending order: Ecuador, Colombia, Peru, the Dominican Republic and Argentina), and less than 1% from Asia and Oceania (mostly from Pakistan, China and the Philippines).

As for language, in 2003, 53.5% of the population had Spanish as their 'first language' (the language learnt at home during childhood), and 40.4% Catalan. The proportion that did not understand Catalan, however, was only 2.4% (and less than 1% among those born in Catalonia), whereas 15.3% were not able to speak it (less than 5% in the case of those born in Catalonia), and 37.7% were not able to write it (Torres *et al* 2005: 21). The complexity of the relationship between Catalan and Spanish speakers is noteworthy: on the one hand, whereas Spanish is seen by many Catalan speakers as imposed from above (in the past through the authoritarian Franco regime and now through the democratic lack of sympathy for Catalan), Catalan is also seen by many Spanish speakers as imposed by the Catalan authorities (for instance by making it the universal language in primary education or a condition for work in the Catalan administration); on the other hand, whereas Spanish is associated with the working classes and Catalan with the middle classes, the higher positions of the social ladder have a significant presence of Spanish as the usual language of communication.

The fieldwork

The local authority in Birmingham is directly or indirectly responsible for 77 secondary schools.⁹ In Barcelona, in the academic year 1999–2000 there were 299

⁸ Data based on the *Cens de població i habitatge. Instituto Nacional de Estadística. Institut d'Estadística de Catalunya*, and taken from the Departament d'Estadística. Ajuntament de Barcelona (<http://www.bcn.es/estadistica/catala/dades/tpob/pad01/llocna/llocna14.htm>, consulted in September 2005). In 2005, the 'padró municipal' recorded over 18% of foreigners living in Barcelona Departament d'Estadística. Ajuntament de Barcelona (<http://www.bcn.es/estadistica/catala/dades/tpob/pad05/nacio/na02.htm>, consulted in January 2006).

⁹ Information taken from <http://www.bgfl.org/services/nqt/primsec.htm>, consulted in January 2006.

secondary schools¹⁰ (78 state schools and 221 privately owned, although these are mostly maintained, i.e. the government assumes most of their cost). The fieldwork began in October 1999 in Birmingham, with a slightly different focus of interest from that described above. The initial intention was to do a nine-months ethnography there with 4 'natural' groups of young people from two different schools with clearly different socioeconomic backgrounds, and then replicate this study in Barcelona the following year. In each school, I would choose one group of 'popular' pupils and another of 'non-popular' ones. However, getting into the schools and getting along well with pupils took much longer than expected, and all the schools where access was obtained were in mainly working-class catchment areas. Before going to Birmingham at the end of summer 1999, I had sent a letter to the Chief Education Officer of Birmingham City Council (Tim Brighouse) asking for permission to carry out the fieldwork in Birmingham schools. I had also contacted the Regidora d'Educació in Barcelona (the sociologist Marina Subirats), who showed her interest in the research project and even kindly agreed to write a letter of support that was included in my request to Mr. Brighouse. In the first week of October, and now settled in Birmingham, I received a reply saying that my request had been forwarded to 4 secondary schools and that if interested, they would contact me. While I was waiting for an answer, I started to attend three different youth clubs in case I could not later carry out fieldwork in schools. Two of the schools did contact me five weeks later, at the beginning of November (even though in one of them the contact was not really established until December).

After my experience in youth clubs and a few interviews in these two schools during November and December 1999, I realised that my lack of social and cultural knowledge in a foreign country would make it particularly difficult to progress from interviews within the school or youth clubs to ethnographic research outside the school walls. Moreover, the two schools that had contacted me had a similar composition in terms of generalised advantage, so I decided to modify the research plan: Instead of carrying out a deep ethnography with 2 groups of young people in each of two schools in each city, I decided to carry out interviews with a wider range of pupils in each school and focus on ethnic rather than class differences, and include in the research other interviews with individuals working in the music industry. Once this new objective had been decided, a third school agreed to participate in the project at the beginning of December, after I had phoned them to make sure they had received the letter. I continued occasionally to visit one of the three youth clubs but stopped attending the other two.

I started doing group interviews with groups of 5-7 young people and continued with individual and, most often, pair interviews. Almost all the interviews were with pupils of the music class of Year 11 – the last year of compulsory education, generally when the pupils are 15 or 16 years old. Several of them were interviewed more than once, and I ended doing 37 interviews with a

¹⁰ Data extracted from <http://www.bcn.es/estadistica/catala/dades/anuari01/cap05/C0503010.htm>, consulted in January 2006.

total of 58 youngsters. They were carried out either during the music lesson or in break times, and I was introduced by the teachers, who helped me to organize the interviews by either choosing the pairs of pupils in terms of their good personal relationship or by asking them to volunteer. Interviews were carried out in other spaces in the school where we could have privacy; they usually lasted between 30 minutes and 1 hour and, in all but two exceptions, were taped. At the end of the academic year I also distributed a survey questionnaire to 195 pupils from Year 9 and Year 11 (14 and 16 year olds).

During the whole period, I also did 26 interviews with 27 persons related in one way or another with the music business. I selected them with no more systematic criteria than getting a diverse range of sectors (clubs, bars, radio-stations, record shops, a skate shop, a community music organization, etc.) and of economic size (both small and corporate enterprises). I contacted almost all of them by directly phoning their business. In a couple of cases, I was given their contacts through a youth worker at one of the youth clubs I attended. I also did participant observation in bars and clubs, attended school activities, and followed the music press.

Table 3.1 Description of the fieldwork interviews and questionnaires

		Interviews	Interviewed	Survey respondents
Bham	<i>White School</i>	12	14	85
	<i>Mixed School</i>	14	27	65
	<i>Dual School</i>	10	16	45
	<i>Youth club</i>	1	2	-
	Total Young People	37	59	-
	Music industry	26	27	-
TOTAL BHAM		63	86	195
Bcn	<i>Periphery School</i>	14	20	60
	<i>Catalan School</i>	8	14	78
	<i>Inner City School</i>	13	22	61
	Total young people	35	56	-
	Music industry	17	18	-
	TOTAL BCN		52	74
GLOBAL TOTAL		115	160	394

After finishing the Birmingham fieldwork at the end of June 2000, I went to Barcelona to attempt to replicate it there, starting in October 2000. I chose three schools on the basis of their notably different composition in terms of ethnicity, national and linguistic identity and ‘immigrant’ typification. I sent letters and talked to the heads of the three chosen state secondary schools. In two of them, I had access to the school through personal contacts, but not in the third. All of them, like the three schools in Birmingham, kindly accepted my intromission. In this case, I directly interviewed most of the youngsters in pairs, without doing the

initial group interview. I followed the same protocol I had used in Birmingham, with the teachers trying to choose the pairs in terms of their good personal relationship. In each school I was assigned one class of 4th of ESO – the last year of compulsory education – and most interviewees were 15 or 16 years old. In one of the schools I also interviewed pupils from the UAC class, a specific group of pupils with important learning difficulties or disruptive behaviour. I ended up doing 35 interviews with a total of 56 youngsters. I also distributed the same survey questionnaire I had used in Birmingham, with some modifications to adjust it to local circumstances. It was filled in by 199 pupils in the three schools from 2nd and 4th grade of ESO (14 and 16 year olds). As in Birmingham, I simultaneously carried out interviews with individuals related to the music business (17 interviews with 18 individuals, combining direct contact through telephone directories and personal networks), did participant observation in bars, clubs and a few school activities, and followed the music press. The main fieldwork finished in July 2001, although four of the interviews with those working in the music industry were carried out in January 2005 and February 2006.

The modification of the focus of attention meant that instead of aiming at detailed ethnographic knowledge of a small number of young people, I was to look for more superficial qualitative knowledge of a significantly larger number of youngsters (a total of 115 young people) and combine this with interviews with individuals working in the music industry (a total of 45). This decision obviously implied an important change in the goal of my research: even though I missed the chance to ethnographically contextualise and dig into young people's experience of – and symbolic work upon – youth and social geographies, I gained access to a broader view of the cultural production of these geographies, since I was able to compare the way it was broadly experienced by many young people, as well as the experience and point of view of those working in the music industry.

Six schools

The schools in which the fieldwork was carried out differed from each other. In Birmingham, they were three state comprehensive schools with mainly working class pupils and a quite varied ethnic composition. In Barcelona, the three schools, also state comprehensive ones, differed in terms of both ethnic composition and social class. In what follows, all the names have been changed to invented names in order to ensure the anonymity of the interviewees and to facilitate the identification of the ethnic composition of each school.

The **White School** in Birmingham had an overwhelmingly white population, with a few Afro-Caribbeans and Asians. The school drew its pupils from surrounding areas with significant social deprivation. The number of pupils that were eligible to receive free school meals was well above the national average. The interviewees were all but one from the music class, and were seen by teachers as 'the goodies' and by other pupils as the '*boffins*', because of their good grades and academic disposition. They were by no means representative of the school population.

The **Dual School** in Birmingham had a split composition of white and Afro-Caribbean pupils, the former constituting about two thirds of the school and the latter mostly coming from distant areas. There was a much smaller proportion of other ethnic backgrounds and many of the areas from which the school drew its pupils were significantly deprived. Most interviewees, all of them from the music class, were generally seen as the *boffins* of the school, and were thus anything but representative of the school population.

The **Mixed School** in Birmingham had many pupils from Asian, Afro-Caribbean and White ethnicities, the majority of them from significantly deprived inner-city areas (there were more pupils than average eligible to claim free school meals). Many of the pupils, mostly Asians, did not have English as their mother tongue. The interviewees were all from the music class, which did not present specific features in relation to the overall pupil population of the school.

The **Catalan School** in Barcelona was located in an affluent area, and many of the pupils were from middle class families with a Catalan background, even though there was a significant presence of pupils from working class families, many of them of Spanish immigrant origin. There was only a token presence of foreign pupils. The interviewees were all from the same school-group and did not differ from the general composition of the school.

The **Periphery School** drew its pupils from working class areas with a high concentration of 1960s immigrants from other parts of Spain. Only about 1 in 10 pupils had Catalan as their mother tongue. There was a small but rising presence of immigrant pupils from non-Community countries. The interviewees were all from two classes, one of them matching the general school composition and the other consisting of those pupils who either could not follow the normal classes or were disruptive in the classroom.

The **Inner City School** drew its pupils from significantly deprived inner-city areas. The pupils were of many different nationalities, the larger groups being Catalan, Moroccan, Pakistani and Latin-American. Only a minority of the pupils had Catalan or Spanish as their mother tongue (more than twenty languages were spoken in the school; Catalan was only spoken by a few pupils, even though it was the main language of instruction). Interviewees, all from the music class, were representative of the school's general composition.

Objecting and surprising subjects

Once the general orientation of the empirical research and the actual places and sites where the fieldwork was carried out have been described, I will now reflect in more detail on the epistemological orientation of the data collection. In the social sciences, there is a continuous debate between the quantitative and interpretative traditions. Bruno Latour (2000) claims that, in accepting the 'official' version of the natural sciences, both positions fail – the 'quantitative' tradition, which tries to copy it, and also the 'qualitative' one, which seeks another type of scientificity for the social sciences. The French sociologist argues that the implied version of the natural sciences, which is accepted by both positions, is false, and that, contrary to

what is commonly thought, in natural science objectivity is based on ‘the presence of objects which have been rendered ‘able’ (...) to *object* to what is told about them’ (2000: 115). He maintains that in general social scientists clearly show less respect for their subjects than natural scientists do for their objects. ‘Nothing is more difficult than to find a way to render objects able to object to the utterances that we make about them’ (ibid.: 115).¹¹

Rendering objects – subjects in this case – able to object is inextricably linked to the theoretical disposition with which we approach them. As Cardús and Estruch argue, ‘per nosaltres, des de la sociologia, fer teoria no ha de consistir a *amansir la realitat* que canta –que seria tant com fer-la desaparèixer–, sinó que precisament ha de consistir a *provocar la realitat per tal que «canti»*.’ (1983: 81). The disposition towards the fieldwork is crucial. In this research, both quantitative and qualitative techniques or tools have been used to obtain data from the field. I argue that any interrogation of reality is made from a previous framework (ibid.: 78), so the two techniques will not be seen as essentially different from each other, since both are clearly interpretative and theoretically construct what is ‘seen’ or ‘gathered’. Nevertheless, it is true that their way of rendering subjects able to object and contribute to what is said about them is not the same.

They both basically use language to establish their relationship with the subjects, even though it is true that qualitative techniques in general – and ethnography in particular – are capable of dealing with the non-linguistic aspects linked to what we have termed, following Willis, ‘sensuousness’. Qualitative techniques also allow us to include meanings and emotions in the analysis with much higher flexibility and sensitivity. In any case, through language and the interpretation of meaning, the two techniques cannot avoid entering the hermeneutic realm of the social sciences, that is, the unavoidable interpretation of meaning and meaning-making processes. This is why I consider ‘reflexivity’¹² – that is, a continuous effort to be aware of our own prejudices – as a central tool in the struggle for objectivity. Even if many naively believe that reflexivity is not as important when using quantitative techniques, the truth is that when designing a questionnaire or analysing its results the importance of interpretation is crucial in the construction of what is seen, the ‘data’ which is ‘gathered’. We impose (linguistic) ‘categories’ and ‘questions’ and we not only assume that the subjects will feel comfortable with them, but that they will all *mean the same* when answering them. Instead of going into these aspects in detail – something that has already been accurately analysed

¹¹ Contrary to the common sense of many social scientists, Latour also argues that ‘Natural objects are naturally *recalcitrant*, the last thing that one scientist will say about them is that they are fully masterable. On the contrary, they always resist and make a shambles of our pretensions to control. If many more precautions have to be taken with human subjects, it is not because humans should not be treated like ‘mere things’ devoid of intentionality, consciousness and reflexivity, as interpretative schools would have it; nor is it, as the quantitative schools think, because they would influence the result, but, on the contrary, because they would quickly *lose* their recalcitrance by *complying* with what scientists expect of them’. (2000: 116).

¹² Following Bourdieu’s approach (as it is developed in Bourdieu and Wacquant 1994).

by Bourdieu (1993 [1971]) and Cardús & Estruch (1984), among others – I will briefly focus on how quantitative and qualitative techniques differ in the way they *render the subjects able to object*, apart from the already mentioned ‘reflexivity’, which I will take for granted from now on.

Quantitative techniques can be helpful in controlling the bias of the researcher’s prejudices about society thanks to the number of individuals from whom information is gathered. The amount and statistical representativeness of the cases can serve to question what from the sociologists’ daily life might be taken for granted. Moreover, the accessible systematic treatment of the data can also help to control one’s prejudices: if care is taken, designing a statistical analysis which questions the data in ways different from what is taken for granted, thus rendering the data able to object, can make it possible to contrast (some of) the researcher’s prejudices. The handicap is, however, that individuals themselves can hardly object to the questions imposed on them through a questionnaire. In this, qualitative research clearly differs from quantitative research, in that even if it is equally interpretative in the theoretically grounded interrogation of the subjects, it differs in that its main tool to render the object able to object is the sensitivity of the researcher to maintain the *readiness to be surprised* by the subjects of the research at any moment, and incorporate these surprises in the social interaction with them¹³.

The fact that both quantitative and qualitative techniques are interpretative is obvious for anybody that has reflexively used both, since in spite of the pretensions of greater ‘objectivity’ of the survey-based research, its need of ‘forcing’ reality to fit its pigeon-holing practices makes it clearly interpretative. In the same thread of argumentation, qualitative techniques are far from the ‘authentic’ road to the real subjectivity that many seem to believe, since the inescapably strong role of personal relationships and the researcher’s subjectivity when gathering and interpreting the results make it as difficult to justify as quantitative techniques. Since we want neither to assume an automatic ‘scientificity’ of any technique nor to ignore their problems, we will make explicit how they have been used and the problems they pose in relation to the validity of the data they have provided.

¹³ This position, defended by Paul Willis in his ‘Notes on Method’ (1987 [1980]), would see qualitative techniques as closer to Latour’s diagnosis: ‘If social scientists wanted to become objective, they would have to find the very rare, costly, local, miraculous, situation where they can render their subject of study as much as possible able to object to what is said about them, to be as disobedient as possible to the protocol, and to be as capable to raise their own questions in their own terms and *not* in those of the scientists whose interests they do not have to share! Then, humans would start to behave in the hands of social scientists as *interestingly* as natural objects in the hands of natural scientists’. (Latour 2000: 116).

Interview as a social relation

The main instrument used to provide data has been the interview, carried out with young people and with people working in the music industry. Almost all the interviews were taped. All of them were semi-structured, in the sense that I had a list of topics I wanted to cover but I was always ready to follow other threads of conversation – to the extent that sometimes several of the initial topics I had in mind were not discussed at all. Some of the aspects raised by interviewees were later introduced into the subsequent interviews; these included the importance of moments of social control and the relevance of fashion, glamour and fame for many young women. In all interviews with young people I tried to cover five topics or areas of interest.

First, *taste in music and music practices*. I started by asking about the music they liked and the music they did not like, about the role of music in their lives, about the role of significant others (friends, brothers, parents) in their relationship with music, and about their consumption of media and records or their attendance at concerts, bars and clubs. I paid particular attention to the way they mapped out musical geographies, the genre categories they used, and their implicit grounded aesthetics and attention to lyrics. I also asked them to recall how their involvement with music had developed during their lifetime.

Second, I asked them about *youth social space hierarchies*, though naturally not in those terms. I asked them to identify different youth tastes or styles in their school and neighbourhoods, and their location within them. This included distinctions of styles, but also about the commercial/non-commercial and underground/mainstream differentiations, about their idea of authenticity, and about their reflexivity in the perception of youth social space and their knowledge of the history of popular music and musical and youth geographies.

Third, I inquired about *personal hierarchies*, that is, about the way they perceived and worked out their position in the school in terms of 'popularity', 'toughness' and other elements. I asked them to explain whether such hierarchies existed and in what terms they were organised. It is then when adjectives such as 'tough', 'loners', 'commoners', 'populars', 'whimps', 'enrotllats', 'pringats', 'jefecillos', etc. were raised by interviewees. I asked whether or not there was any relationship between taste in music and different positions in personal hierarchies.

The fourth area of interest was that of *social structure hierarchies*. I introduced questions about general class, gender, ethnic, linguistic or national differences and their connection or absence of connection to taste in music. In most interviews I also asked about other schools and areas within the city, about their family and neighbourhood and about their expectations for the future after finishing compulsory schooling.

The fifth and final issue was what we might term *globalization, time and space*. I asked them about their perception and typification of their locality in terms of 'modern' or 'backward' both within their country and within the global music arena. I also asked them to explain the role that notions like 'modern', 'old' and 'fashion' had in their taste in music.

For each area of interest, I had several questions that might or might not be asked, always formulated not as I have described here but in young people's terms. As my experience of the interviews grew, I progressively stopped looking at my written notes. Moreover, from interview to interview, the readiness to be surprised implied that new topics arose or gained force whereas others were hardly covered, so the list of questions was always being modified. In any case, there were few interviews that covered all aspects detailed above in some depth.

In the case of interviews with those working in the music industry, these were, with two exceptions, individual. Their goal was to cover four big areas of interest, even though these varied considerably from interview to interview depending on the role of the interviewee in the industry. As in the case of interviews with young people, moreover, insights provided by previous interviews were constantly introduced into the new ones.

First, I asked them to briefly *describe the music business and its history*, and I paid special attention to the *genre categories* they used and the way they chose them (both in what concerns the music and the marketing of it). I asked them to explain moments when the music had been changed or modified.

Second, I asked them to reflexively discuss the way they faced the goals of *money-making and developing the music*, and aspects like being commercial or not, being popular or not, being credible or not. We discussed the way their business was profitable and how products became viable.

The third area of interest was their perception of the *weight of different geographical areas in the development of music*. I asked about the United States, the United Kingdom and Spain, as well as different cities within their own countries. When possible, I asked about the differences between different 'crowds' and their perception of 'cosmopolitanism' and 'parochialism'. In Barcelona, I asked many interviewees about the lack of popularity of 'black' music in the city and in Catalonia in general.

The fourth and final issue I tried to discuss was *their perception of, or knowledge about, general youth geographies*. I asked about the main youth styles or trends of the moment and about the hierarchy of coolness, popularity and toughness. I then asked them to characterise their business and their audience or crowd in terms of their location within musical and youth geographies, as well as in terms of its socio-economic features.

It is important to point out that any interview, far from being a neutral, objective and straightforward means of obtaining information from 'reality', must be seen as a social relation and an arbitrary intrusion into an individual's everyday reality and subjectivity. This implies that in order to control as much as possible – and not to 'eliminate' – the effects of this intrusive social relation on the information gleaned, the main tool we have is 'reflexivity'. Many researchers believe that 'reflexivity' is not enough, and make a considerable effort to critically

control the factors influencing the interview¹⁴, sometimes even trying to reproduce a lab-like procedure. This option is relevant, and an interesting road to promote scientific rigour and systematic doubt. Nonetheless, it can also prevent us from obtaining relevant information, for instance when it does not allow the researcher to impose his or her own categories on the interviewee, thus precluding important and interesting areas of research. Even if it is true that methodological and epistemological vigilance is crucial, it is also true that interviewing is as much a technique as it is an 'art' or a 'craft' that is difficult to systematise. In this thesis, interviews have been carried out with the assumption that they were neither standardised nor neutral empirical instruments, so I did not avoid carrying out each interview in a different way in order to establish a good communicative situation and I often pushed individuals to comment on concepts they would not spontaneously use. I relied on reflexivity as the main tool to guarantee objectivity and scientific validity, starting by acknowledging the fact that we researchers tend to 'impose' our prejudices on the interviewee, as argued by Bourdieu:

'This means that nobody is immune to the 'imposition effect' created by naively egocentric or, quite simply, inattentive questions and, above all, the fact that answers extorted in this way risk rebounding on the analyst herself, whose interpretation is always liable to take seriously an artefact that she herself has manufactured.' (Bourdieu 1996: 20).

As for not imposing the researcher's prejudices on the interviewees, I do not believe that an 'ideal' interview can be achieved. One can make an attempt to control the imposition, but it cannot be completely avoided. My argument is that depending on the goal of each research, moreover, different strategies could be applied in that a stronger imposition can be considered necessary or even positive as long as it is reflexively considered. Naturally, the interviewing relation is violent in itself. In the case of interviews with young people, my introduction via school teachers, my credentials as a 'sociologist', and the structure itself where I asked questions within the school walls, all made it obvious that our social relation was not symmetrical. I did not intend it to be. A good illustration of the violence of the mere presence of the researcher is the reaction of a young girl in Birmingham after she had participated in a first collective interview. She and all her classmates had been previously asked if they had any reluctance to participate in the interviews. Since she did not object, I included her in a collective interview with five other classmates, where we discussed their taste in music. As always, I carefully tried to be supportive and not judgemental, but the fact was that she did not talk much during the session. The following day I attended her school, she told me

¹⁴ A good example of this is the work of Cicourel and his preoccupation with the reliability and validity of the methods and data used, which he believes to be lacking on most social sciences research: 'The lack of validity in most social science research means that research analysts seek the quickest and easiest route to obtaining publishable results. If the training of social scientists strongly emphasized the need always to explore the relationship between reliability and validity, our findings could be linked more readily to supporting and/or changing our theories' (Cicourel 2004: [106]).

in the corridor that she would prefer to withdraw from the research. I immediately accepted her request and asked her if I could know the reasons of her decision. She did not want to answer. A few months later, I saw her again in the corridor, while I was waiting for a classmate of hers, and tactfully asked her again about her decision. She told me that she *did not know the answers*. Even if my questions had no 'good' and 'bad' answers, and there was nothing to be known, she experienced my questions about her taste in music as a 'test' that put her on the spot in front of her peers, and the violence of the situation led her to abandon the interviews.

Even if I did not pretend that the interviewing relation was symmetric, I tried to create an atmosphere where interviewees felt comfortable and free to express anything they wanted. The pattern I chose in the interviews was an attempt to create what Bourdieu calls 'social proximity and familiarity', since I see these – as Bourdieu does – as necessary conditions for 'non-violent' communication¹⁵. Even though the imposition effect cannot be avoided, researchers can do their best to reduce the symbolic violence as much as possible. In a sense, the goal is to collect 'natural discourse' as little affected as possible by cultural asymmetry (Bourdieu 1996: 21), so I was careful to never judge the interviewees' answers, and I based my comments on sympathy for their positions and experiences. Whenever I found some aspect of my own biography similar to that of the interviewees, I brought it into the conversation to make our shared experiences visible. I did not attempt to appear 'neutral'. Through the tone of the interview and the language register an effort was made to basically keep the conversations on the interviewees' terms. When interviewees showed an interest in my own taste in music, which happened repeatedly, I answered them but in broad terms, in order not to be strongly identified with any clear position in musical geographies.

At the same time, however, I did not avoid influencing the thread of conversation, the topics that were discussed and even, in some case, the concepts that were commented on. The interviews were in many senses not 'natural discourses', even if I tried to make them as similar as possible to informal conversation. For one thing, since I attempted to deal with particular topics in a reduced timeframe, I decided to raise most of the topics myself, although when the 'imposition' effect of my questions came across as embarrassing for the interviewee, I tried to either change the formulation of my words or drop the topic altogether. In the same sense, when unexpected but interesting topics arose, I not only encouraged them to keep going but even incorporated them in subsequent interviews.

It is important to note that several of the topics I wanted to discuss were aspects that are rarely reflexively discussed *even in 'natural discourse'*. I am referring for instance to broad musical geographies, which in many cases are not systemati-

¹⁵ 'Social proximity and familiarity in effect provide two of the social conditions of 'non-violent' communication. For one thing, when the researcher is socially very close to her respondent she provides her, by virtue of their interchangeability, with guarantees against the threat of having her subjective reasoning reduced to objective causes, and those choices that she experiences as free made to seem the effect of objective determinisms revealed by analysis' (Bourdieu 1996: 20).

cally or reflexively known to young people. Quite often interviewees *thought about what they were saying for the first time*, at least in the terms I asked them to do so. This was particularly clear when I asked them to talk about the relationship between musical and youth geographies, or when I put forward categories like ‘ethnicity’, ‘linguistic identity’, ‘class’ or ‘gender’. In my fieldwork, since I was unable to carry out long ethnographic participant observation, I could not expect the interviewees to bring up such topics spontaneously, so if they did not mention them after the main questions had been asked, I imposed them through direct questions – even though I did it carefully, always being ready to modify and withdraw them as soon as the interviewee showed perplexity, confusion or uneasiness. The questions were always casually brought into the conversation through questions ending with an opportunity to just deny such relation, in formulations like ‘is there any relationship between being more working or middle class and taste in music or does class have nothing to do with it?’. When the interviewees showed unease with the question, I just moved to another one. The fact is that I clearly imposed them on the conversation, and even if this has to be reflexively taken into account in the analysis and interpretation of the data, which becomes less robust, it has allowed me to bring up questions that are often overlooked¹⁶. In my own personal relations, I do not always have access, even after years of friendship, to deep feelings of class resentment, confidence or uneasiness, as well as to ethnic stereotyping or discrimination injuries. This does not mean that they do not exist, but that we generally hide them, and are thus paradoxically a hidden source of meaning generally overlooked in both public and everyday discourses. Disclosing and bringing them to the attention of youth cultures research is one of the goals of this thesis, so as long as its imposition is reflexively acknowledged and an attempt made to control it, I argue that it is not only legitimate but even necessary, particularly when deep ethnographic fieldwork cannot be carried out.

It is obvious that trying to obtain information, in an interview of an hour or less, about aspects that are rarely talked about even in long-term personal relations is not an easy task, and the results must always be taken with caution. Another problem was the unease that the interviewees felt in some cases when asked about internal hierarchies of popularity within the school, not so much because of talking about them but because of being taped. They sometimes parried my questions with general, imprecise answers, and on other occasions they asked whether the teacher was going to listen to the tape. I always guaranteed complete anonymity, and sometimes I stopped the tape recorder.

Even if my main goal was to grasp (linguistically) typified meanings, and the way these were experienced by young people, the face-to-face social relation of an interview provided much more information than simple words or linguistic repre-

¹⁶ Cohen correctly points to the problem of empirically identifying such aspects: ‘The means by which people mark out and recognize status may often be concealed from the superficial ethnographer, masked as they often are, beneath protestation of equality and the paucity of institutional expressions of inequality’ (Cohen 2000 [1985]: 33).

sentations. An interview provides – like any other face-to-face interaction – many threads of non-verbal information that help to interpret the taped words. The body, the voice and the reaction to questions and comments are full of information which is difficult to systematise in words. In this case it is even more obvious than when reading transcribed words that the instrument to gather such data is basically the researcher's humanness. Aspects like social injuries, pleasure through music or through going out, class resentment or the play for social dominance in school corridors may not be clearly present in linguistic terms, but may be apprehended through non-verbal information. Since they are relevant for the goal of this research, they have been taken into consideration wherever possible and included in the interpretation of the results. In spite of its theoretical relevance, nevertheless, this has not been a central goal of the fieldwork, since only deep ethnography and participant observation would have made it possible to have access to I, so the main focus of the fieldwork has been an attempt to grasp interviewees' (linguistic) typifications, that is, their discourses about music with their subsequent reasons, justifications and interpretations, as well as their myopias and paradoxes.

The fact that the instrument for gathering information from the field is, in this case, the researcher's human body has another crucial impact on the information that is gathered and on the social relation that is established with the interviewees: this human body is not 'neutral'. Being a male, white, Catalan university student researcher crucially influences the social interaction: it is easier to establish an atmosphere of cultural symmetry with young people from a similar background, and more difficult to overcome the social distance with young people from different ones. All the fieldwork was carried out by myself, what means that in Birmingham I was a foreigner, with a strange accent and a clear difficulty in understanding some of the interviewees' words and implicit meanings, or to manage interview situations where I did not feel competent enough. Whereas in Barcelona I had many social and cultural resources in order to understand, interpret, comment on or question the interviewees, in Birmingham I often felt a lack of cultural competence to do so. Even if this made it difficult to manage interviews with the same scope or resources as I would later do in Barcelona, it probably made it easier to avoid imposing my own categories on the interviewees. The truth is that, at 193 centimetres (6 foot 4 inches) tall, with my unfashionable appearance and – at that time – long hair, it is difficult to imagine the image I projected on young people and those working in the music industry. In general, I adopted an ignorant stance, obliging interviewees to explain everything from the beginning, although I also often used certain information to allow the interviewee to feel that we spoke the same language and to make it possible to take things for granted. In Barcelona, I could be much more aware of the image I projected on the interviewees. I had many more tools to establish complicities with them, as well as to immediately recognize social distance and reticence, and to be successful in my attempt to bridge them or at least to react in accordance with the social situation.

As well as the image I projected, there was another important difference: in Barcelona I had not only personally grown up among the musical and social

geographies of my generation, but I had also carried out previous research projects during the second part of the 90s, and was thus familiar with the main co-ordinates of musical and social geographies, as well as with their imbrication with social hierarchies. By contrast, in Birmingham I had to learn them from the start, as if I were a child entering youth social space. This difference obviously influenced how I made sense of them in the two places, even though the procedure I followed was the same in both cities (talking to young people and those working in the industry, distributing a questionnaire to almost 200 young people in each city, going to bars, pubs, clubs and concerts, as well as paying attention to radio stations, magazines, TV shows and *flyers*). In Birmingham, the first interviews were my first contact with young people's co-ordinates, so I was open to any distinction they verbalised, trying to understand their perception of musical and social geographies and gradually building up my own mental map of their general musical and youth geographies. By contrast, in Barcelona I already had an idea of what I would find, and interviews were from the beginning a chance to either confirm or challenge my expectation, which probably enabled me to be much more precise and subtle in my questions and interpretations, but perhaps led me to take for granted meanings that were more present during my adolescence or in other research projects than in the minds of the interviewees.

The fact is that the social relation with the interviewee varied in every single interview in both Birmingham and Barcelona, and this diversity crucially influences the information that is gathered. The social relation with the interviewees ranged from a fluid sympathetic conversation to an impossible dialogue between me and interviewees who ignored my questions while playing with a cassette player in the room. The type of information that each of these cases provided is, naturally, very different, and they cannot be judged in the same way. The reluctance of several Afro-Caribbean interviewees to talk about music with me in Birmingham, for instance, was not very informative in terms of their typifications about musical geographies, but was highly relevant in relation to their 'attitude' towards authority and intromission.

Bourdieu reminds us that in an interview we do not have access to reality, but to a realist construction of reality made by the interviewee. When interviewing young people, I will analyse young people's representations in that specific communicative situation, not their 'real' or even 'everyday' sense-making. It is obvious that I will assume that there is some connection between what they explain in interviews and their everyday experience, but not that this connection can be taken for granted. Interviewees, both young people and those working in the music industry, tended to begin the interview with the impression that our communicative situation was similar to a radio interview. They sometimes even looked at the tape recorder to say particular things, or asked me to rewind it. Even when this did not happen, it is important to bear in mind that they were presenting me not with a supposedly 'spontaneous' representation of themselves, but one which – whether they were aware of it or not – they produced for the occasion. This was particularly obvious in some cases, when interviewees showed off, exaggerated or

quite obviously lied. Statements like 'If you look at me, right? I'm one of the more popular geezers in the school, man. All girls like me man!' were never straightforwardly interpreted. The fact is, however, that it is not possible to know the extent to which it happened in every single interview. I do not consider it, however, a definitive problem in the interpretation of the results, since this thesis is not trying to describe any objective music and youth geographies, but the process of cultural production, so such personal representations allow the researcher to analyse individual processes of cultural production in the context of the existing music and youth geographies.

The fact that many interviews were not individual but either group or pair interviews, created many ethnographic moments when the importance of each interviewee's presentation in front of the others could be grasped. The same interviewee, for instance, would create a completely different impression depending on who accompanied him or her in the interview. In some cases, the presence of classmates clearly intimidated them. This was the case of a young Asian woman who said, in one interview with two other classmates where she had remained quiet most of the time, that she did not like garage music. The following week, since I had sensed her unease with the interview situation, I asked her to participate in an individual interview. She was reluctant to do so, and said that she did not know how to answer. I told her that I had noticed that she had not felt comfortable and since it was not about knowing anything, but just chatting about music, I would be very pleased if she agreed to talk with me again. In this second interview, she talked freely about her taste in music and many other things, and at the end of the interview was happy to have done it and invited me to interview her again if I felt that there was the need. In the first interview, the conversation with the other two girls was experienced by her as symbolically violent. For instance, after she had mentioned her admiration for Westlife, the other two girls repeatedly and strongly criticised them. Moreover, in the first interview she pretended to know what garage music was and claimed that she didn't like it, whereas in the second interview she explained that she had never heard about this music genre before I asked about it in our first meeting. All group interviews produced, in some sense or another, a similar – even if generally milder – implicit cultural struggle, where interviewees were negotiating the image they caused not only on me but also on other interviewees.

In conclusion, in obtaining empirical information for the research, it seems clear that the idiosyncrasy of both the social relation and the human process of interpretation of each interview makes the fieldwork anything but a straightforward, direct source of empirical data. To (partially) overcome this problem, as well as the continuous attempt at reflexivity and the readiness to be surprised by the interviewees (the effort to render the subject able to object), two basic strategies have been used. On the one hand, an effort to find more or less 'external' signs of the existence of what I call musical and social geographies, that is, not only analysing young people's general 'typifications' of these but also looking for moments in which they were enforced through different social control mechanisms: the

comments of other youngsters, critiques, put-downs, and mockery. In the case of those working in the music industry, I focused on the market profitability of their decisions. Through this external social control, I wanted to obtain clear and communicable indices of the existence and functioning of such geographies.

On the other hand, I have used triangulation, whenever it has been possible, between linguistic information in a particular interview and other sources like body language, observation in other informal situations, or other interviews with the same or different interviewees. For instance, in an interview one boy pretended to be extremely tough and radical, with a linguistic discourse of manliness linked to rap music. His body language did not clearly correspond to his discourse, but it was difficult to judge the accuracy of his words. After the interview, in the classroom, in a silent gesture, one of the leaders of the class nudged him away with his elbow in a clear sign of dominance and lack of consideration. My interviewee responded with submission and this was enough for me to understand that his discourse had more to do with a rhetorical representation of himself than with his real position in the school. Other interviews, which never mentioned him as a tough classmate, corroborated this impression.

Survey as a social relation

Another tool for obtaining data from young people was the questionnaire about taste in music filled in by almost 400 individuals. Schools were asked to distribute the questionnaire to their pupils in Years 9 and 11 in Birmingham and 2nd and 4th of ESO in Barcelona – that is, those mostly aged 13 or 14 in the first case, and 15 or 16 in the second – and I was only present on a few of the occasions when the survey was filled in. Its questions, referring to taste in music and socio-demographic issues, were written – after many qualitative interviews had been carried out – using young people’s own typification of music in terms of both genres and artists. The questionnaire had 7 broad questions.

Respondents were first asked to mark the answer that best defined their attitude towards 12 (18 in Barcelona) different *broad music genre categories*. The options were ‘I don’t know exactly what it is’, ‘I like it very much’, ‘It’s all right’, ‘Indifferent’ or ‘I don’t like it’.

The questionnaire then asked respondents to write down *three artists or bands* they specially liked and three artists or bands they specially disliked.

Respondents were asked to mark the answer that best defined their position regarding *27 specialised genres* (30 in Barcelona) in two different aspects: their knowledge of them and their attitude towards them. The options regarding their knowledge of the different categories were ‘never heard about it’, ‘I’ve heard about it, but I wouldn’t recognize it’, ‘I barely know it’, ‘I know it well’. The options related to their attitude were ‘I like it’, ‘It’s all right’, ‘I’m indifferent’ and ‘I don’t like it’.

The fourth question asked respondents to say whether they wanted to *be musicians, go to college and go to university*. The possible answers were ‘yes’, ‘yes, but I don’t know if I will’, and ‘no’.

Respondents were asked to mark the answer that best defined their position regarding *42 artists and bands* (45 in Barcelona) in the same two aspects as the question about specialised genres.

They were then asked to specify whether they took part in *several practices* 'very often', 'sometimes', 'rarely' or never'. The content of each epithet was not made explicit, and the practices were 'play music', 'listen to music', 'buy CDs', 'Go out (night) to the city centre', 'Go to the city centre (daytime)', 'Watch Top of the Pops', 'Listen to Radio 1', 'Listen to Galaxy Music', 'Listen to Silk City FM', 'Listen to BRMB', 'Listen to Kool FM', 'Hang around in the street', 'Read teenybop magazines', 'Read music magazines', 'Go shopping/window shopping' (in the case of Barcelona, the questions were adapted to local media).

Finally, there was a battery of *socio-demographic questions*: parents' occupation, area of residence, sex, age, family members and parents' ethnicity (Birmingham) or geographical origin (Barcelona).

The survey was designed from the beginning as an empirical support for the central qualitative research aiming at providing a broader picture of musical geographies in the schools *and* its imbrication with social hierarchies. In other words, its strength is that it gathers information from more young people than the interviews, and can therefore be useful to contrast some of the generalizations drawn from them. It is also useful in systematically relating taste in music to structural location of young people.

At the same time, however, it is important to bear in mind that a survey, like an interview, is a social relation. Even when they are limited to 'facts' and 'actions', and not 'opinions', it is not true that they produce 'objective' data. Surveys produce a particular social relation based on interpretations and assumptions where the prejudices of the researcher are equally important. In the first place, the 'imposition' effect of the researcher is even greater than in the qualitative techniques, since the questions cannot be explained, modified and adjusted for particular interviewees. The questions oblige the respondents to 'think' in the direction imposed by the researcher, which inescapably impedes embracing social diversity. Everybody that has filled in a questionnaire has experienced the unease of not being able to accurately express his or her experience. In survey-based research, moreover, is assumed that everybody understands the questions in the same sense and that they answer them 'honestly', which is quite a risky assumption. When asking about music styles and taste in music, I do not expect the answers to be an immediate door to reality, since I take for granted that many respondents will 'pretend' to know more styles and bands than they actually do, or to answer the questions on the basis of the image they want to project to the sociologist. I also assume that they will often try to 'cheat' and 'have a laugh' through the questionnaire, or just to fill it in as fast as possible, regardless of the veracity of their answers (in order to estimate the extent to which respondents pretended to know artists and bands, one invented name was introduced among the real ones).

The imposition effect is, therefore, very strong. Even when previous qualitative interviews are used to create or test the questionnaire, as is the case here, the

result cannot fit the diverse range of respondents. The reductionism implied in the quantification of social reality is useful at the cost of losing on its way the detail that can help to understand this reality. Surveys, therefore, must be used with caution, that is, by seeing them not as a transparent tool to access social reality but rather as one among many techniques to generate information about this reality, an information that is interpretative in its origin and that must be further interpreted when processed and used in any research.

In this particular survey, moreover, there was one further weakness: many youngsters did not take the questionnaire seriously and – because of a confusing design and the lack of explanation – many of those who did, did not understand how they were expected to answer it. The result is that not all interviewees answered all the questions, and many who did, did not do so correctly. The data is thus even more fragmentary than expected, and this explains why it has not been used as intended, by carrying out correspondence analysis, but only in exploratory descriptive terms.

Triangulation and systematisation

The truth is that no single methodological instrument can be considered perfect in collecting or producing data from the field. Each instrument reveals different aspects of reality, so in the same way that I used different interviews to triangulate particular interviewees' statements, I also used different instruments and data sources to triangulate the information they provided. I am not only referring to the combination of the main methodological instrument, interviews, and the support of the data provided by the survey, but also to observation, participant observation and media analysis carried out in a non-systematic way.

First, I was often able to observe or participate in interviewees' activities, either in the corridors, in the classroom, in youth clubs, at concerts or during rehearsals. The observation of the interactions among young people in these situations was valuable. Second, I anonymously visited many bars, clubs and record stores, where I was able to observe generally older young people in both cities. Alongside the interviews and questionnaires, insights provided by this observation and participant observation have been minor but extremely useful bits of information which, taken with the rest of the data, have made it easier to interpret young people's experience of musical geographies and the words of those working in the music industry. It is through these observations that I was often able to interpret the interviews. I have mentioned above the example of an interviewee who, after pretending to be tough during his conversation with me, was flagrantly intimidated by one of his classmates in the classroom. Another illustration is a young man who claimed that in the school they were 'all equal, completely equal', but was later embarrassed when treated as inferior by two classmates making fun of him.

Third, I carried out on the sites of the interviews many informal conversations with teachers, youth workers and young people themselves which naturally provided many insights or modified them. Fourth, I lived in both cities during the

fieldwork, so personal experiences and conversations with friends, colleagues and acquaintances, a verbal exchange when having a hair-cut, or overheard conversations on public transport also sometimes provided relevant information.

And fifth, as regards the carriers of musical geographies, I also followed the music press and to a lesser extent music TV and radio, in an attempt to get extra information about the discourses and the soundscape available to young people through the media. This data has not been systematised – it could be in itself the object of a whole thesis – although it will be occasionally used as an illustration of different elements analysed in the following pages.

All this information has been important in developing the analytical scheme of the research. The more systematic analysis, however, has only been carried out with the survey and the interviews. The taped interviews were transcribed verbatim (all but 15 by myself), resulting in 1,300 written pages of single-spaced text. The transcriptions have all the grammatical and lexical incongruence and inconsistencies of spoken discourse. When needed, bracketed comments or missing words were introduced.

All these pages were coded using the Atlas.ti computer program. From an initially defined tree of codes based on the initial interpretation of the results throughout the fieldwork and the transcription and first reading of the interviews – in the light of the theoretical framework and research questions – a close reading of the 1,300 pages gave rise to new codes and ideas, producing a final count of over 500 codes organised on 5 levels of specificity. Once the codification was done, systematic analysis of each of the codes of the third level of specificity (32 in total) was carried out, which allowed first impression interpretations to be contrasted in order to get a more accurate picture of the scope of answers of each kind. This systematic analysis helped to render the subjects able to object, making visible those answers and groups of answers that were initially downplayed, and vice versa.

This is the basic empirical data on which this thesis is grounded, and in what follows many literal quotes will be used as illustrations of the interpretation and analysis of the results. Character information about the interviewees will only be offered when considered particularly relevant. Even if the reader will often feel that some extra information about the interviewee would have helped to contextualise the quote, I decided to generally neglect it because the amount of literal quotes would make this contextual information excessively distracting. The fact that there are several dozen interviewees, moreover, makes it impossible to acquaint the reader with each particular interviewee. As for the quantitative systematisation of the answers, since not all aspects were covered in all the interviews, and since the number of interviewees is not statistically significant, I have avoided counting the answers in one or other direction, and when I refer in the following pages to the presence of each aspect among the interviewees, the more approximate 'several', 'many', 'a few' or 'some' will be used.

The survey results were introduced into the SPSS computer program, as explained above with the initial intention of carrying out correspondence analysis. The fragmentary and uneven results, however, led me to the decision to use them

only partially as illustrations, to triangulate and support the analysis of the interviews. The only analysis I have carried out, therefore, has been an exploration through cross-tables, which are nevertheless very informative in contrasting many of the aspects covered by the interviews.

In conclusion, the amount of data is important, and a conscious and systematic effort has been made to triangulate and control the interpretations imposed on it. Although the oriented theoretical framework and the limited depth of the data probably makes it impossible to avoid the imposition of categories and the overinterpretation of some of the results, the several systematic controls apart from general reflexivity and the researcher's willingness to be surprised in the field have hopefully rendered the subjects, to some extent, able to object.

II. *Carriers of musical traditions and commodities*

Musical and social geographies faced by young people when they are growing up, are experienced and re-produced by each new generation through actual interactions, events and artefacts. We will begin the analysis of the empirical fieldwork by paying attention to these 'carriers', which are necessary in order to keep them alive from one generation to the next. Meanings need to be passed on by parents, siblings, friends and the media. Collective musical social experiences need to be actualised in places such as concert venues, clubs and music bars, as well as in privately shared spaces like bedrooms or cars. The contemporary act of listening also needs CDs, MP3, tapes, Walkmans and other artefacts to make sounds physically present. For their organisation, maps of meanings making sense of musical geographies need music genres as reference points. All these persons, places and artefacts are what we term the 'carriers' of musical traditions. They are necessary in order to keep musical traditions alive, to make them available to every new generation of young people. Many of them are made available through the market, and are thus subject to the logic of commodities. Indeed, today's popular culture is inextricably linked to the commodity form, and popular music is not an exception. To understand the cultural production of musical geographies, therefore, we will analyse both the carriers of musical traditions (Chapter 4) and the logic underlying those that are commodified (Chapter 5).

4. CARRYING, ACTUALISING AND MEDIATING MUSICAL TRADITIONS

Individuals do not trace their pathways through musical geographies by spontaneous generation, but through ‘material’ interactions with persons, sounds and objects. To learn and negotiate the meanings constituting musical geographies, people have access to discourses, sounds, artefacts, events and practices in a way that is socially structured. Young people face musical geographies as an objectified reality because they are kept alive by individuals – and their acts of social control – and artefacts. If there were no CDs, MP3s or tapes; if young people could not listen to – and talk about – music at home and in the street; if there were no concert venues, music bars, clubs, records, the internet, music press, schools, Walkmans, streets, radios, TV, charts, and many other artefacts and spaces, they would not inherit the ‘objectified’ meanings concerning musical and youth geographies as they do, and they would not be able to negotiate them as we have shown in the previous chapters.

We will distinguish three different set of ‘carriers’ of musical traditions. First, we will analyse material networks of personal, face-to-face relations, which are basically independent of the market. Second, we will deal with those mainly commodified events, artefacts and places needed by musical traditions in order to exist as they do. And third, we will pay attention to music genres as a central means of organising musical geographies. All these aspects, each with its own logic, become crucial ‘carriers’ of musical traditions, playing a central role in the cultural production and maintenance of musical traditions in the on-going process of re-production.

Before we continue, a warning is in order: although the following pages contain many stylistic references that will probably baffle the reader, only in Chapter 6, in Part III of this thesis, systematic maps organising them will be provided. This implies that those not familiar with contemporary popular music, will experience much of the information that will be analysed in a way similar to that of children when entering youth social space, that is, as an opaque and at first incomprehensible stock of knowledge which they need to make sense of by gradually mapping out its main co-ordinates.

Social networks outside the market

We will first analyse different networks of personal, face-to-face relations outside the market through which young people have access to knowledge about musical traditions. By ‘outside the market’ we do not mean that they are not mediated by commodities – the border between commodified and non-commodified networks is not self-evident, since young people do use commodities in all their personal relations – but that they are networks where personal relations are not the result of a commercial transaction – in contrast to what happens in record shops, pubs or clubs – but of non-commodified activities. These networks play a central role in

the production and reproduction of musical geographies. Different people at home, at school, on the street and in other spaces, become central carriers of the musical traditions inherited by young people. To a great extent, it is through them that youngsters have access to 'already-existing meanings'. At the same time, in these spaces, with their contemporaries, they not only 'inherit' these meanings but also culturally produce how they make sense of them.

The aim of this section is to stress the social organisation of knowledge through the main networks where musical meanings are learnt and negotiated: the home, the school, and the street, as well as what we will name 'alternative' networks. These networks – social spaces where personal relations are established – have their own logic and imply idiosyncratic ways of passing on musical traditions from one generation to the next.

Home and family

Young people have access to musical traditions, in the very first place, in the context of their families. In general, it is through their parents, siblings and other relatives that they first have access to musical traditions. Even in those cases where music is absent at home, this absence can be understood as a primary disposition towards music. The home is the starting point from which young people look at musical geographies, the first space where taste in music is shaped, since it is there that primary socialisation is mostly carried out. Family members are the significant others responsible for the initial socialisation of individuals during childhood. When they enter adolescence, their parents are in some cases a positive influence and in others the model *against which* taste in music is developed – and in most cases a combination of these. In other cases, however, music is just absent in the family context, or in young people's relationship with their parents.

When parents had a positive influence on the interviewees' musical taste, they also shared some general disposition about musical geographies, about the meanings of different music genres and sounds. This means that the meanings learnt by parents when young, became actualised, in one way or another, in their children's taste in music. Among the group of pupils who liked rock music in the White School, as well as among those who liked 'black music' in Birmingham or '*flamenco*' in Barcelona, many shared their general taste in music with their parents, and thus got access to a set of meanings of these musical traditions through them. The following example is from a boy who liked rock music:

Roger: And can you explain when you started listening to music and how your involvement with music has changed?

Joel: Oh, it's since I was little, my dad has always been strong on the guitar...

Roger: Which music?

Joel: Well, it was very basic stuff...

Roger: No, I mean you father... What he likes?

Joel: He likes the 60s music. Like the Shadows, basically 60s music he is into... When I was 8 he bought me a guitar, and accessories, he took me to a guitar teacher, and I've been into it for 9 years...

Roger: And which music did you like at that time? Or did you listen to?

Joel: Mmm... I just... heard music... I did like the same music as dad, and I still do, the 60s. But I mean I started with classical guitar, and when I was about 10 or 11 my dad gave me a sixties electric guitar...

The same continuity could be found in many Afro-Caribbean interviewees, like the following:

Roger: And can you now tell me when did you start listening to music? And which sort of music did you start listening to, and if it has changed and so on?

Daniel: I've been listening to music all my life. (...) I used to like Bob Marley when I was 5. And then when I was 10 I started to like hip hop... And now.... I listen to garage.... (...)

Roger: What about you?

Mathew: I was brought up with Bob Marley. Mostly reggae. My mum liked mainly reggae. And dad.

Andrew: I listened to Bob Marley because my dad used to listen it...

Roger: But then you liked it?

Andrew: Yeah.

Roger: OK, Mathew, do you still like reggae?

Mathew: Yeah, I still listen to it as well.

Roger: Andrew?

Andrew: Yeah, but I'm not too keen on that...

A final example of this generational continuity concerns the taste for '*flamenco*': 'Siempre, desde que nací ya... rumba. (...) Si, de pequeña ya lo escuchaba, los Chichos y esto. Siempre'. An illustrative but unusual example of this intergenerational character of '*jaloteo*' is given by the following interviewee:

Eli: No, yo sí, desde Chiquitita con el "jaloteo" ése, mi tío, mi padre, y además mi tío que estaba siempre enganchado a los porros, y ya una, mi padre bailando encima de la mesa, tablaio y todo, y de pequeña ya me acostumbraron al "jaloteo".

This concordance between parents and young people's taste in music happened more often with anti-commercial attitudes like those mentioned above (rock, black music, *flamenco*), but it was also frequent in some mother-daughter mainstream commercial tastes. In general terms, however, parents assumed that their children would like music they disliked. In those cases, young people's access to musical traditions followed other pathways hidden from parental sight.

Roger: ¿Y ahora la música, la *màkina*, les disgusta mucho? ¿Les gusta? ¿Les...?

Juan: Mi padre no lo traga, mi padre no lo traga. Y el gitaneo aún menos, je, je.

Roger: ¿Aún menos?

Juan: ¡Aún menos!

Roger: ¿Y tu madre?

Juan: Mi madre, aún. Mi madre... mi madre no dice nada, pero que cuando vamos a Calafell los fines de semana y yo me pongo ahí el cassette de... no sé, de algo, lo tienen que apagar, no les gusta.

As seen in this quote, parents sometimes exercised a mild pressure in the form of complaint about their children's taste in music, but did not seriously seek to influence them other than avoiding listening to their music, at least at a high volume. In some cases, parents tease their children ('la veo muy tonta a esa'; 'anda quita eso tonta'). The only cases of interviewees acknowledging a serious attempt at control over their taste in music and practices were some of those with a Moroccan and Pakistani origin in both cities. In those cases, parents considered 'westernised' music as morally dangerous, both because of its explicit and implicit meanings and because of its distance from their cultural background. Nevertheless, on many occasions they could not or would not impose their will ('They don't like it, but they accept it').

Even when parents did not play a significant role in transmitting musical traditions, at least positively, family could be important through the influence of brothers, cousins, uncles, aunts, etc. On the one hand, every house is a stock of potential and actual music, through available CDs and tapes as well as through music actually played in the house. Some interviewees explained their taste for the same music as their brothers and sisters not because of their aim to copy them, but because of the fact that their music is available and present at home:

Eli: Es que todo, todo, o sea, es, coger cintas y, y, y me irán gustando, por ejemplo a mi hermana estaba escuchando todo el día Mecano hasta que me lo pegó, todo el día OBK y Viceversa y Platón y todo eso... y me lo pegó, me encantaba. Ahora de... o sea... OBK, tengo todos los compactos, y todo en compactos, todo, desde el primero que sacaron me los compré todos, todas las cintas de ellos, todo de los conciertos que han hecho, todas las cintas de... *desto*... grabadas o compradas cuando era pequeña. Todo, todo tengo de ello.

In general, however, the influence of siblings and cousins was more profound. Many of the interviewees referred to them as very significant in their musical biography: '[I got into rock] because of my cousin. He's a year older than me. And he is like the big brother I've never had, I've always looked up to him like... and he likes playing some stuff, and 'Wow, that's very cool, yeah'. 60s kind of rock...'; '¿Cuándo yo era pequeña? A mi me gustaba lo que le gustaba a mi hermana'; 'Mecano, ho escoltava la meva germana i em va agradar a mi, perquè que tindria jo, nou anys...'; 'Cuando tenia cinco años. Escuchaba música *raï* esa. (...) Sí, mi hermana, mi hermana. (...) Sí. Y cuando iba a casa de mi prima. También escuchaba ésta. Cuando tenía ocho o nueve años empecé a escuchar una que se llama Khaled. Es de estos tres, los mejores eran estos... Y Nusrat'; 'Yo es que copio de mi hermano'; 'Es que yo también, la forma de vestir y todo porque como me gusta lo de ella pues, yo también quiero, ¿sabes?... llevarlo'. The following quote, longer than

the others, is of a girl in the Catalan School explaining her initial taste for *màkina* and later move to house music on the basis of her sister's development, and is illustrative of the central role a brother or sister can have not only at a particular moment in time, but on the whole pathway through musical geographies:

Roger: *Vale*, i tu quan vas començar a comprar o a escoltar música apart?

Maria: Quan anava a quart d'EGB o així, vaig començar més per la ràdio i així.

Roger: Quina ràdio?

Maria: Flaix FM, perquè clar, jo tenia una germana gran i quan [la] vaig escoltar, doncs vaig dir: "Va, jo també ho escoltaré". (...)

Roger: I era la mateixa música?

Maria: Sempre no es troba la mateixa música, perquè sempre... *Bueno*, jo era més petita, m'agradava més de nou a onze que feien "El que més trenca", que era així *màkina*, doncs m'agradava més, però a partir de fa ja un temps, ja no.

Roger: Quan vas canviar?

Maria: No sé, vaig canviar...

Susana: La seva germana va canviar...

Maria: Quan ma germana va venir, llavors va canviar. És que... és que és així, eh? Els germans et marquen molt, i llavors... no sé, va canviar per la... Perquè quan ella [feia] primer de BUP, jo feia primer d'ESO, pues ja... ja vaig començar a sortir una mica més d'aquest rotllo *makiner* i anar més a la meva bola i no m'interessava cap tipus de música en particular, però llavors després no sé... Vaig provar això [del *house*] perquè la meva germana també ho escoltava molt i...

Roger: Quan fa? Això del *house* quan fa?

Maria: A tercer... No, l'any passat.

Another interviewee in the Inner City School developed a taste in music for Queen and rock music – which was unique in his school – because of the influence of his sister's boyfriend. His unique taste meant that he was seen as 'strange' by his classmates. The fact that his taste was considered 'strange' underlines the fact that when analysing the carriers of musical traditions, we are not only interested in musical taste and attitudes to music, but also in how typical knowledge about musical and social geographies is transmitted from generation to generation. When two young girls in the Inner City School were asked about the start of *màkina* music, one says that it started when she arrived at the school, but her friend corrects her by saying that 'No, jo crec que la *màkina* sempre s'ha escoltat, perquè quan jo era petita el meu cosí ja escoltava *màkina*'. Older brothers, sisters and cousins play an important role in passing on meanings to younger generations of young people. The following example shows how some interviewees 'learned' from one of their brothers the meaning of 'prole', an epithet they use repeatedly in relation to those who like dance music:

Roger: You told me that here in the school most people like dance music, and that you call them 'proles'.

Dave: Proles [they smile]. Because they're all the same.

Edward: They just follow one another.

Roger: Do you know when you first started using this word? Or you just heard of it?

Dave: Your brother said it.

Edward: Yeah, my brother said it. (...)

Dave: Yeah. Sort of passed on really.

'Passing on' meanings from one generation to the other, although not from parents to children but from older to younger adolescents, is a central aspect of musical and youth geographies. Another illustration is of an interviewee who used the adjective '*grebo*', which had been popular years before – and was still popular in other localities of England at that time – but only a few of the Birmingham interviewees knew about it. When asked about where he had first heard about it, answered the following:

Joel: I just heard it around.

Roger: Where do you think? Here in the school, in a bar?

Joel: No, I think that mainly I heard it from my cousin. Because his sister is very very poppy, that has to be trendy and buy 5 coats just because the fashion is changing and stupid things like that, and she's always calling us freaks and grebos and silly things like that.

Roger: Do you know a lot of people who know what it mean?

Joel: No, I don't know... I think it's more... because my cousin comes from the other side of Birmingham... it's even in Birmingham, you know, even different parts of Birmingham seem to have different slang words.

It is clear, therefore, that family networks are often central in transmitting musical traditions. We are not talking only about taste in music, but also about attitudes towards different sounds, genres and youth styles in general, as well as the mental maps and typifications organising them in terms of distances and proximities. The frontier between family-home and other networks of social interaction is naturally not clear, in that friends often become 'familial', and the family often becomes a source of external friendships. There is one case in which the limit is particularly confused: sentimental partners. The peculiarity is that they start outside the family networks and gradually become part of them. The idiosyncrasy of sentimental partnerships, that is, their deep intimacy and significance for individuals, make them very important in the understanding of musical and social geographies (particularly in the case of girls, who tend to project more expectations in love relationships¹ than men do, and more often than men gravitate to their partner's networks of friends and interests). Sentimental partners become the interlocutor through which a perspective on the world is developed, so it is obvious that they will be decisive in the way young people negotiate their location and perception of music and youth geographies. As

¹ See Núñez (1994) for research on the meaning of love among adolescents, and Martínez (2002) for a theoretical reflection on the relationship between youth cultures and gender.

Sebastian puts it, 'Sí. Y como [mi novia] escucha tanto[, Estopa,] pues ya empieza a gustarme'. Nevertheless, the exact way in which this influence is carried out varies considerably from person to person.

Through the analysis of home and family networks as carriers of musical traditions, we have seen that, contrary to the idea of a crude and direct impact of the media on young people, there is a hidden tradition of meanings that still has the family as one of its loci of transmission, even if it is true that it often does it through siblings and cousins rather than parents. Family networks are important in sharing, learning, comparing and negotiating taste in music and meanings about music. The school and the street provide two other important networks through which hidden musical traditions are passed on and re-produced from generation to generation.

The school

Whereas the family is the sphere of primary socialisation, the school is a crucial institution through which our social relations are broadened. Through the school we have access to a broader social world where meanings are negotiated. During adolescence, when individuals start exploring and becoming aware of broader social geographies, the school offers a small-scale perspective of typified youth social space, where 'different types' of young people are mapped out in relation to each other, in social distances and proximities, many of them hierarchical. The school is a highly significant 'local context of cultural production' where young people get an impression of the general meanings and connotations of different musical traditions. At school, cliques and best friends, as well as more distant schoolmates, become a strong influence on adolescents. In fact cliques and best friends tend to be decisive in the building up of young people's taste in music, even though some interviewees, like those quoted below, were not very keen on acknowledging it:

Tony: When I was little I used to listen to whatever my dad was listening to ... Beatles...

James: I never had an interest in music.

Tony: It wasn't an interest in music! It just was listening to whatever my dad was listening to. I still like the Beatles, because I listen to it because my dad... because he likes the Beatles and stuff like that. But as I got older...

Roger: When did you start changing?

Tony: Eleven, twelve... I started getting into punk and heavy metal. And that was it. Because when you get into punk and heavy metal, you are only that, but then I started to listen to drum 'n' bass, or to the Beatles, or something like that, and you think 'Yeah!'.

Roger: It was at the same time that you got into drum 'n' bass?

Tony: [When I was] Thirteen, fourteen, I got into other types of music.

Roger: And because of brothers... friends in the street?

Tony: Places here, the radio, whoever, a little bit around...

Roger: But how did you get into it? Because this is not on the radio, is it?

James: Mmm...

Tony: Mmm...

James: A few friends really...

Roman: A few friends really [*all speaking with a weak voice*]

Tony: Just listening to it a bit.

James: There is a pirate radio station...

Roger: Drum 'n' bass?

Tony: Yeah, drum 'n' bass.

In contrast, others had no problem in identifying the importance of school friends in their taste in music. A boy from the Philippines who liked 'jumper' music, a style that was not mentioned by any other interviewee in any of the two cities, when asked about when he had started listening to it answered 'Bueno, en el cole, con los otros chicos que había, los españoles. En otro cole que iba. (...) En primaria, en quinto, en sexto... en donde se empezaba a oír esta música'. As compared with family relations, the school provides a broader range of sounds and positions, and it does so from the point of view of a particular generational cohort. Depending on each youngster's network of friends and acquaintances, he or she will face different sounds and attitudes. Material personal interactions can create connections, links and influences that are decisive for the cultural production of musical geographies, as is illustrated by this example of a Colombian interviewee who introduced a Moroccan friend to salsa music:

Roger: ¿Y a gente de aquí les has pasado cintas o así...? ¿Hay algunos que les guste la salsa?

Roxana: ¿De aquí? Si, a Anice, pero no es española, es marroquí.

Roger: Pero le gusta la salsa. Lo ha oído y le gusta...

Roxana: Si, le gusta... A ella le gusta la salsa...

The fact is that during adolescence music is a relevant sphere of social relations. As one interviewee remarked, 'It's sort of... a thing that you can talk about... If you can talk about something you can make friends with people'. It is not always easy to identify the extent to which friends listen to the same music because they are friends or they are friends because they like the same music. The fact is, in any case, that apart from a few exceptions, close friends tended to listen to the same type of music ('Like we've got a big group of friends, but like the closest it's like four of us, and we all go out and all listen to the music as well, Led Zeppelin and that... And that's really good').

The school is not only important because of the friendship networks it builds, but also because it becomes, as mentioned above, a small-scale youth social space where youngsters negotiate and define their relative position within musical geographies. At school, young people have access to 'what's going on', to the main meanings structuring musical and youth geographies. Each school will provide its pupils with a particular perspective on musical geographies, a particular view on musical traditions, with some visible sounds (the 'popular' ones, whether commercial or not) and others that although materially available are often opaque

and even hidden to the majority (minority sounds of pupils with an anti-commercial stance that is not popular in the school). Take, for instance, the example of garage music in Birmingham. Among White School interviewees, it was a somewhat invisible taste. Several of them, when asked about it, said that they did not really know what garage was. In the Mixed School and the Dual School, by contrast, garage was very visible to the eyes of almost all interviewees, who described it as the most popular music in the school:

Roger: And do you remember when you first heard about garage?

Erving: I heard people chatting about it here in school, when I was about in year 8...

Roger: Three years ago...

Erving: People chatting, and I kind of liked it, so I decided to make my own piece...

Roger: And you listened to it and they were saying it was good?

Erving: Yeah.

Roger: It was not on the radio?

Erving: No.

Roger: What do you remember about when you heard about that? Why did you decide about it?

Erving: I don't know, they were just saying: "Have you heard garage?", "Have you heard that?" They were saying, when the radio stations started telling at once, putting it like... Everyone was getting into it, and then clubs started opening with garage and then... it just... everyone realised how good it was to dance to it, and just kept going there...

It is obvious that the experience of musical geographies that a new pupil will have in the White School and the Mixed School or the Dual School will be considerably different. The school, as a barometer of musical geographies, a social space where young people can – and need to – negotiate their own taste, where they can measure the relevance of different sounds and its attached meanings, can and does make a difference in young people's socialisation in musical traditions, because they produce different 'normalities'. The school walls provide cultural diversity within a broad but circumscribed and visible social environment since, in contrast to what happens in other social relations, where those individuals which are perceived as distant remain basically invisible and hidden, the school provides considerable visibility to all groups, making distances and proximities more obvious than other networks like the street or nightlife. Compulsory comprehensive school ensures some degree of visibility to cultural diversity in ways that other activities and institutions do not. In the following quote, two boys map different tastes in music in the Catalan School, a map that differs considerably from what was found in the other five schools in both Barcelona and Birmingham:

Roger: *Vale.* Llavors, aquí a l'institut em podeu posar, més o menys, números, o sigui, grans números, o sigui, quin tant per cent sent només màkina, quin tant per cent seria *punk*...

Alan: Seixanta per cent màkina.

Marc: Sí.

Alan: Màkina. I inclourem dins de la màkina tot *lo* que sigui música electrònica: *house, techno, dance...* Tot això estaria dintre.

Roger: I dintre podeu fer la diferenciació? Més o menys...

Alan: A veure...

Roger: O sigui, *makiners* serien...

Alan: Dintre del seixanta per cent? Un trenta per cent seria màkina.

Marc: Sí, hi ha molta més màkina que no...

Alan: I la resta, i l'altra meitat... doncs, *techno, dance* i *house*.

Roger: I l'altre quaranta per cent?

Marc: I l'altre quaranta per cent, allà entraria el *punk*...

Alan: *Punk, heavy*...

Marc: *Heavy*, sí...

Alan: I també *hip-hop* i molt alternatiu, molta música independent, perquè a batxillerat hi ha molts així que van vestits molt...

Even if this systematic reflexivity on musical geographies at school was not the norm, what is clear is the role of the school as a barometer, in youth biographical pathways, of musical and social geographies. More or less systematically, young people were able to map out the main sounds of musical geographies in their school. In fact, any taste in music needs to be negotiated in school networks and hierarchies, and general typified meanings affect how young people experience their own musical preferences – interviewees who had recently changed school were particularly aware of it. If a boy likes Queen in a school where nobody likes it, this will imply that he needs to negotiate this 'eccentricity' with his schoolmates. He will 'feel' in his flesh his very 'difference' through the reactions it raises in others, whether this is fascination, respectful indifference, mockery or whatever. The perception of 'what's going on' in the school, and the experience of social control mechanisms which make it more obvious, are always important to understand young people's pathways through musical geographies. In the following words from a girl we can see how the influence of friends is often linked to the perceived value of different sounds in the school as a whole. Sonia started to like pop music because of her friends at school, but then shifted to other music styles that were more 'fashionable':

Sonia: Pues a medida que me iba haciendo más grande me iba gustando más el pop.

Roger: ¿Cómo fue eso, te acuerdas? El primer grupo que te gustó o...

Sonia: Backstreet Boys y Spice Girls, sí, fueron lo primero.

Roger: ¿Cuántos años tenías?

Sonia: Creo diez u once, tendría...

Roger: ¿Y cómo empezó, en la escuela...? Porque las amigas lo escuchaban también...

Sonia: Sí, claro, escuchamos, después hacíamos bailes de, del grupo de música y eso, y así un poco. También aquí hemos hecho música de... de Britney Spears y todo eso, de Acqua...

Roger: ¿Esto habéis hecho?

Sonia: Bailes, bailes para gimnasia, hemos tenido que hacer bailes y cogimos así músicaailable, porque claro, [con] música màkina ¡qué baile vas a hacer! No. Saltando. Entonces cogimos un poco...

Roger: ¿Y ahora te gustan los Backstreet Boys, o las Spice Girls?

Sonia: No, no, no, ahora ya no...

Roger: ¿Pero antes te gustaban?

Sonia: Sí, al principio, el *boom*, pero ahora ya no, ahora prefiero MC, Handsome, los que están ahora más de moda.

When she explains her shift from the Spice Girls to Handsome in terms of '*los que están ahora más de moda*', she is pointing to the importance of musical geographies as a whole, apprehended not only through the media – which we will analyse later – but also through the school barometer, where one can directly check whether or not a band *is fashionable right now*.

Finally, as well as friends and schoolmates in general, the school provides another network of social relations with an impact on musical and social geographies: interactions with adults. Even if we are basically talking about musical traditions transmitted by young people and not adults, a school's cultural diversity is not completely autonomous from adults. On the one hand, teachers establish the spatial, temporal and behavioural limits through which social interaction can take place. On the other hand, adults can sometimes cause an impact on young people's access to musical geographies. The fieldwork provided a range of influences from teachers, particularly music teachers. In the Inner City School, the music teacher verbalised as one of her main goals to broaden her pupils appreciation of different sounds, and it really seemed that she was considerably successful in doing so, since several interviewees spontaneously referred to revealing experiences during music lessons. An Indian girl explained that her classmates used to joke about Indian music, but when she sang some of it in front of the class, after being asked to do so by the teacher, many of them changed their mind: 'Es que todo el mundo se quedó [impresionado], ¿eh? Pero decían: "Tienes una voz...". Another girl explained that she started to like Queen because 'aquí... la nostra senyoreta va posar un dia la cançó i ens va dir que la traduiria i tot, em va començar a agradar i un dia va sortir a "Quaranta Principals" el videoclip i m'el vaig gravar i em va agradar'. A Colombian girl made a similar point: 'Me gusta lo que ahora tocamos de la clase de música... Es música de aquí... como folklórica... "El niño en la luna", o "La luna en el niño", o cosas así. Me gusta mucho'. A Moroccan boy expressed his experience with classical music in the following terms: 'Sí. Y la música clásica, que me la recomendó la [profesora] para relajarte. Cuando dan un poquito así por la radio o algo así, para dormir la pongo y me duermo rápido. Cuando es tarde...'. And yet another Colombian interviewee explained that she very much liked the song sung by a Moroccan classmate in the school Christmas concert. More than one interviewee in this class, when filling up the survey questionnaire, asked whether they could write 'music class music' in the space of their three favourite artists or bands.

The same goal of broadening the pupils' taste in music was made explicit by the music teacher in the Dual School in Birmingham, even though he found it extremely difficult and even frustrating. He chose to encourage his students to work on the music they liked, and then try to offer them a range of different sounds that could appeal to them. The GCSE composing exercise of two of the music pupils was a garage MC session, with the music room full of pupils dancing to the music at break time. This academic activity made an impact on the school, where garage was the most popular sound, particularly among the Afro-Caribbean pupils. Everybody was aware of the event, and it raised considerable comment. One Afro-Caribbean girl referred to it in an interview:

Roger: Where you here when they did the garage MCing thing?

Norah: Yeah.

Roger: Did you like it?

Norah: There weren't that much white people in there...

Roger: And that's good or bad?

Norah: It's bad.

Roger: It's bad? You like mixing?

Norah: Yes.

Roger: And what do black people like? They think the same as you?

Norah: I don't know.

Roger: There were three or four white people. What did you feel about that?

Norah: That there should have been more...

Roger: And how the other people thought about that?

Norah: Most black people must have been thinking why are they in here?

Roger: Why are they in here?

Norah: If there was like more white people then it wouldn't have been like that... but white people outside must [have thought]... "why can't we come in?"

Roger: But they could...

Norah: They could've... But they are scared...

The fact that only four whites attended the MC session was also negatively valued by the staff, since it was seen as reinforcing ethnic segregation. This example, like the ones described above, illustrate how adults can have an impact on the way musical geographies are negotiated at school. Musical traditions are basically hidden from adults, but there are some ways through which adults influence the terms in which they are culturally produced within the school.

The street

The school, in spite of its importance, is far from the only relevant space or network of personal relations in young people's lives. For many youngsters, other networks are as – or even more – significant in building up friendships and having access to musical geographies. Many young people get in contact with their best friends outside the school walls, and one of the main spheres where alternative friendships are built is the 'street', that is, outdoor unsupervised leisure with

informal networks of contact. It is not easy to define the 'street', since it raises powerful symbolic connotations that can often hide its diverse reality. In popular music, for instance, it has often been romanticised as a space of authenticity and masculinity. Notions like 'streetwise', 'street culture' or '*la escuela de la calle*' are broadly used, but hardly represent the diversity of experiences offered by it. What we will term 'the street' points to those personal relations originated, or at least mainly developed, in the streets, far from any formal institution or adult supervision. We will take in consideration the diversity of ways it is imagined, ranging from its representation as a space of innocent play, sociality and friendship, to its typification as a space of transgression, toughness and danger.

In modern societies, we tend to think of the street in the context of an imagined opposition between, on the one hand, a quiet, generally rural but also suburban environments with children playing in the streets and, on the other, rough, dangerous, risky, generally urban and in particular inner-city settings ('*benlieus*' in Paris, '*perifèria*' in Barcelona) with gangs transgressing social norms, conventions and often legal limits – that is, with one of the modern fears linked to urbanisation and the so-called 'loss of community'. This latter reality points to a street as a space of unsupervised leisure where transgressive practices are seen and often experienced, and where particular and specific social interactions take place².

The fact is that many of the interviewees got in touch with different musical traditions through networks of friendship and social contact based not on their school but the street. The limit separating them, however, was not always clear, since these groups and gangs often mixed school and street friendships. The point is that young people's experience of after-school hours sharply differs depending on whether they hang around in the streets or not, particularly in disadvantaged neighbourhoods where the street is seen as a dangerous and rough space. Many interviewees spent those hours either at home or in supervised leisure activities. In one extreme case, one Asian girl was not even allowed to go out of the school at break time unless she had special permission from her parents. At the other extreme, there were a few interviewees who after leaving their bags at home after school, did not go back until late at night. One boy put it as follows: '[Cuando salgo del colegio] voy a casa, deajo las cosas y luego bajo a la calle. (...) [y estoy por ahí] hasta las diez o las nueve o así'. Another one stayed out until 12 o'clock at night. Those who spend a considerable amount of time outdoors developed and negotiated friendships in this alternative space – sometimes superimposed on

² For an analysis that takes into consideration this aspect of the street see Hollands' *The Long Transition* (1990), where he refers to the street as a 'particular social site of working-class youth identity formation' (1990: 131) and distinguishes different working-class males' use of this public sphere 'as a way to compensate for their lack of status at work or inability to afford alternative leisure pursuits' (1990: 135). He notes how some of the more upwardly mobile male trainees chose to save up and spend their allowance on other leisure pursuits, and some of them were openly disdainful of those youngsters hanging around on the street. See Jackson (1989) for an analysis of the symbolic opposition between the street and the home as part of the moral geography of family life in 19th century Victorian England, through which 'A clear association was assumed between the private virtues of family life in the home and the public dangers of the streets' (1989: 100).

school friendships and sometimes not. The point is that these alternative networks could often be at least as significant as those developed within the school, and thus had a strong influence on many of the interviewees' taste in music. Several interviewees said that they had been introduced to the music they liked by friends from the street, not from the school.

The street networks were not only important because of the influence of friends, but also because of the typical knowledge young people gleaned there. As in the school, the street had its own soundscapes, providing access to 'what's going on', 'what's available' in musical geographies. One interviewee in Barcelona, for instance, explained as follows how after listening to Barricada, a Spanish rock band, he shifted to rumba: 'Y luego ya me decanté más hacia el meneo, las rumbitas, porque, por el barrio, por la gente, porque, y bueno por estar...'. Just as he got interested in rumba because it was in the '*barrio*', the neighbourhood, a Moroccan boy also explained how during the previous years the soundscape of his neighbourhood had been modified: 'Sí, porque antes no se escuchaba *raï*. Ahora hay más. (...) Escuchaban un poquito de *raï*, pero o sea... no tanto...'. The importance of distinguishing between street and school networks of personal relations is perfectly illustrated in the following quote, where a boy from the Catalan School explains the evolution of his taste in music in relation to the street and school friends he was with at each moment:

Roger: Vale. ¿Y cómo fue este paso por el *punk*? ¿Cómo fue? ¿Tenías amigos que también...?

Alberto: Fueron los amigos, sí. Los amigos, que como les gustaba el *punk* y me fui con ellos... Y la forma de vestir también.

Roger: ¿Qué era, aquí en el instituto o...?

Alberto: Sí, fue aquí en el instituto, al principio del instituto.

Roger: Y luego, ¿qué pasa? ¿Cambiate de amigos o ellos también cambiaron? ¿Cambiateis todos juntos?

Alberto: No. Fue lo mismo, pero al llegar al [instituto]... Yo, cuando salía con mis amigos, entonces del instituto, durante un año o dos, cuando... Fue el principio [del Instituto].

Roger: Sí.

Alberto: Pero luego ya con el cambio, pues fui con mis amigos de siempre otra vez, con los que son de mi... de al lado de mi casa, que los conozco de toda la vida. Y empezamos a ir a discotecas y cada uno se decantaba por lo que le gustaba. Y nos fuimos haciendo poco a poco un grupo que nos gusta a todos la misma música: la *màkina* y las discotecas. Y entonces varié de música.

Indeed, the streets were a source of personal networks that could make a difference in young people's pathways through musical and social geographies. Depending on the particular group or gang – 'pandilla', 'penya' or 'banda' in Barcelona – one's perspective of musical and social geographies could differ significantly. In terms of ethnic composition in Barcelona, for instance, pupils at the Inner City School recalled many different types of groups of youngsters in the street. There were some strictly Moroccan or Spanish, and many others with a

diverse ethnic composition. In general, those Moroccans who hung around in gangs of predominantly Spanish origin were the ones who had already spent many years in Barcelona, and incorporated, at least partially, the musical taste of the group.

The 'street', as well as being this alternative source of networks of personal relations, is particularly relevant because of the notably unsupervised character of its leisure (it is clear that adults and, most notably, the police, also have an important influence on street sociability, but we will not pay attention to it here). This is why the distinction between individuals who hang around and those who do not is often important, particularly in those neighbourhoods experienced as 'rough'. In these latter cases, the street becomes a space of open transgression, danger and toughness, just the opposite of what most adults expect of their children. In these neighbourhoods, and particularly among certain groups there, 'hanging around' in the streets is seen as a transgressive and tough practice in itself, whereas in 'safer' environments it can be much more neutral in terms of transgression. It is not surprising, therefore, that young people clearly distinguished among neighbourhoods in terms of their 'roughness'. A group of Asian interviewees in the Mixed School, in a group interview, explained that their neighbourhood used to be one of the worst areas in Europe, but was now improving. A couple of white boys in the White School said that they lived 'in a kind of nice area in the middle of bad areas', and explained that those pupils coming from bad areas were easily recognizable in the school. One of their classmates also explained that he lived in a nice neighbourhood, 'but as you come out of it, you've got... [this other], and it's really rough, sells drugs, and beat people up and smash windows... and things like that. So it's not a nice neighbourhood really'. Other interviewees also referred to bad areas as those with 'rough kind of people', of 'younger kids hanging around... crime, steal...'. The point is that this distinction in terms of roughness was often linked to ethnic differences and musical traditions. A white boy in the Mixed School, when asked about the music that the girls liked, provided an illustration: 'It depends on the culture. (...) Because if they come from black areas, yeah? They mostly listen to garage, and if its from a good area [they like other music]...'. Some white interviewees, while acknowledging the presence of this 'image' or 'stereotype' (as they put it), denied that it reflected the truth. In any case, all of them saw the street, when it was equated to 'roughness', as linked to a strong anti-academic disposition ('Yeah, usually the ones that come from the rougher areas don't want to study...'; '[The ones who hang around] are usually fed up with school').

The degree of 'roughness' of each living area was important in young people's experience. We can see the relevance of it in the words of a girl who moved from a quiet rural town to a rough Barcelona neighbourhood with a marked ethnic diversity. She described her experience as shocking and difficult:

Samanta: A mi me pasó que no conocía nada de otros países, de música (...). Y al venir al barrio también lo pasé muy mal, ¿eh? La primera semana muy mal lo pasé.

No salía sola a la calle, si salía a la calle... Porque claro, yo vivía en un pueblo y no habían habido nunca peleas ni nada, porque había quinientos habitantes, que era muy chiquitito, en el pueblo de al lado... Y cuando vine aquí, que si uno pinchándose, que si los otros chillándose, que si el otro robando, me quedé [de piedra]...

Roger: Y ahora más o menos ya te has situado, ya...

Samanta: Ya me he acostumbrado, ahora ya...

Like Samanta, who finally got used to her new neighbourhood, those youngsters living in rough areas who did hang around did not talk about them as very problematic, but rather as part of their everyday reality. For some of them, the roughness of the streets even became an object of mystification and excitement, as in the words of Francisco and Álvaro of Periphery School:

Francisco: Yo lo he visto... ¿sabes esos palos de así? Que hay en las aceras, que eran con un pomo, o sea, [yo he visto] entre tres arrancarlo y estampárselo en la cabeza a uno. Hombre, después de todos los barrios en que hemos vivido... (...)

Roger: Pero [dónde vives] ahora es tranquilillo, ¿no?

Francisco: ¡Eh! [*they both laugh*] ¡No!

Francisco: (...) [La plaza ésta.] No te pases por ahí.

Álvaro: (...) Es en vez de trapicheo de drogas, trapicheo de armas..

Roger: ¿Ah, sí?

Álvaro: De pistolas, navajas y todo eso...

Francisco: Y una vieja con pistola por la calle..

Álvaro: Mi cuñada vive ahí al lao... (...) Mi barrio [de antes] venía gente del [de ahora] (...), que por mi barrio no se podía casi ni pasar, que si venía gente to'a lanzá que venía con el mono a por drogas. Y ahora, desde el verano pasao, o del otro, era lo que era, todo el verano, todas las noches lleno de motos, lleno de motos, de coches...

Francisco: Lo que pasa es que ahora [el barrio ese] (...) está muy vigilado por la nacional, entonces toda la *troupe* que está allí pasando armas y rollos de estos vienen a barrios como este o por mi barrio, ¿sabes? Que yo vivo [más arriba] (...), y hay como un descampao (...), pues no te pases por la noche... están allí pasando de todo. O sea, buscan barrios como el mío, o sea, que están (...) a cinco minutos de su casa con la moto, pero que no pasa la nacional, y están [allí], pasando de todo.

They claimed that they had not had many problems in the neighbourhood because if you had a group of friends, they protected you if something happened. By contrast, many of those who did not hang around experienced it with fear and unease. Kiran, an Asian girl was not allowed by her parents to go out on her own, because they found it too dangerous ('somebody might pick on you!'). Her unfamiliarity with them and her parents' fears of them made her perceive the streets with concern: 'When it was my birthday, me and my friends we all went out for a walk, and it got dark outside, and although I was with my friends, I got scared outside, because it got dark: "Let's go home!" [*laughing*]. They go to me, "You're scared, man! You are scared!'. Other interviewees who did not hang around repeatedly pointed to the danger of the street, particularly in Birmingham:

'If you hang around out in the streets you have to be careful where you go...'; 'People will rob you and everything!'; 'You just stay away from there'; 'The streets are horrible, man'; 'The streets aren't safe, man'. Because of this, hanging around was seen by many interviewees as having a 'bad reputation', particularly in Birmingham and the inner city neighbourhood in Barcelona. These two girls at the Inner City School subtly introduce this perception:

Roger: ¿Hay gente que sale más, no, aquí? Con dieciséis años...

Esther: Con catorce ya... Yo tengo compañeras que desde los catorce...

Samanta: Yo tengo quince pero por las noches no salgo, por el barrio en que estamos...

Esther: Es que también depende de los barrios, ¿no?

Samanta: No es un barrio de fiar.

Esther: Porque si aquí en la calle, no puedes ni ir... Cuando ahora se oscurece más pronto, no puedes... Ni a las seis de la tarde no puedes ir sola...

Samanta: No puedes ir sola...

Esther: ...porque te dicen unas cosas...

Roger: ¿Si? ¿Os ha pasado?

Esther: ¡Ya ves! [Pues claro que nos ha pasado]

Samanta: O te intentan robar: "No sé qué, no sé cuantos".

Roger: ¿Te han intentado?

Samanta: A mí ayer.

Esther: O te intentan molestar.

In general, 'roughness' is particularly experienced as problematic by girls, who feel more vulnerable to physical and sexual aggression than boys. In Birmingham, the idea appeared more visibly in several interviews, where it was explicitly stated that hanging around was 'not right'. Two girls in the Mixed School, for instance, said: 'I don't think... that it looks right... ¿you know? That sort of things... That's why there's a lot of teenage pregnancy... That's why: people hanging around in the street meeting people... That's it'. Others who did not hang around, but used to go to pubs, saw those who did hang around as clearly different:

Roger: And the people that tends to hang around more in the streets after school... Are they more like street...

David: That's the thing... Our sort of groups, the people I'm with sort of go out and go to the pub and stuff, and the other group will just hang around on the street corners and...

Roger: They don't go to the pub?

David: It's kind of different, because it's kind of a different thing to them, because... It's kind of a different thing to them, I think, I don't know why it is. I don't know why, but no, they don't...

David and his friends often referred to those who hang around on street corners as not doing anything, wasting their time and not caring about anything. In neighbourhoods experienced as 'rough', typical knowledge connected to the street did not only refer to the music that 'was heard', but also to the reputation,

potential danger and ethnic composition of different gangs. At the Inner City School in Barcelona, many interviewees distinguished between groups and gangs, or rather between areas in the neighbourhood where different gangs tended to hang around:

Karim: (...) Según por qué parte vayas, por ejemplo, si vas [a aquél sitio], pues ahí hay gente...

Pervez: Los gitanos esos.

Karim: ... que no sé... Que según por dónde vayas, [a esa calle], que mejor no camines por ahí porque te puede robar.

Roger: ¿Si?

Karim: Si, [allí] seguro.

Pervez: No, no, ya no.

Roger: ¿Gitanos más, decías?

Pervez: No, antes robaban algunas personas pero ya... ya... Pegaron a una persona pakistaní que tiene tienda ahí, porque él intentó ayudar a una persona que robaron, y aquél día le dijeron a la policía que si nos han pegado, nosotros vamos a pegar, y ahora el que roba ahí le pillan...

Karim: (...) [Y en] la plaza [esa] y por ahí, ¿sabes? Y allí la mayoría son argelinos, de origen argelino, y cuando los pillan la policía les dice, ¿de dónde eres? Y ellos dicen, "De Marruecos", y por eso nos culpan a nosotros...

Roger: ¿Y a parte hay, aunque no roben, los que son más duros? Por ejemplo, en mi barrio tenías que ir con cuidado con los más duros...

Karim: ¡Ah también! Si. Por ejemplo, con los amigos que yo paro, [dónde estamos normalmente], no es que te vayan a hacer nada, pero si pasas por ahí en plan, en plan "Mírame" y no sé qué, pues que se te ponen en medio y "Pero tú de qué vas" y tal...

Roger: Eso tu grupo de amigos...

Karim: Si. O sea, no suelen hacer nada, pero siempre hay el típico...

Roger: Si el otro se rebota pues...

Karim: Si, el que pasa por enfrente, con su amiguita, que van de puestos, ¿sabes? "¿Tú de qué vas? ¿Vacilando? ¿No puedes caminar normal?"

This territorialisation of different networks in the street is particularly acute in 'rough' neighbourhoods. Different groups, with different reputations and social composition, become linked to different spaces and routines. A Moroccan boy, for instance, explained that those who had arrived in Barcelona many years ago formed groups of friends distinct from those who had recently immigrated ('En grupos separados. Porque los que estamos sentados ahí... (...) son gente que ya hace tiempo que está aquí. Y los que acaban de llegar se ponen en otra plazoleta, ¿sabes? Aquí cada uno tiene su sitio...'). At the same time, as regards our focus here, the point is that different groups were often related to the music they listened to. Some sounds were seen as linked to 'roughness', both in Birmingham and Barcelona. In Birmingham, two white female interviewees, when asked about jungle music, immediately answered that they hated it, and when asked for the reason, one of them said that she did not know how to dance to it and then, laughing, dismissed the people who liked it and ended her reply by referring with

contempt to ‘people who show off in their cars... you know?’. Two white male interviewees, when describing the different zones of their area, did so using the criteria of crime intensity and considered that the ‘blacker’ the area, the rougher it was. Since garage music was seen as clearly Afro-Caribbean, they also linked this music to ‘roughness’. This typical knowledge was also present in the school, where an Asian interviewee with a limited knowledge of musical geographies related those who hung around to garage music. In Barcelona, a few interviewees also connected rougher areas to those with a *màkina* soundscape, or more precisely with the ‘*pelao*’ youth style.

Roger: Per barris, a Barcelona, a tots els llocs s’escolta el mateix?

Maria: No, jo crec que no.

Roger: Hi ha com un mapa, o...?

Susana: Home, sempre hi ha la típica zona de *pelats* que et diuen “no passis per allà perquè”...

Roger: Però a tu t’agrada...

Susana: No, jo no hi vaig per allà..

Roger: Però tu vas amb gent que li agrada la *màkina*, que són gent semblant.

Susana: Sí, però,... Sí, jo no em foto [totalment en el grup]. Vaig amb ells però tampoc entro dins... dins el grup.

Roger: I quines zones són aquestes?

Susana: A [una zona allà baix], per exemple.

Maria: Jo he sentit del grup [d’aquest lloc], “marxa corrents que no...”

Roger: Que és una banda, una banda que es foten amb la gent...

Susana: Sí. Bueno, si no vols problemes, doncs si et fots amb una persona que té amics allà doncs ja...

Maria: O que... o que... només que el miris malament, que ell s’adoni i que et vingui a veure...

This connection, in the case of both *màkina* and garage, was never automatic, since the popularity of both music genres implied that only a minority of its fans were really tough. The importance of the connotation, however, is significant enough of the ways in which musical and youth geographies were being mapped out. If we have made a considerable effort in analysing the link between the ‘street’ and ‘roughness’, this is in fact because street networks provided many young people with a source of ‘authenticity’ in their taste in music which – as we will see later – had a strong impact on musical geographies. Street networks, particularly those of male individuals in rough neighbourhoods, were associated by definition to an ‘anti-commercial’ taste in music. ‘Roughness’ was antithetical to the ‘softness’ of commerciality and pop music, so those who hang around in the street, particularly in bad areas, were an important source of ‘anti-commerciality’, particularly when it was equated not with ‘arty’ versions of popular music but with ‘loud’ or ‘fast’ sounds and ‘transgressive’ lyrics. This means that the music that was listened to in the street, the music that tended to be popular there, based its ‘authenticity’ on its anti-commercial provocation, in its toughness, and since it was antagonist to the ‘charts’, followed alternative channels of distribution. This often

implied that young people taking part in these networks had access to new trends that were subterranean from mainstream media and often from the school itself. Many new sounds arrived in the street first, and only later entered the school. Andy, the pupil who many claimed had first introduced garage into the Mixed School, explained that he first heard about garage from a friend, hanging around in the street. In the Dual School, two boys also said that they were first told about garage by some neighbours of theirs.

The very importance of this network of personal relations is that it compressed a diversity of meanings that can largely be read as linked to the reproduction of the hierarchy of generalised advantage and gender divisions. The 'roughness' of the street culturally re-produces those meanings linking manliness to tough, stereotypical masculinity, which dismisses 'mental' labour – represented by the school and its meritocratic promise – and praises manual practices and attitudes. The dismissal of 'soft' commercial music, as well as those forms of anti-commerciality that were seen as 'soft arty snobbishness', was part of the cultural package praising masculinity as opposed to the effeminate character of females, homosexuals and the middle class 'snob' orientation to mental labour. We are dealing here with one of the key aspects of the articulation of musical geographies and social hierarchies that we will analyse in the following chapters. The street becomes a space where young people, from generation to generation, culturally reproduce, in the light of commodities, part of the traditional working-class attitudes towards the school, social mobility and masculinity. The fact that young people do not experience their search for authenticity as having anything to do with class identity does not mean that their experience of the street is not linked to it. On the contrary, 'toughness' and the scope of transgression, as well as the balance between it and family and school obligations, is a crucial cultural device to channel many young people to manual, unskilled jobs³.

We are talking about powerful cultural meanings which young people face in street networks of friendship, which thus become a hidden tradition that passes from one generation to the next always transformed into a new, trendy, transgressive and 'cool' new music and youth style. In contrast with the school, and as with the influence of brothers, sisters and cousins, street networks tend to gather youngsters from a wide range of ages in direct and intimate personal relations, thus offering younger individuals the chance to get in touch with musical geographies from the point of view of those who are older than them. At the same time, the anti-conventionality of the street guarantees that it becomes an important source of cultural innovation within musical geographies, since it is

³ We have already mentioned in the preceding chapters Willis' *Learning to Labour* (1981 [1977]), where this argument is ethnographically developed. As Willis (2000) and Hollands (1990) point out, the empirical question is what will happen with this stance once there are not enough manual jobs on offer. 'It must be stressed that despite the changing nature of industry and production, masculine attitudes to manual labour amongst young working-class men remain out of proportion to the number of jobs still requiring great physical exertion' (Hollands 1990: 109).

always looking for new sounds that match young people's search for anti-commercialism and provocation. Loud, fast, strange.

Alternative networks

Family, school and street networks are probably the most relevant sources of personal relations for young people. There are, however, other networks that often play an important role in channelling young people's pathways through youth and musical geographies, in that they can provide young people with alternative networks of friendship and personal relations with an important impact on their lives, including the way musical geographies reach them. In the following quote, Eli explains how her friends in the town where she spends her holidays and many weekends during the year have changed the view she has of the association between '*pelaos*' and an anti-Catalan stance:

Eli: Pero ocurre una cosa, [en relación a] todo lo que has dicho [talking to a classmate of hers] ahora mismo de un catalanista a un *pelado* que se diferencian en la forma de vestir, yo conozco un montón de gente catalanista en [el pueblo en la costa donde voy], en donde tenemos... tenemos la torre, ¿sabes? El apartamento, [allí], tengo un montón de amigos (...) todo eso, visten con la Alfa y eso, pero sin embargo, tienes a un amigo y se ponen a hablar en catalán con el amigo y el amigo le contesta en catalán, todo el rato catalán.

Even though the majority of young people socialised with their friends from school or the street, there were several who mentioned other friends, most frequently those made in sport activities, in holiday and weekend residencies, and some supervised leisure activities like youth clubs, '*casals*', church parties, organised music activities or even parents' social networks, to name just a few. Other alternative sources of personal relations mentioned by interviewees were friends of either friends, partners or friends' partners, as well as focus activities like skating or one's neighbours (when they did not relate to them in the street). Personal relations originated in these spheres could strongly influence young people's pathways through musical and youth geographies. One Moroccan interviewee in the Inner City School, for instance, got interested in *màkina* music and *màkina* clubs through his friends in the football team he played for, which met outside his neighbourhood. A boy from Pakistan at the same school explained that he first heard pop music on the radio at the youth club ('*casal*') he attended in the neighbourhood. A girl from Colombia changed her dislike of young people with green hair and a Goth style after getting along well with her neighbours with this appearance.

Another key sphere of personal relations, which I have kept separate from the former ones, is that of organised music practice outside the school. There were a few interviewees who referred to this as the origin of their group of friends: 'Through music really, through playing in a band with my clarinet...'. The following quote from a boy who did not particularly like the girls in his school is a

good example of the importance of alternative networks of personal relations in broadening one's alternatives of friendship:

Roger: What about the girls here in the school? (...)

Mike: Yeah, they're more quiet. Do you want to know the music they like?

Roger: Yeah.

Mike: They aren't really nice to be honest... It's... I think they like more pop, really, pop music, what's in the charts... they listen to it, so I don't...

Roger: And are there any girls in the school who are more into Indie music?

Mike: Mmm... There's probably a couple but not many at all... It's not really what the girls listen to... [They're rather] like teenage...

Roger: But you know girls outside the school which...

Mike: Yeah, yeah...

Roger: Where, in the neighbourhood?

Mike: Well, I play in that orchestra, in a brass band, so I know people through that, and they kind of like the same music as I do, so...

It is noteworthy that when friends were made in organised music activities focused on classical music, brass bands, jazz or other music genres which were regarded as 'adult', the musical coincidence was explained not in terms of the music they played, but of genres of popular music that were popular in youth social space. Those interviewees who played 'adult' music genres tended to hide or downplay its importance in their everyday life.

In conclusion, alternative networks of personal relations were for several interviewees very important sources of friendship and typical knowledge about musical geographies. Nevertheless, we must not see either this sphere or those analysed above – family, school and street – as a separate and self-sufficient spaces in young people's everyday lives. In general, young people's pathways were the result of the confluence of different factors from all these spheres. The following quote provides a good example:

Roger: I tu?

Pere: Jo, el primer disc que em vaig comprar va ser, *bueno* cassette, va ser el de Scorpio, que em sembla que va ser sisè, em sembla, va ser el primer que em vaig comprar.

Roger: I com és que la vas comprar?

Pere: No mira, perquè tots els amics escoltaven màkina i això, i vaig dir: "Mira, provaré a veure, i si m'agrada...". I me la vaig comprar. I després el meu cosí que també feia mescles em va fer un cassette d'aquests per mi, i després ja està, després d'escoltar això i allò no em va agradar gaire i llavors vaig començar tot això *tipo* una mica *rap*.

Roger: Com vas començar amb el *rap*?

Pere: Amb el *rap* vaig començar fa poc, poc. [Fa] poc que va. Un amic meu, que va amb skate amb mi, *pues* tenia cançons i un altre, un amic que tinc aquí a classe, el Roland, em deixava escoltar cançons i mira..

Friends from school, relatives, skating friends and a single friend from school with a different taste intermingle, in this example, in influencing Pere's taste in music. This is not an exception. Pathways through musical and social geographies are complex and diverse. What we are trying to do here is to identify the main ways through which young people get in touch with musical traditions, understood as attitudes towards music that is liked and music that is disliked, as well as the meanings which are linked to each musical style and the navigation maps to make sense of musical geographies.

Migrations and travel

To end this review of the networks of personal relations channelling young people's pathways, we will analyse migration and, less centrally, travel experiences. Migration has a strong impact on young peoples' lives, since it implies that musical and social geographies learnt and culturally produced at one place at one biographical moment need to be adjusted to those faced in a completely different social location. This is not easy, and can produce considerable distress in those who migrate and, quite often, even their children or other descendants. In both Birmingham and Barcelona there were many interviewees who, as immigrants or children or grand-children of immigrants, kept this as part of their personal identity (whether in terms of 'ethnic', 'national', 'diasporic', 'linguistic' or 'immigrant' identity), and music often played a significant role in the negotiation of their positioning between their culture of origin and the culture(s) they found in their host society.

We have already talked about the role of the family, the school and the street in carrying and actualising musical geographies, and since we will later analyse the way 'ethnic', 'linguistic' and 'immigrant' identities are articulated in current musical and youth geographies, we will now focus on the experience of those who had themselves migrated, experiencing a cultural shock when facing musical and social geographies in their new social environment. Barcelona's interviewees provide more obvious examples of this experience. In general, those recently immigrated from Morocco and Pakistan felt rather alien from autochthonous musical geographies. In most cases, they did not even know the main co-ordinates of musical geographies, and were basically unfamiliar with Popular Western music.

Roger: ¿Y cómo fue? ¿[Cuándo llegaste a Barcelona] la música cómo la viste?

Esther: Me pareció muy, muy...

Roger: Muy rara.

Esther: Muy rara, sí porque... escuchan más los tambores, la batería, y en la India no.

Roger: ¿Allí escuchabas un poco de pop, americano e inglés?

Esther: ¿En la India?

Roger: Sí.

Esther: No, nunca he escuchado. La música que escuché de Estados Unidos e Inglaterra, fue aquí, en la India no escuché.

Moreover, several of them got interested in raï, arab rap or bhangra music either back in their countries or, when they arrived in Barcelona, through friends of their same cultural origin. Some of them referred to language as an important barrier, for music as well as for general participation in autochthonous activities and even the school. Even in the case of Latin-Americans, some of them at first considered Catalan, spoken on many music radio-stations, as a problem for listening to the radio. Their experience, nevertheless, was very different from that of the Moroccans and Pakistanis, as was that of young people from Eastern European countries, since both of these were more familiar with popular Western music. At the same time, however, they often did not share the meanings and coordinates of autochthonous musical geographies. By keeping their original taste in music and stock of meanings, they were pushed to the margins of musical geographies in Barcelona, and had to find ways to negotiate their location from this marginal position. One of these cases was Roland, a black boy from Colombia who kept his taste for rap and *merengue* music and was thus seen as 'different' in the Periphery School. Both his brothers' and his cousins' taste for hip hop, as well as his parents' taste for *merengue*, strongly influenced him back in Colombia, and he kept to this music in Barcelona mainly by socialising with immigrants from Colombia and those autochthonous people who attended hip hop venues. In the following quote he explains how he felt when he first arrived in Barcelona:

Roland: Sí. Muy diferente porque yo no conocía nada, sólo, ponía la emisora y sólo màkina, màkina, màkina...

Roger: No lo conocías, ¿ahí no hay, en Colombia? ¿no? Ni techno, ni màkina, ni nada.

Roland: ¡Qué va!

Roger: Vale, ¿y qué? ¿No te gustaba cuando llegaste aquí?

Roland: No.

Roger: ¿Y te sorprendió?

Roland: Claro, yo pensé que era lo mismo, ¿eh?

Roger: Vale, ¿qué más te sorprendió? ¿Música española, la conocías?

Roland: Sí, porque mi madre vivía aquí, y fue allí y llevó música.

Roger: Y, ¿qué música trajo?

Roland: No sé, una de, que dice no sé qué Barcelona, y que el Paseo de Gracia y no sé cuántos..

Roger: Peret.

Roland: Ése.

Patricia: ¿Sí?

Roger: No te sorprendió nada más, ¿hip hop, hay menos que allí?

Roland: Sí. (...) Allí todo el mundo escucha eso.

Roger: ¿Y aquí hay gente que escucha, dices, o no, en el instituto?

Roland: En el instituto.

Roger: ¿Sí? ¿no?

Roland: No sé... el Bolo.

Patricia: El Bolo.

Roland: El Bolo va conmigo, ése.

Roger: O sea, el que va contigo, le empezaste tú a pasar cintas y tal y le gustó, ¿o no?

Roland: Sí.

A second example was that of Roxana, a girl from the same country who had arrived in Barcelona just three months before the interview took place. Back in her country, she had initially started to like *vallenatos*, following her parents taste, and then had shifted to what she named ‘trance’ and ‘salsa’, the music her friends in Colombia also liked, and ‘*merengue*’, the music that was always played at parties.

Roger: ¿Y la música [aquí] cómo?

Roxana: No sé. En mi casa tengo el equipo de sonido, y pongo la radio y no me llama la atención. El único grupo que me ha gustado de aquí es Estopa. El único. Los otros no.

Roger: Pero también se escucha Backstreet Boys y todo esto...

Roxana: Sí, esto sí.

Roger: O sea, que no es tan diferente la música, ¿o sí?

Roxana: No, pero también hace falta la salsa...

Roger: Y aquí hay poca...

Roxana: Aquí hay poca, ¿eh?

Roger: Y el Ricky Martin y así ¿no os gusta? ¿O sí?

Roxana: Sí, también pero no es salsa. Ya te digo.

Roger: Te gustaría mas salsa

Roxana: Sí. La salsa aquí se escucha pero en las discotecas donde van los dominicanos...

Besides missing ‘salsa’ music, Roxana was also surprised because in Barcelona people used the term *màkina* for what she felt to be ‘trance’:

Roxana: ¡Ah, sí! Estaba yo, abajo, acabábamos de salir, y como casi todos traen Walkman, me dice, “Kathy, escucha esto a ver si te gusta”, y yo, “Sí, me gusta”, y me dice, “¿Cómo se llama?”, y yo digo, “*Trance*”, y me dice, “No, no es *trance*, es *màkina*”. Y vale. Y era el mismo disco.

Roger: ¿El mismo disco?

Roxana: Sí, de mi país. Yo lo tenía.

Roger: (...) Y desde entonces ya viste que hay que decir *màkina*...

Roxana: Sí, *màkina*.

Roger: ¿Y ellos habían oído *trance*?

Roxana: No.

Roger: No les sonaba.

Roxana: No, sólo una amiga que es colombiana y me dijo, aquí no se dice [trance]... Aquí es *màkina*.

This is a perfect illustration of the symbolic work every young immigrant needs to make in order to adapt to autochthonous musical geographies. The same happened with broader youth geographies, for instance with transgressive dispositions. Roxana, for instance, also felt uncomfortable with ritual transgression when

going out, in terms both of dress and sexual display in certain bars. Her experience shows the cultural shock of leaving one's cultural tradition, in terms of musical and youth geographies, and facing a completely different one. To understand the importance of the way they negotiated the discrepancy between their taste in music and that which they encountered in the host society, we just need to point out that several 'white' interviewees, both in Birmingham and Barcelona, referred to those from ethnic and immigrant minorities who liked the same popular music as those of the dominant groups in youth social space, as more 'integrated', not only in musical but also in social terms.

Even if it is not our concern at this moment, we need to note the importance, for the collective cultural production of musical and youth geographies, of the impact of significant groups of immigrants who do not 'integrate' (using interviewees' term) in the existing cultural patterns but stick to some extent to the ones of their country of origin. The importance of 'black' and 'Asian' music in Birmingham or *flamenqueo* and increasingly 'Arab' and 'Latin' music in Barcelona are good examples of this. Once they culturally produce a distinct cultural tradition that passes from one generation of young people to the next, this becomes an autochthonous tradition with its own clear location within local musical and youth geographies, as we will analyse in the following chapters. Indeed, as a result of the significant number of immigrants in both cities during the second half of the 20th century, musical geographies are now mapped out taking into account the cultural origin and identity of some of their most significant styles.

Travelling can also be a source of knowledge about musical and social geographies, in that different ways of mapping them out are encountered. Two interviewees in Barcelona who liked *màkina* music, for instance, explained that they did not tend to listen to foreign DJs, and then explained this as follows:

Juan: Es que es diferente la música que hacen allí. En Francia... Fuimos a una excursión, ¿vale? a Francia y entramos en una tienda así a mirar, y era todo hardcore, hardcore pero duro. Y nos contó también que en Estados Unidos hay muy poca... No, no era en Estados Unidos... Bueno, es igual, no sé dónde me dijo. Que hay un compact, pero todo lo que hay de fuera de España, que es mucho más hardcore, mucho más duro.

Roger: ¿Ah, sí?

Juan: Sí. Que era eso. Es mucho más... mucho más... ¿Sabes? Mucho más... mucho más duro.

These are examples of personal relations influencing the view young people have of musical and youth geographies other than what we will analyse in the following section, that is, mostly commodified *mediascapes*, artefacts, places and events. In all the networks of personal relations we have reviewed so far, as well as in the experience of migration and travelling, we have seen how individuals become the carriers of the meanings of music and youth geographies, which are passed on from one generation to the next, sometimes from adults to children, but most often from young people themselves to those a little younger. The impor-

tance of these networks is not only that they keep alive and continuously produce meanings that do not necessarily appear in the media, but also that they organise and channel the intersubjective symbolic work and negotiation linking and adjusting the different perspectives on musical and youth geographies. A new sound and its related meanings appearing in the street, or in one school, can travel to other spaces through the presence of youngsters in multiple networks. Sounds and meanings can thus travel from any of the networks to the others and then be spread and extend their geographical and social influence. The street, the school, the home and what we have named alternative networks are thus permeable spaces where meanings and sounds travel, and it is through this spatial and social expansion and negotiation of meanings that general musical and social geographies are being culturally produced. In other words, it is because of the intermingling of networks that musical and youth geographies in different schools are not alien to each other. The play of positions and oppositions they generate *make sense* to young people outside the school, because they are part of the cultural framework of interpretation. There is, nevertheless, another set of important carriers of sounds and meanings which do not always need personal relations in order to be accessible to young people.

Commodified 'mediascapes', artefacts, places and events

If in the preceding pages we have analysed the main – mainly non-commodified – networks of personal relations as carriers of musical traditions, as social spaces in which young people could get in touch with them, we will now turn our attention to the artefacts, events, places and *mediascapes* that allow these musical traditions to exist as they do, to be actualised and transmitted from one generation to the other. They allow musical geographies to be 'materialised' – although they are naturally dynamic and changing 'materials' – in actual acts of listening, consumption or going-out. We are talking about CDs, radio stations, clubs, magazines, concert venues, flyers, bars, TV programmes, and so on. From now on, therefore, the object of attention will not be 'networks of personal relations' but commodified artefacts and particular events, places and *mediascapes* used by young people as 'materials' for their symbolic work with music and their attempt to make sense of it in their everyday lives. It is certainly true that some of these, like events, small records shops or clubs, can explicitly produce personal relations and thus overlap with what we have analysed in the preceding section. What they share with the rest – which are closer to the pole of anonymous typical relations, like media artefacts – is that they are mainly – though not always – commodified. They are all necessary to mediate the way young people get access to, and culturally produce, musical traditions, whether through 'material' artefacts like CDs or magazines, or through less tangible commodities like nightlife *experiences*, broadcast programmes or human icons.

The line between commodified and non-commodified is not clear-cut. It is not only that commodities always play a role, however small, in most personal relations, but also that highly commodified practices or artefacts can also offer

non-commodified ways of access. Whereas in the preceding pages we have excluded personal relations developed in places where a commercial exchange was expected (like clubs, bars or record shops), in the following pages we will include some artefacts, events, places and *mediascapes* that are not necessarily commodified, like house parties or fanzines. Our focus on the commodified character of artefacts, events, places and *mediascapes* is important because it will allow us to understand both the importance of economics in the cultural production of musical geographies – we will deal with this later – and the way ‘commercial’ and ‘anti-commercial’ stances are socially organised.

Media spaces

As well as personal relations, young people have another central window to access musical geographies: the media. Radio, TV, magazines, flyers or websites allow young people to know ‘what’s out there’ in broader terms than networks of personal relations. The media are experienced by young people as providing access to broader musical geographies ‘existing out there’, not only what is ‘going on’ but also, however marginally, what has ‘existed’ in the past. They play, therefore, a crucial role in mediating – and culturally producing – musical geographies. Young people use them to access musical geographies, to experience musical symbolic forms and meanings and the discourses attached to them. A couple of examples will be enough to show the importance of the media, in this case radio stations, as providers of musical materials for young people: one male *màkina* fan explained that he did not buy much music: ‘Puedes ponerte en el programa que dijimos de Flaix FM, “Decibelía Flaix”, y grabas las canciones que están ahora de *màkina*, las de novedad’; a girl who liked pop had the same experience: ‘Más [que comprar música] la escucho por la radio y si eso pues me grabo las canciones... claro, no sé...’. The media, moreover, not only provide materials but often influence young people’s taste in music as well. This is the case of a white girl in Birmingham who said that her taste in music shifted because of listening to one radio station: ‘Mmmm... I changed to r’n'b when I was about 14, because I started listening to it more... a station... Galaxy, all the r’n'b... really into that’.

The appropriation of materials from the media in everyday life is certainly often carried out collectively with friends and acquaintances in networks of personal relations in their local context of cultural production. Many interviewees claimed to start listening to specific radio stations because friends, and friends’ brothers and sisters, led them to do so: ‘D’un amic meu, que té un germà gran i aquest ja escoltava *màkina*, i llavors me va ensenyar la música i a mi m’agradava. (...) Flaix FM, “El que més trenca” era’. In spite of the influence of personal relations in developing different media consumptions, however, the role of the media as ‘carriers’, ‘producers’ or ‘mediators’ of musical traditions is indisputable (they are, naturally, much more than ‘carriers’, since they also participate in their cultural production). The knowledge provided by the media about musical and youth geographies it is not drawn from personal but anonymous and thus highly typified social interactions. In contrast to those moments in which parents, siblings, cous-

ins, school- and street-friends provide musical materials and the linguistic and sensuous meanings mapping out musical geographies, the media can provide young people with musical materials and meanings without the mediation of any network of personal relations. Youngsters will no doubt only appropriate it in the light of their local context of cultural production, but the very representation of different materials in the media will decisively contribute to young people's perception of 'what's going on', of the 'objectivity' of musical geographies.

Instead of structuring the analysis around the differences between different media, we will do it through the distinction between 'mainstream' and 'specialised' media, which must not be seen as a clear-cut distinction but as two poles of a complex continuum. On the one hand, the (generally) more popular media oriented to best-selling music; on the other hand, the (mainly) minority media oriented to particular styles and genres of music. As we will see, the distinction must be made with caution, since when a particular medium is oriented to a specialised but very popular genre or group of genres, and prioritises its more commercial manifestations, it could be considerably 'mainstream'. Thus, this way of cutting the cake, rather than accurately describing the diversity of the media, will help us to analyse the inherent tension between these poles *in the experience of both young people and those working in the music business* – the way the commercial/anti-commercial distinction (or ideology⁴) is experienced.

We will first analyse what I term 'mainstream' media. As we will see in the following chapters, if young people do not have an explicit initial anti-commercial attitude – generally, but not always, developed through networks of personal relations – the most probable access to musical traditions is – what is seen as – the 'commercial' taste. This taste is acquired through networks of personal relations but also, and sometimes even primarily, through the consumption of mainstream media, more visible and popular by far among young people. In other words, many young people start listening to the music broadcast by mainstream media and only later develop specialised or anti-commercial attitudes. As well as the former influence of children's or pre-adolescent music – recalled by many of the interviewees, and usually liked after hearing it on TV – during adolescence mainstream media are apprehended as the barometer of 'what's going on', 'what's out there'. As one interviewee pointed out when asked about the music he listened to: 'Pues lo comercial, lo de siempre, lo que sacan en la radio, lo conocido'. Many interviewees, even if they had a strong anti-commercial attitude at the time of the interview, recalled starting to listen to music through 'Top of the pops', 'Los 40 Principales' and other mainstream TV and radio shows. This is the case of Alfred, a strongly committed punk fan: '[abans del *punk*] escoltava una mica tot, escoltava *lo que sortia per la ràdio i per la tele*' (he was not referring, though, to commercial pop but rock-based music in mainstream media). Another example of this transition

⁴ As Sarah Thornton calls it. What follows is to a considerable extent indebted to her analysis of club cultures and the media (1996 [1995]), even though I do not follow her typology of 'micro', 'niche' and 'mass and national' media.

from mainstream media to other sources of music information is provided by the following boy:

Mike: I used to listen to the radio a lot more...

Roger: Which stations?

Mike: BRMB and Radio 1, things like that, but now I hardly ever listen to it...

Roger: You used to listen to the chart music programs... or specialised?

Mike: Yeah, yeah, I used to just listen to the charts... [Not] anymore...

Radio 1 and BRMB in Birmingham, and *‘Los 40 Principales’* in Barcelona, were the radio stations most clearly identified as ‘mainstream’ by the interviewees. An interviewee in Barcelona, after recalling that she used to listen to anything broadcast on *‘Los 40 Principales’*, justified herself by saying ‘Es que tampoco... la primera vez lo... Es así: no me identificaba por una música, ¿sabes? Es ahora cuando más o menos... [sí que tengo un gusto más definido]’. Many other interviewees, however, were *still* building up their taste in music on the basis of what they saw and listened to in mainstream media:

Roger: To what extent people... you like it because you listen to it? Because friends tell you that they like something? How it works?

July: No, It's with the radio.

Susan: The radio and the telly. “Top of the pops”.

July: Yeah, “Top of the Pops”.

We do not need to believe their words literally in order to consider the importance of mainstream media as the main provider of musical materials and meanings. It could be that July and Susan first had access to the commercial musical tradition through their friends and schoolmates *and only later* looked for the media that broadcast it. It is equally possible that they started to listen to mainstream media *alongside* their friends, collectively developing their taste in music. In any case it is clear that mainstream media played a central role in their access to musical traditions: they provided the materials and meanings surrounding them, a particular representation that actualised musical traditions. As Sonia points out in the following quote, mainstream media provided a representation of what was considered by them *today's music* (‘la música de ahora’):

Roger: Radio, ¿qué tipo de emisora?

Sonia: “Los 40 principales”, porque es música... de ahora, también el programa de “Música sí” porque están siempre al día de los programas de música...

Roger: ¿Cómo se llama?

Sonia: “Música sí”, en la dos o en la uno, los sábados a las diez o así. “Música sí”, y siempre hacen canciones pues del momento, ¿no? No, o sea, no se pondrá allá música clásica y de rebote, sino música del momento.

Mainstream media are not only important for those who like them, but also for those with an anti-commercial stance: since to them the music broadcast in com-

mercial media is immediately suspected of lacking in credibility, the most obviously mainstream media becoming the 'symbolic marker' of 'commerciality' and 'lack of authenticity', the devil against which their anti-commercial attitude is constructed. Boys in particular often complained about those who just liked 'what was on the charts'. They thought that they did not 'try to find different kinds of music', that they just 'watch telly and they like what's on'. 'Chart music' was the antithesis of what they liked: 'Most of the music around, I think the charts are... synthesisers, you know? [*he and his friend laugh*] It's pathetic!'. However, we must not believe that 'being commercial' is seen as negative by all young people. On the contrary, many interviewees saw it as a positive feature of music. One girl, for instance, explained that she only liked the 'commercial' house in the following terms:

Susana: El *house* [me gusta], però el *house-house*... el *house* que és només *house* comercial, *tipo dance*, típic que surt moltes vegades com a promocions a... a la ràdio. [En canvi,] el *house* que només és *house*... doncs... no m'agrada.

Roger: (...) I per què no t'agrada?

Susana: Doncs perquè em *ratlla* molt, doncs perquè els sons es van repetint, o sigui, amb *lo* altre també però, no sé, van canviant de tant en tant, i aquest no sé, és més lent. El *house* és més [*she la-la-las*].

We will later analyse how the 'chart' broadcast by BBC Radio and television (and its popular 'Top of the pops', recently disappeared in 2006) provided in Birmingham an 'objective' representation of commerciality, and in Barcelona a similar role was played by '*Los 40 Principales*', which although not based on sales figures was seen as a clear indicator of the commercial pole of popular music. Both the Official Charts in Birmingham and '*Los 40 Principales*' in Barcelona were broadcast on radio and TV programmes and reached the whole country, and were the markers of commerciality. In Birmingham, radio station BRMB shared this position with 'Top of the pops' (BBC1) and Radio 1. It is not strange, therefore, that several interviewees who liked specialised music genres pointed out that they did not like the songs of their chosen genre that were in the charts: 'I don't like the new stuff [of rap music]. The stuff that's in the charts... it's rubbish [*the other laugh*]. I like so much old stuff, like Wu-Tang'; 'Trance is good, but when it goes into the more... the charts... the dance stuff, it's not really my scene'.

The importance of the charts and mainstream media is that they are by far the most visible representation of musical geographies. Even those who disliked them tended to see and listen to them sometimes. 'Sí, miro la tele. Pongo por ejemplo "Los 40 Principales" y si veo que me gusta bien y si no pues... [lo quito]; '[¿Estopa?] Hombre, sí, también la he escuchado alguna vez en la radio'; 'I don't sit at home waiting for [Top of the pops] to come on, but if it's on I'll watch it, yeah...'. The fact is that even if they did not watch and listen to mainstream media and the charts, since they defined themselves in opposition to them, they had to know what was going on there.

Teenybopper magazines also played an important role in mediating and marking out the most commercial versions of pop music. One boy, when asked

about how he first got into pop music, put it as follows: 'It's just... Only I think no one talked to me about it really before... It just started coming from magazines [like Smash Hits] and stuff like that...'. These magazines, read by an important proportion of the younger girls in both cities (each magazine was seen as being appropriate for different ages), provided material about some pop artists marketed towards adolescents. Girls explained that they bought teenybopper magazines, among other reasons, 'to know more', 'porque habla de la actualidad, de música', and some of them were seen as unilaterally devoted to one band or group of bands: 'Hablan más de los Backstreet Boys que de otra cosa...'; 'Sí. Que la Super Pop... *demasio* no sé... Todo Backstreet Boys, Backstreet Boys, Backstreet Boys... no.... Más que... compro casi siempre el Vale'; '[Compro el Super Pop i la Vale] porque salen cosas de los Backstreet Boys y West Life'. The information provided by these magazines was often used by girls during the interviews to judge their favourite bands and explain the rivalries between them:

July: I like the new song. They've got really good songs. They said... they won't go out and copy, that's what I like about them... Otherwise... they copy, like Boyzone for instance... They got number ones... They copied. Westlife... they said in an interview that they were not going to be like Boyzone, that they were going to write their own songs. They've done that for three number ones, but then the rest, the other two were Abba's ... One was Abba's and the other was...

Susan: Boyzone as well. They wrote their own songs and then... Hypocrites!

Roger: Hypocrites?

July: I think they are, especially Westlife that they say they're not gonna copy, but they are.

Roger: Where do you read these interviews?

July: I've got... I think it's in a magazine at home, yeah...

Susan: Yeah...

Magazines and mainstream media were also particularly relevant in providing a few interviewees of immigrant origin and ethnic minorities with 'access' to (westernised) musical geographies. Either because they had recently arrived in the country, or because their everyday networks of social relations did not familiarise them with pop music as a whole, when they wanted to know about musical geographies, they used magazines and mainstream radio and TV to get familiar with this music and its meanings. A Moroccan boy at the Inner City School explained that his female classmates brought a lot of magazines to the school, and because of this he knew quite a lot about pop music ('Sí... y ya sabes más o menos...'). Another boy from the same country who had arrived in Barcelona many years before the interview and had many autochthonous friends, explained that he started to like the Spice Girls through listening to them on the radio and television. Another interviewee from Pakistan explained that he started to like pop music through listening to it on the radio with his friends from the youth club (*casal*). The importance of the 'visible' mainstream media in helping those from ethnic minority groups to gain access to the musical tradition of pop music, not

embedded in their 'ethnic' networks of personal relations, is best grasped in the following quote from Kiran, where she explains the symbolic work she needs to do to get familiar with it (as well as with Indian music):

Kiran: Well, basically, as they [the other girls] get older, start reading magazines and all that stuff. Some things... I still don't know everything about music. I look at TV when the music show comes on, I look at music shows... And like Indian films, you know, there's lots of songs in Indian films, and then the actors used to sing... So gradually I watch things, I read magazines, and I've got all this information from my other cousin who is older than me... Just from here and there, and then when I talk to cousins and everything, I say, 'This is like this', and they go, 'No, that's like that!', this is what actually happens. This is all the stuff, as you are growing up, and read magazines, what they say about music, listening to the radio, and going to shops and looking at new albums and all this stuff.

She also explains that she started to like Westlife because she heard their songs time and again on TV. She liked the first song she heard of theirs, but then, 'they started coming on again and again, and then 99 award, Best Record Award, and that came on and I got to know them more, better than before, I got to know better and better what they are'.

The visibility of mainstream media is thus very important in understanding their role in developing not only many young people's taste in music but also the main co-ordinates of musical geographies. The combination of magazines and mainstream media – particularly the charts – had a strong impact on many young people, particularly on girls, but not exclusively so. Nevertheless, we must be careful not to simplify the importance of the charts as simple 'carriers' of musical traditions. In contrast with what happens in Barcelona, in Birmingham the charts are seen not only – particularly in the past – as an indicator of inauthenticity and commercialism, but also of new (credible) musical trends and artists, from the Sex Pistols and punk to Oasis and Brit pop or even Artful Dodger and garage. In the following quote, three boys who like rock and indie music, with a strong anti-commercial stance, perfectly illustrate this (the quote also illustrates the little support offered by a few interviewees to the interviewer):

Roger: What about you: when did you start listening to music?

Tom: I can't remember. I just started... just rock music man.

Roger: You used to like it?

Tom: Yeah.

Roger: Did you listen at home? Was it popular in the school? Where did you listen to it...?

Tom: At home.

Roger: Because of brothers? Or you bought it?

Tom: No, I heard it on the radio.

Roger: Which radio stations?

Tom: BRMB, and Radio 1.

Roger: And when did you change?

Tom: I still listen to it... I'm more into Indie now.

Roger: What was at the beginning? Which artists?

Tom: I can't remember. All sorts of stuff. A mixture. Whatever was on the radio. Whatever was in the charts.

Roger: And when you started listening to more Indie stuff?

Tom: Ten, eleven.

Roger: Now is less popular than it used to be, right?

Tom: Yeah...

George: It's all faded out... bands...

Colin: American music it's all sorts of... almost techno.

George: They just... no guitar in it! All the bands have been took over by... little bands, computer... It's not music anymore.

Neil: It is! [*laughs*]

Colin: No! It's terrible! We want proper music.

They all started to like rock and indie music through the charts. The same was happening with garage at the time of the fieldwork. It had been underground up to that point, but was then 'crossing over' to the mainstream and 'making the charts', and thus becoming more visible and acceptable – at least the more commercial versions of it – to a broader section of young people. This is why one boy, when asked about whether garage music was popular in the school, answered that it was popular in the country, because it was in the charts. It is not surprising, thus, that whereas for many it still had a strong 'anti-commercial' edge, it was starting to be perceived as pop music by others such as the following boy who after being asked whether he liked 'chart' music answered as follows: 'Yeah, a little bit. You know, some Christina Aguilera, Britney Spears is all right... and the new Artful Dodger [*garage music*] tunes...'.

Indeed, the charts not only provide boy and girl bands and 'pop acts', but also popular artists of specialised genres like rock, rap and dance music. Their visibility through the charts and mainstream media, therefore, provides young people with somewhat diverse materials among which they can choose and differentiate themselves. An example of the relative diversity of '*Los 40 Principales*' was given by a girl in Barcelona, who after saying that she listened to anything that was on the radio, specified that she did not like this radio station (she liked *màkina*, pop and *flamenqueo*): '[no escucho *Los 40*] porque... No, porque yo que sé, a veces sale música y así que no me gusta, por ejemplo el heavy metal y cosas así [*que*] no me gustan. Eso no'. The presence of a range of music genres, at least in their softer versions, implied that mainstream radio was sometimes also important in providing materials for those who had a general anti-commercial stance, like Pedro, a Barcelona interviewee who had developed his taste mainly through the influence of his sister and her boyfriend, but he also started to like a couple of rock bands after listening to them on '*Los 40 Principales*':

Roger: Mmm... *vale*. I els Foo Fighters i tots aquests, com els vas conèixer?

Pedro: Els Foo Fighters, vaig escoltar una cançó als *40 Principals*, per la tele...

Roger: Sí.

Pedro: Vaig veure el videoclip i m'agradava, no?

Roger: Sí.

Pedro: I al cap de... uns mesos o així, vaig escoltar el CD. M'agradava. El vaig comprar i així ja vaig...

Roger: Mm... I Nirvana, per exemple?

Pedro: Com als Foo Fighters... al bateria [dels Foo Fighters], li agradaven els Nirvana... I també vaig escoltar Nirvana. Em va agradar i el vaig comprar.

This quote is a good example of how the media not only provide the musical symbolic forms (the songs) but also discourses and meanings about them helping young people to trace out musical geographies. Pedro heard that the drummer of Foo Fighters, a band he liked, was a Nirvana fan, and because of this he got interested in Nirvana and, after listening to it, decided to buy a CD of the band. Another example is provided by a Backstreet Boys' fan who explained that she got offended when she saw on TV that a band named Blink 162 made fun of them in one of their songs. Young people use these meanings to work out their pathways through musical geographies, to make sense of the music they like *in relation* to other positions in musical geographies.

The charts were naturally not the only content within the mainstream media that was significant to young people. Music adverts on TV, for instance, were recalled by several of them as a source of information influencing their taste in music: 'Entonces tú lo oyes y, y te aprendes ese cachito, y entonces ya la quieres escuchar para aprendértela toda'; '[I know about new songs] usually advertised on television sometimes...'; '[antes me gustaban Dover] Sí... No. Pero es sólo un compact que hay dos o tres canciones que salían en un anuncio por la tele y eso'; '[de pequeño me gustaban los *remix*] simplemente porque salían en la televisión anunciado y me gustaba la música'. In fact, many interviewees recalled as significant the mere appearance of music in any TV programme: talk shows, variety programs, films, series and music programmes other than the charts.

The mainstream character of these media spaces was important because they made visible to a wide range of youngsters musical materials that would otherwise remain invisible to many. Note the example of Estopa, who, although they were having a huge commercial success at the time of the fieldwork, were still unknown to some interviewees like Alan, a heavy metal fan in the Catalan School. He had recently seen them on the TV3 talk show 'La cosa nostra', and this provided him with some information to get an impression of them: '[Estopa] no, si tenen pinta de... així de *progres*. Jo el vaig veure al cantant, no sé, a "La cosa nostra", va sortir amb la samarreta del Che Guevara. Tampoc no sé per què la duen, però *bueno*. (...) Com no he escoltat la música, no sé de quin pal van les seves cançons, si són del pal revolucionari. Però *bueno*, és igual...'. Other interviewees explained that they recorded live concerts on TV, watched specialised music programs, videoclips, and satellite music channels. Two Asian boys started to like rap artist Tupac because – besides the fact that rap 'became fashion in the school' – 'a program came on TV talking about Tupac's life'. The power of television was that any hidden artist, style or practice, simply by being broadcast on TV, could become immediately

visible to many young people. A heavy music fan, for instance, did not know any club where heavy music was played until he saw one on TV ('Si, por la tele vi una discoteca asín de heavies...'). The power of TV is its visibility. A white girl started to like Madonna after seeing her in a film on TV: 'Un día viendo la tele, una película de la Madonna..., bueno, aquello para mi fue, "mira de, a ver qué pasa con esta chica" o algo así, no me acuerdo muy bien... Bueno, me compré todos los discos, me sé aun...'. The same visibility made young people quite sensitive to any appearance of the music they liked on TV. Two girls from different schools in Barcelona, for instance, complained about the way Backstreet Boys' fans were depicted on TV: 'Me da mucha rabia, más que nada la gente, cuando hacen un reportaje en la tele'; 'És que és això a tots els programes... això... quan surten Backstreet Boys es *figuen* amb ells, amb les fans... '.

Among this range of materials offered by mainstream television, satellite television is a distinct reality. On the one hand, not all young people have access to it. On the other, it broadcasts both mainstream and specialised channels. Its mainstream music channels, even if they only reach a minority, were important because their 'transnational' character provided young people with a heightened sense of taking part in global musical geographies. One boy, for instance, when asked about the music he reckoned was popular in Spain, replied as follows: 'I don't know really! From what I heard like the MTV Europe awards... it's like pop music have very Spanish influence, there's a lot of flamenco guitar on it... I don't know, this is what I think I'd say... I don't know'. A Moroccan in Barcelona explained that he knew some of the music that was listened to in Spain because back in Morocco he could watch some Spanish television. Satellite television also made it possible for some young people, particularly in Birmingham, to follow the American charts instead of the British ones (either through television channels or the access they provided to American radio stations). MTV and other music channels, included more than pop music, and thus many young people with an anti-commercial stance also claimed to watch them.

Satellite television was also important because it created 'communicative spaces' which, without being – or pretending to be – 'global', transcended the borders of the nation-state, for instance for the immigrating diasporas of Moroccans or Pakistanis⁵. Several interviewees of these national origins explained that at home they mainly watched satellite television from their countries, including the music that appeared on it: 'La mayoría, si escuchamos música, es de... (...) cinta o de parabólica, y ya está'. Some explained that they could only watch Catalan and Spanish TV when their parents were not at home. It is a clear example of mainstream media back in their countries which, through the possibilities offered by technology, can be present in their local context of Barcelona, where it is nevertheless minority and thus alternative to local mainstream media.

⁵ See Amezaga (2003) for a text focusing on the importance of satellite TV on the production of transnational linguistic spaces.

Both mainstream TV and radio, therefore, broadcast much more than chart music, and most interviewees did a considerable amount of symbolic work in finding out how to get best value out of what was broadcast from the perspective of what they liked. Besides the more popular programs, TV channels and radio stations, there were other programs, channels and stations that offered a wider range of musical materials. It is not only that *'Los 40 Principales'* and BRMB, and particularly Radio 1, offered specialised materials used by several interviewees, but also that other radio stations provided their own versions of the Top40 or other music formulas with slight variations on the range of music they played. They could be much less visible and even minority among young people, but they were part of what we call 'mainstream' media in that they reinforced the visibility of the more commercial (best selling) music.

Another distinction can be made with the media which, even if they had a high popularity among young people, were committed not to 'chart' but to a relatively specialised music style or musical tradition, as was the case of Radio Galaxy in Birmingham, devoted to dance and r'n'b music, and Flaix FM or Radio Tele-Taxi in Barcelona (oriented to dance music in the case of Flaix FM and to what many youngsters termed *'flamenqueo'* in the case of Radio Tele-Taxi – even though the young audience of the latter was not as important as Flaix FM)⁶. These radio stations were very popular among the interviewees and were thus close to what might be considered mainstream media – in fact, as one interviewee observed when asked about whether the people liked Galaxy in his school, 'Yeah, [Galaxy] is the popular one in the school!'. Because of this, they were often seen as equally commercial. The following interviewee talked as follows about Flaix FM: *'Bueno, és que és això. (...) El techno-house jo crec que és estil comercial, saps? Rotllo els compilatoris que fan, que anuncien, que et regalen...'*. By contrast, many others saw the same radio station as significantly different from, for instance, *'Los 40 Principales'*. This is the case of two girls who did not like very commercial music:

Roger: Val, a vosaltres no us agrada el que surt als *40 Principales* o tot això?

Susana: Home, algunes cançons, però és això, només que, ja t'has afartat de sentir una música, a mi no gaire..

Maria: A mi els *40 Principales* no m'agraden gens.

Roger: No?

Maria: No. (...)

Roger: Llavors els *40 Principales* és molt més comercial que Flaix FM o no?

Maria: És que els *40 Principales* és més, més,...

⁶ None of them reached the whole country but only Birmingham, in the case of Radio Galaxy, and Catalonia, in the case of Flaix FM and Radio Tele-Taxi. Nevertheless, both Radio Galaxy and Flaix FM were also present in other parts of their respective countries. There were between 50 and 81% of respondents, depending on the school, that never listened to Radio Tele-Taxi, and only between 19 and 31% who never listened to Flaix FM. There were slightly more respondents who claimed to listen to Flaix FM 'very often' than there were that said so in relation to Los 40 Principales.

Susana: És més global, és més, tenen una mica de tot.. tenen... el més popular de house, el més popular de màkina i el més popular de dance...

Maria: Però, però agafen, però super pocs, perquè, perquè parlen molt...

Susana: ... és més comercial...

Maria: ... en canvi Flaix FM és més, és perquè t'agradi més...

Susana: Es dedica més al house...

Maria: Es dedica al house tot el dia...

The difference was that the musical tradition these stations represented was not the whole commercial centre but only parts of it: dance in the case of Flaix, *flamenco* in the case of Tele-Taxi, and dance and r'n'b in the case of Galaxy. Besides this stylistic specialisation, their visibility was high, and they were thus close to the mainstream and often worked out in similar terms to the media analysed above. The difference is that their stylistic specialisation meant that in youth geographies these radio stations had very different connotations: Galaxy was seen as playing (commercial) black music, Radio Tele-Taxi as playing 'jaloteo', and Flaix FM as being in-between commercial dance and *màkina* style:

Marc: Sí. Tu vas pel carrer i sents un cotxe que potser està a tres... I si veus una persona escoltant "Radio Teletaxi" de Justo Molinero, *ya ni te hablo!* (...) És veritat. [O per exemple] tu vas pel carrer i escoltes un cotxe des de molt lluny amb música *makinorra* i així, segur que quan passin, són *garrulos*, un tant per cent molt alt són *garrulos, fiyo*, moltíssim.

The strong social connotation of *Radio Tele-Taxi* as well as of *màkina* music (which many identified with *Flaix FM*, even though this radio station combined it with a range of dance music, and particularly house) would be hardly imaginable in relation to '*Los 40 Principales*' or other more mainstream stations – much more neutral in terms of social connotations other than gender.

As well as the diversity we have described so far, we must bear in mind that mainstream media and the specialised but very popular and quite commercial – and thus visible – media were often perceived as meaningless by those young people with a very specialised taste, since they did not provide access to the sounds they liked: '*Punk a la radio no n'escoltes*'; 'There's not many TV things I like... The kind of music I like... don't show it much on TV...'; 'És que el *punk* no és un tipus de música molt estès, o sigui, el que fan a la tele és comercial, bàsicament, ja no posen ni màkina, a la tele, però, hòstia, *punk*, no és precisament comercial, és totalment *lo* contrari, és anti-comercial'; 'Ràdio? No, perquè la música que posen no és molt del meu *rotllo*'. These youngsters, if they wanted to use the media to have access to their musical traditions, needed to look for less visible, more specialised, media or programmes – much less 'obvious' and 'visible' than mainstream media, which were often experienced as 'hidden' and even 'obscure' by young people.

Specialised magazines played an important role here. They were not very popular in either of the two cities, but clearly played a significant role in providing

access to diverse musical traditions, both in terms of materials and discourses. From those interviewees with an anti-commercial stance, many said that they occasionally bought or read them (or had done in the past). In Birmingham, *Rocksound*, *NME*, *Melody Maker*, *Q-Magazine*, *Guitar Player*, and in Barcelona *Metal Hammer*, *Heavy Rock*, *Guitar Player*, *NME*, *Select*, *Rock de Luxe*, *Rocksound*, *Absolut*, and the free ones *Go* and *A Barna* were named as sources of information. These magazines, which often included a free CD, and even if they were generally mentioned without much passion, were sometimes important in young people's pathways through musical geographies:

Roger: And do you remember this progression? It's more because you find a record, because you listen to the radio, because a friend tells you... how it works?

Joel: Yeah... My cousin has some rock stuff, [so] I went out and bought one of the rock magazines, and had a free CD out of it. And I found what I like, and bought CDs, and read the magazine to see what band... and buy their records...

A few youngsters use specialised magazines, therefore, to acquire a deeper knowledge of their musical traditions. In Barcelona, a much smaller minority would even buy music press from the UK and the US for this reason. Their existence was generally known through personal relations ('He sentit a parlar'; 'Mi hermano, sí')

Another crucial source of alternative materials were minority radio stations. In both Birmingham and Barcelona, as well as those radio stations analysed above and other minority stations committed to mainstream music, the interviewees referred to other stations, both legal and illegal – or, more precisely, extra-legal. The role of pirate radio stations in Birmingham was significantly different from in Barcelona, where they had a very limited impact on the interviewees.

In Barcelona, only one interviewee claimed to listened to Radio 3 (the state-funded music radio station with a small following but with a relatively high credibility) and two more to M80, an oldies' station⁷. As well as these, a few other interviewees said they listened to music from alternative stations as a way to have access to different music: 'però alguna, algun cop he pillat ràdios lliures que sí que posaven música d'aquesta, com una (...) que de nit de vegades posaven música rock, hardcore, punk, música de tot, ska'. Another had access to hardcore *màkina* music from a radio station that broadcast the sessions at the club Scorpio, another had access to salsa and *merengue* through listening to Gladys Palmera, one listened to heavy in Ona Montjuich and two Moroccan boys listened to Moroccan music through an internet radio station. One interviewee who 'sometimes' listened to what he called '*ràdios clandestines*', pointed out that he did not listen to them more often because 'hi ha unes interferències que *flipes!*'. These radios were perceived as

⁷ In the survey answers in Periphery, Catalan and Inner City schools, 2, 5 and 14 respondents (3, 6 and 25% of the total respondents in each school) answered they listened to it either 'very often' or 'sometimes'.

'hidden', as being difficult to access: 'És que és allò, o sigui, la música aquesta [que ens agrada] normalment la fan a emissores clandestines, *tio*, i per trobar-les *flipes!*'

In Birmingham, it was a completely different story. Apart from a couple of interviewees who referred to BBC Asian, Premier and Radio 2 as alternative sources of musical materials, there were many interviewees who used pirate radio stations as their main media access to musical materials. In contrast with what happened in Barcelona, in Birmingham pirate radio stations played a central role in carrying and producing musical traditions.⁸

Roger: And how did you know about jungle and then garage? When you first heard about it?

Ben: The radio.

Roger: Which radio?

Sam: Pirate stations. Kool FM.

Roger: Which radio stations do you like? Kool FM?

Sam: Yeah. Smooth FM.

Roger: Do you know Silk City?

Sam: Yeah.

Roger: Do you like it?

Sam: Yeah.

Roger: Do you listen to it?

Sam: Yeah.

The same answer was given by several interviewees who had also first known about garage music through pirate radio stations. Those who had first heard about it through relatives or street and school friends, moreover, generally said that they regularly listened to it on pirate radio stations. Furthermore, the diversity of pirate radio stations was important – each of them specialised in a particular genre or a particular form of a genre. Consequently, in the Birmingham schools pirate radio stations were by no way minority, but rather popular among the interviewees. In this sense, they could be compared to those specialised but very popular radio stations like Galaxy, Flaix FM and Tele-Taxi, but with the difference that they were much more specialised and had a clearly anti-commercial image among young people. A few of the interviewees claimed to know a DJ from some of these stations, and many referred to – and mythified – their illegal status, the risk their DJs and MCs took by participating in them, and the adventure of broadcasting from a moving van. These urban myths were part of pirate radio stations, and helped them to be seen as underground and 'authentic'. Their 'not-fully-professional' sound also helped to sustain their underground pedigree.

⁸ According to the website UK Pirate Radio (<http://website.lineone.net/~stealth54/uklist.html>, consulted in February 2001), in 2001 there were up to 17 different pirate radio stations in the Birmingham area (Heat, Real, Sangam Radio, Skyline, Smooth, Kris' FM, Unity, PCRL, Kool, Flava, Sargeet FM, Mix, Rhythm, Vibe FM, Rhythm FM, Silk City, Sting).

Pirate radio stations, therefore, decisively contributed to provide those neighbourhoods a soundscape that was very popular and, at the same time, perceived as 'anti-commercial' – which was naturally reassured by the fact that, up to the moment of the fieldwork, it was absent from the charts. Spartaca clearly points to the role of this radio soundscape when, after being asked about when she had first heard garage, answered as follows: 'Yeah... I think it was 98 [that jungle came], and then it started doing radio stations with just garage on it'.

Pirate radio stations enabled young people to get familiar with the cutting edge music that 'was going on' – which was naturally different from mainstream music 'going on' – without being in those networks of personal relations where garage was present. Two white boys in the Mixed School, however, distinguished between those who liked it because of their networks of personal relations from those who just listened to it on the radio. Having access to the '*stuff*' that is not on the radio was thus seen as a further mark of authenticity:

James: Some of the [Asian] kids in our class listen to garage.

Tony: Yeah, some listen to garage, but some listen to...

James: Asian...

Tony: Yeah, bhangra and that, but not many people listen to that. It's like more the... the older Asians. They're much older that listen to bhangra and Asian music, like typical stuff that you get from India. Most don't listen to that anymore.

Roger: How old? The parents?

Tony: Yeah, the parents.

James: You do get... you do get like... 18 years old into that...

Tony: Yeah... most of them listen to like house and garage... but more the house and garage they hear on the radio... not the other stuff that is not on the radio.

They always come to the school, and the class...

The variety of media to which young people had access, thus, made their use of them quite complex. Two interviewees even claimed to get into the music they liked through the consumption of the *manga* animated film *Akira* and a computer game:

Alan: I [first] heard [the Chemical Brothers] on the Play Station, when a game came out. I was ten or eleven years old, and then I was playing it, I had never heard that sort of music before, because at that time, at 90 whatever, it was early 90s, it was like, you know? All these crappy dance stupid music, it was just getting on your nerves. Then I heard the Chemical Brothers, and I was playing and "Wow! This music is very good". And from then, it's been the same, you know?

The media were important because since most of them were 'free', they could watch and listen to more bands and genres than they actually liked. Several of them clearly distinguished between the music they 'bought' or 'had' at home, and the music they listened to on the radio or on TV: 'Sí, no, porque, normalmente cuando escucho música màquina la suelo escuchar pero no grabarla, y si algún día la quiero escuchar pues pongo la emisora y ya está, pero claro la música pop me gusta más tenerla y así la escuchas más veces'; 'I don't really listen to [r'n'b]...

Some on the radio, but I don't really buy it. (...) When I want to listen to some just turn on the radio...'. Two boys who did not like pop explained that they watched '*Los 40 Principales*' and MTV, 'fent zapping a *lo millor pilles...* Si ho fa un discjòquei que t'agrada, *pues...* jo què sé, a *lo millor* et quedes mirant'. The consequence of this accessibility of musical materials that they would not otherwise buy is that they could get familiar with broader musical geographies that transcended what they actually liked.

Even if we have distinguished mainstream from specialised and minority media, we must bear in mind that young people often combined the two, and looked for what they liked in particular programmes or times of the day. Even young people with an anti-commercial attitude often listened with pleasure to some of the materials provided by mainstream and specialised but popular radio. An illustration of this is provided by a boy in Barcelona: 'Sí, els diumenges per la nit [*als 40 Principales*] fan un programa que es diu "Rock Star".' Another one said that Flaix FM was too commercial, but then explained that 'per la nit també es curren alguna *session*. Vaig sentir una molt guapa'. A classmate of his thought a similar thing: 'Em sembla que és durant les hores normals del dia que posen música comercial i màkina, però jo he escoltat alguns caps de setmana aleshores a la una, a les *dos*, a les tres, i posen música *techno* i bastant bona'. In Birmingham, an Asian boy explained that he listened to a rap program on BRMB radio, and a white boy listened to Radio 1 late at night, when the trance music he liked was played. A rock fan in the same city explained that on BRMB, 'sometimes... They play sometimes, good music. Sometimes they play like 70s weekend or something like that'.

The amount of symbolic work carried out by young people in their media consumption was important⁹, not only in choosing the media they liked, but also by decodifying, taping ('escucho las que salen y eso, a veces me lo grabo, luego lo escucho y lo borro...') or talking about the music they listened. The result was that they often combined many different media, in a sensuous search for what they liked:

Roger: Which radio stations do you listen to?

Andrew: Kool FM, usually.

Daniel: Galaxy. I like Galaxy. Dance.

Roger: And BRMB?

Daniel: Nah! I listened to it once, but it's... not really...

Mathew: Died out...

Daniel: They don't play songs that musically...

Mathew: It's like the old songs...

⁹ See Willis (1996 [1990]) for an analysis revealing the symbolic work and creativity behind the consumption of music. He sees it as a necessary human work and describes it as 'the application of human capacities to and through, on and with symbolic resources and raw materials (collections of signs and symbols – for instance, the language as we inherit it as well as texts, songs, films, images and artefacts of all kinds) to produce meanings' (ibid.: 10). As a result of our symbolic work we produce and reproduce individual identities, place them in larger wholes, and 'develop and affirm our active senses of our own vital capacities, the powers of the self and how they might be applied to the cultural world' (ibid.: 13).

Daniel: Yeah...

Roger: Which old songs?

Mathew: Going back like...

Daniel: Michael Jackson...

Mathew: All the classics...

Daniel: Yeah, yeah.

Roger: And Radio 1?

Daniel: Radio 1? They just... dance music!

Mathew: It's all right.

Daniel: Sometimes it's talk and talk [*boring*]. That don't really catch me.

Mathew: Yeah. And they play really old songs as well.

Particularly in Birmingham, but also in Barcelona, when local radio stations became part of networks of personal relations (interviewees knew someone who appeared there as a DJ or an MC), they were immediately perceived as closer and more meaningful than 'impersonal' media:

Roger: Vale. Y radio, ¿qué escuchas? Televisión, radio, o sea, que escuchas música... ¿cuáles?

Loles: ¿Las cadenas?

Roger: Sí.

Loles: "Los 40 Principales", el del [barrio], la radio del [barrio].

Roger: Ah, no sabía que...

Loles: Sí, 103.2. Porque conozco DJs de allí. Uno de ellos pincha en La Nit y con él voy a La Nit.

Roger: ¿Sí? ¿Es música màkina o hacen de todo en el Carmelo?

Loles: No, hacen de todo.

Roger: Vale, tienen programas que es sólo música màkina...

Loles: Sí, son... Hay algunos de... Él hace uno de... ocho a diez, de lunes a jueves. Luego, hay otro el viernes, también de ocho a diez, creo, que es de màkina. El de gitaneo está el sábado por la tarde, después de comer. Y no sé... por la mañana los domingos hacen heavy, creo que también. Ponen de todo.

Roger: ¿Escuchas el heavy?

Loles: No.

Roger: No. ¿Y de "Los 40 Principales" escuchas todo o escuchas programas en concreto?

Loles: No... no sé. Es que voy haciendo *zapping* con el mando [de la minicadena] y ya está. (...)

Roger: Ha, ha. ¿Y el... Flaix FM?

Loles: También.

Roger: También. ¿Pero menos o...?

Loles: No. Es que depende... yo qué sé. Estás aburrida y empiezas a... y escuchas una canción que te gusta y la dejas. (...)

The point is, therefore, that young people often combined several different media without being committed to any one of them, but rather to a complex combination of them. In this section we have seen – however superficially – through the analysis of radio, TV and magazine consumption, the importance of the media in carrying and

producing musical traditions (the internet was only mentioned by a very few interviewees as a significant media space in relation to music, which would certainly have been different if the fieldwork had been carried out a few years later). Without the presence of mainstream and specialised media, musical geographies could hardly exist as they do. The media are fundamental not only in disseminating the musical forms and the co-ordinates segregating 'mainstream' and 'alternative' geographies, but also the image and discourses of those human icons that decisively contribute to draw the cartography of taste in music. When pop stars perform, appear or are interviewed in the media, their stylistic and verbal presentations are used by young people as reference points to map out musical and youth geographies. Pop idols play with the codes of popular culture in their public presentation and discourses, their 'performance', and with their gestures contribute to the cultural production of musical geographies, marking out symbolic boundaries, building bridges between formerly opposed traditions, creating walls between musical forms that could otherwise be thought as close to each other. Estopa, for instance, had a rather '*cholo*' image among many Catalan-speaking youngsters, but as we have already seen their appearance in a very popular talk-show on TV3, the Catalan public TV station, had an impact on two interviewees. More than what they said, the turning point was the fact that one of them wore a Che Guevara T-Shirt. We have also seen how two Asian boys explained that since they saw a report on TV about the life and death of Tupac, they had become fans of his ('The way he lived his life. The gangsta...'; 'It gives youngsters braveness'). Another example is that of two girls who liked the Spice Girls and explained the influence they had on pupils in the school: 'People used to come in with their hair! I got my hair like Victoria, because it was fashionable! Two years ago'.

The networks of personal relations through which every individual has access and decodifies media representations are naturally fundamental in the way they mediate young people's experience of musical and youth geographies. Without the media, however, young people would not experience – in their personal relations – musical and youth geographies as they do. The media mark out the taken-for-granted reality of what is considered 'popular', 'current', 'going on' at any time, and provide minority and hidden roads to access sounds that are alternative to the more visible sounds. And this typified knowledge is of crucial importance in young people's everyday experience of musical geographies.

Records as artefacts

Musical geographies are also dependent on recordings, playing devices and those places where they can be bought or obtained. When Edison recorded a human voice in 1877, he was to change the way music had been experienced throughout human history: live only. During the 20th century, the techniques to record, store and broadcast music rapidly developed until its fidelity and affordability made music listening an everyday, taken-for-granted activity. Recording technology influences our experience of music at home, in bars, shops and many other public spaces – with the introduction of the Walkman, virtually anywhere. The question

is, therefore, how do young people in Birmingham and Barcelona use records, record shops and playing devices? (Playing devices were, naturally, also fundamental for the actualisation of the media spaces analysed in the preceding section).

The objectivation of music in specific records which could be played at will was not equally valued by all interviewees. Some just preferred to listen to music through the media or when going out ('Yo si tengo que comprar un disco me lo compro, pero prefiero escuchar la radio'), whereas others valued records more than any broadcast music ('Yo aquí la radio no. No me gusta la radio aquí. Escucho las cintas, la màkina que me dejan mis amigos, o los cassettes que he traído de mi país...'). Records enabled different musical practices, from occasional background accompaniment ('Sí, a veces. En casa escucho música cuando estoy recogiendo... Lo pongo... ') to full-time deep commitment ('Sí. Vull dir, m'aixeco escoltant música i m'adormo escoltant música. (...) *Lo primer que faig al matí, no pixo ni res, música i després faig tot lo demás. (...) I més d'un dia et fots el Walkman tota la nit i al matí encara està sonant, va donant voltes la cinta...*).

The objectivated character of recorded music is important because it allows it to transcend the *hic et nunc* ('here and now') of live performance. It can be played over and over again, it can be collected, selected at will and kept and recovered a long time after it has been forgotten, and it can give every record a life of its own. In the following example, a record randomly used as a present becomes significant music after several listenings:

Marc: Als sis... set anys o vuit, tenia set o vuit anys, ma cosina em va regalar un cassette de Metallica, va ser el meu primer disc...

Alan: Però el tenies *por ahí tirat, tio!*

Marc: No tenia ni idea de *lo* que era.

Roger: A ella li agradava.

Marc: No, no. Me'l va regalar per regalar

Roger: Però a ella no li agradava?

Marc: No. Me'l va regalar... Mira...

Roger: O sigui, un cassette de Metallica, de... ha, ha...

Marc: Sí, ha, ha. I res, i el vaig escoltar i no em desagradava i això que vaig anar escoltant... I després, als deu anys o així, ja m'agradava bastant aquesta música... I després, ara ja més de gran, ja m'agrada molt.

Records, like playing devices, tend to be first accessed at home. Parents, brothers and sisters tend to provide young people with their first records: 'Cuando encontré cintas de mi padre... Porque mi padre tiene de todo el gitaneo, todo. O sea, él, claro, desde pequeño que está en Andalucía y desde allí siempre ha escuchado eso. Entonces yo les iba registrando cintas para ver si encontraba algo y encontré eso'. In general, brothers and sisters were more influential than parents. In several cases, from using one's brothers' and sisters' records, interviewees went on to make tapes and buy recordings themselves. A key moment is when young people start to record and buy their own records and build up their own record

collection. We can see the evolution in Juanma, who after listening to the music played by his sister, started to develop his own taste:

Roger: Vale. ¿Y después tú, cuando empezaste a tener tu música, tu cinta...?

Juanma: Sí, me ha gustado siempre mucho la màkina, desde...

Roger: ¿Cuándo empezaste?

Juanma: Desde los diez años o así.

Roger: ¿A los diez años?

Juanma: Sí. A pedir cintas a los amigos, a que me las grabasen, no sé qué...

Roger: ¿Y tus amigos ya tenían? ¿Ya les gustaba esta...? ¿[Tenían] la misma edad o [eran] un poco mayores?

Juanma: Un poco mayores... Iba con mucha más gente que tenía màkina y [les pedía] que me la grabasen...

Producing ‘tapes’, alongside with presents from relatives, is an important step in the transition from borrowing family records to starting a record collection. Many interviewees said that they started to do so when they were between 10 and 12 years old. Music is also often recorded from the radio: ‘D’on he tret jo la música? És que escolto Flaix FM, la radio, i a vegades m’ho grabo, i a vegades, doncs ma germà si porta algun CD, ha portat el Matinee¹⁰ (...), i llavors em va dir: “Eh, no sé què”, i el vaig pillar i me’l vaig gravar’. Recordings had a considerable circulation through tapes, which for many were the preferred way of collection: ‘Jo la música que tinc és de gent que m’ha deixat, i m’ho he quedat i he dit: “M’ho he de gravar”, ja està; ‘Comprar música no, prefiero que me la graben, sí. (...) Pido música a la gente. me voy grabando cintas...’. Young people do a considerable amount of symbolic work in making and talking about tapes and recorded CDs. For those who focus more on particular songs than on records, recording is a fantastic option. When tapes were produced by charismatic leaders, like friends who were – or were trying to be – professional DJs, they could acquire an aura or authenticity that made their circulation greater than usual: ‘Si no [te grabas los compactos que te compras,] siempre se conoce a un chavalín que está, que conoce al *disc jockey* y que te la graba...’; ‘Es que aquí hay un amigo mío que tiene platos y él hace sus mezclas y entonces me las graba’. The fact is that the constant circulation of tapes and recorded CDs among young people, a practice which goes hand with hand with music talk, enables unexpected musical practices to occur, as in the following example, where Maria, who basically liked house and techno music as well as some pop, used a tape with ska music as follows:

Maria: Sí, sí (...) que tinc una cinta que me la van gravar un company de la classe, un cassette de ska. I... jo vull dir... A mi mai m’ha agradat la pretensió de l’ska, però em va dir “Va Maria, si vols te la grabo” i jo li vaig dir, “*Vale, vale*”. I la poso de vegades quan joestic de mal humor, ho poso i *huhu*, ja està.

¹⁰ Compilation of a – at the time of the interview – gay after-hours which opened at 6am.

Leaders who influenced other people often used tapes as a way of spreading their taste among their friends ('Sí, ellos se lo grabaron y después ya fueron [fans como yo]'). The fact is that tapes and recorded CDs make the music more portable ('Nos traemos cintas al colegio') and affordable (the low cost of buying and recording tapes contributes to the wide dissemination of this practice¹¹). Because of the price of records in the market, using recordable tapes and recorded CDs was often seen as the more reasonable way of collecting records ('más còpia que comprar').

As for buying records, the decision to spend money on CDs or any other format was seen as important, and was pointed out by several interviewees as a further degree of commitment to the music on which money was spent: 'Cinta virgen. Se la dejo a mis amigos y me la graban. Si algún día me gusta mucho un tipo de cantante o algo, me lo compro yo en CD, pero lo suelo hacer poco'. A few of them claimed, as a proof of their fandom for particular artists, to have at home all their records ('ya me empecé a comprar todos, todas las cintas y a imitarla y estuve mucho tiempo, estuve dos o tres años, yo creo...'). Other interviewees just dismissed tapes and explained that they basically listened to music on bought CDs ('A mi no m'agraden els cassettes, no en tinc gaires'). CDs, in any case, were always seen as expensive.

Marc: A més, també depèn de la pasta. Si algun dia tinc molta pasta, doncs potser em compro dos o tres i no me'n torno a comprar fins el mes que ve... o potser em compro una setmana un i la setmana següent dic: "Ai, mira, ha sortit aquest nou i tinc *pasta*, doncs me'l compro".

A few interviewees said that they bought fewer records at the time of the interview than in the past, always as a consequence of the money this entailed: 'Abans comprava molta, però ara estic: "Això no pot ser perquè em gasto molt"'; 'I used to buy every other week'; 'Mmm... I used to [buy a lot of music], but I don't so many now... I usually just tape them into a blank tape, because if my friends bought it and I like it I just tape it'. Copies were also made in CD format by a few interviewees of both cities: 'Iba a coger uno que es... la nueva, pero no he podido, no me llegaba el dinero. Se la pedí a un amigo y me la he grabado... en CD'. Two of the interviewees claimed that they preferred original CDs and bought them even when they previously had a copy in the same format. One of them even made an important economic outlay to do so:

Roger: ¿Y compras? ¿Puedes comprar mucho o grabas cintas? ¿Cómo lo haces?

Sebastian: A mí me gusta comprar, comprarme los CDs. Porque en CD es más cómodo escuchar música y tiene más calidad de sonido. Y ahora Celine Dion ha sacado un nuevo disco y no tengo dinero para comprármelo. Y me lo quiero comprar y estoy ahorrando para comprármelo.

¹¹ Needless to say, the technological mediation of domestic music reproduction has been notably modified during the last 7 years.

Roger: ¿Estás ahorrando?

Sebastian: (...) Sí. Prefiero no gastar en tonterías, que...

Among those who did buy CDs, vinyls or tapes, not all bought 'albums'. Both 'singles' and 'compilations' were popular formats among the interviewees. Singles were particularly popular among Birmingham's pop fans, and compilations among Barcelona's *màkina* fans, for whom compilations made by *màkina* clubs were by far the most popular recording format: (Sí, [prefiero las compilaciones de discotecas], porque... Bueno, también hay DJs progressive y cosas así, pero está mejor lo de las discotecas, porque como vamos los fines de semana ahí, ya, más o menos, sabes que música hay y ya sabes si te gusta o no'). Many interviewees who liked *màkina* would not specify any DJ but just referred to the name of the compilations they liked ('No, no, normalment és que jo amb els discjòqueis només sé si la cançó m'agrada, llavors sí, llavors m'interesso, però no... vull dir, tampoc ho conec tant'). The compilation format was also popular among other youngsters ('És que és això, és que jo en si CDs, CDs, no n'escolto. Sinó que m'agrada molt comprar-me recopilatoris per escoltar-me les millors cançons...'), even punk fans, who although they liked albums very much, occasionally used compilations as well. As happened in the other cases, the following example of a punk fan shows the extent to which putting different songs together in compilations was sometimes a way to broaden young people's tastes in terms of artists and also styles:

Roger: I com vas començar a escoltar *hip hop*? A la botiga aquesta, a...?

Alfred: No, em vaig comprar un recopilatori que valia molt pocs diners que en principi sortia un disc de *hardcore*, no *hardcore*, sinó de *hard rock*, *hardcore*, *ska*, una mica de tot, i sortien altres de *hip hop*, i també... em va agradar. I em vaig començar a comprar CDs de *hip hop*, igual, però aquest no em va introduir ningú. Vaig posar-me jo a escoltar *hip hop*.

Compilations had their own connotations among young people, as if they were artists. Some of them were seen as more 'commercial', others as 'tough', others as *màkina*, etc. In the following quote Sofia distinguished between Pioneer and Pont Aeri compilations. She considered the first of them a 'house' compilation and the second a '*màkina*' one:

Roger: Luego el *house* que tienes, *màkina*, que ¿qué cedés son? ¿Son recopilatorios de discoteca...?

Sofia: El último que me he comprado es el Pioneer, ¿sabes cuál es?

Roger: No.

Sofia: El Pioneer, ay, es muy conocido, tiene tres cedés, uno es de *house*, otro de *dance* y *progressive*, y en el de *progressive* sale la de Björk que es la número siete, y en la número siete empieza lo *guapo*.

Roger: ¿Y de Pont Aeri y esto también?

Sofia: No, eso es más *cholo*.

Roger: Y este, el del Pioneer no, no es *màkina*, no es lo mismo.

Sofia: No, no es lo mismo...

When asked about how they first heard about *màkina* when they were younger, many interviewees in Barcelona referred to the ‘Max-Mix’ and ‘Màquina total’ compilations of the mid-90s: ‘[La màkina] te un caire més comercial [que el techno], no sé, que [abans] feien els “Màquina total”, totes aquestes collonades, no sé, que són comercials i a la vegada són *cutres*, no sé si... si m’entens...’. The media visibility of these more commercial compilations led many interviewees, even some of those who did not like *màkina* at the time of the interview, to buy them at some point: (*La màkina sempre m’ha sonat malament... Tot i que bueno, quan jo era petit, el primer cassette que em vaig comprar va ser el de Màkina total [laughing]*’).

Even though records could be received as presents from relatives and friends, they tended to be bought – or shoplifted – by the interviewees. The act of buying is important in itself, since the decision to invest important sums of money on a record, the spatial distribution and categorisation of records in different record shops, and the ritual act of buying itself made it very relevant for young people. Many interviewees used big record stores like El Corte Inglés and Fnac, or even Castelló, in Barcelona, or HMV, Virgin and Tower Records in Birmingham: ‘Sí, luego, o si no... es que casi siempre voy al Corte Inglés porque por aquí.. siempre voy ahí y encuentro lo que me gusta, o sea que...’; ‘HMV. Different places, sometimes. Where is cheapest...’. These megastores were mentioned by almost all interviewees, and were not only more visible but also cheaper than the rest. Those interviewees with an ‘anti-commercial’ attitude, however, also – and sometimes exclusively – mentioned small and often specialised record shops as important in gaining access to records.

Record shops are important because they determine what is available to young people – particularly before internet technology facilitated downloading large volumes of information –, and how it is organised conceptually, that is, how records are organised in particular genres that appear to the buyer as – more or less – objectified territory of sounds. Since we will analyse this in the following section, we will now focus on the different way megastores and small independent record stores provided access to musical geographies. Megastores offered mainstream and sometimes non-mainstream music. Roxana, for instance, who after migrating from Colombia to Barcelona missed the music with which she had been brought up, explained how she had discovered some of the music styles she liked, *merengue* and ‘pop latino’, in the big music store of El Corte Inglés. A boy in the same city, who liked punk, explained that the FNAC megastore had a ‘punk’ section: ‘Sí, sí, vas en allà, i veus aquells, però, jo conec grups de vegades, de recopilatoris que compro, clar, tinc, tinc molts recopilatoris, doncs els veus allà, i després potser veus el disc i dius “ah, mira, aquests, no sé què, doncs sí estan coneguts”’.

In general, however, small specialised shops were seen as more useful in finding non-mainstream records. Roxana did not know any specialised record shop where she could find the music she liked, but many other interviewees with a non-commercial taste referred to small shops as their favourite places to buy records.

They were small specialised shops that sold records not available in megastores, or that at least stocked the records of certain styles to which megastores did not pay much attention. It is true that there were also small record shops without a clear specialisation, which just sold – a small proportion of – the same records sold by the megastores. In those cases, those with a specialised taste felt restricted ('But if you go to Ourpize you couldn't [find what you want. There is] only chart music').

In Birmingham, interviewees said they bought records in small record stores like Andy Cash, RPM, Reddington's Rare Records, and in Barcelona, other ones like Revolver, Outline Records, CD-Drom (and in general all the record stores in Tallers street) or Vinilo Discs. These small business offered a completely different experience of buying music. For one thing, young people could talk about music with those who were selling it: 'You do talk to people sometimes, if like you're looking around and they come over and say, "Do you need any help", and then, ah, "That's good", they're usually quite nice people'. They could also obtain a lot of extra information, from specialised journals to flyers and many other sources that made them feel part of an alternative network, a field within musical and youth geographies:

Roger: Però, tu, on compres i demés, on?

Alfred: On compro? O a la FNAC, o a una tenda del carrer Sitges, que és un carrer que fa cantonada amb el carrer Tallers de dalt de les Rambles, Outline Record. Outline o Outline Records. És una tenda que també és un segell discogràfic, es diu Outline Records, i doncs allà és especialitzat en punk i hardcore, tenen de tot, de punk i hardcore.

Roger: Allà més que a la FNAC compres?

Alfred: A la FNAC també, de tant en tant, si hi ha algun CD que estigui més *barato* o que el tingui més a prop, doncs a la FNAC, però abans era més *barato* a la FNAC i ara ja no, i prefereixo anar allà. I a part, allà, que m'expliquen una mica el que hi ha i.. (...) [també hi compro la revista] Absolute, que és d'aquí, és nacional, [i d'altres].

A different set of specialised record shops in Barcelona where those where young Moroccans and Pakistanis could buy cheap tapes of the music they liked, which was generally difficult – or expensive – to buy in megastores. Some of them bought tapes when they went home for holidays, but several said that they purchased them in the shops – sometimes videoclubs, not record shops – in their neighbourhood specialised in Arab or Indian music. The Colombian boy in the Periphery School who liked rap and merengue also explained that there was a small record shop he frequented in the city centre (not in the street where most record shops were situated, though). In Birmingham, there were record shops specialised in Indian and Afro-Caribbean music, but none of the interviewees mentioned them.

As well as record shops, we must naturally refer to an emerging means of gaining access to recordings, which at the time of the fieldwork was already acquiring important dimensions and is now turning the music industry upside down: 'But I don't actually buy the music, I download it off of the internet...'; 'I've

got about 30 albums and are copied. I don't buy music actually'. Some of them used their computers to download and listen to the music on their MP3, on the computer, or to record CDs and play them on their stereos. Minidiscs were also mentioned by two interviewees as a way of copying music (CD and minidisc copies were pretty much the same practice of recording tapes, but the fact that quality was not affected by the copy made them qualitatively different). Finally, two other ways of obtaining records, each of them only mentioned by one interviewee, both of them in Barcelona, were pirate records (bought in the street) and public libraries – one interviewee obtained many of his records from a public library, a practice that was becoming important at the time.

Computer technology is blurring the distinction between 'bought' and 'recorded' recordings. When the quality is not important, only the edition of the covers can make a difference. Interestingly enough, at the time of the fieldwork in Barcelona, there was a widespread circulation of bootleg tapes of the most successful band of the year, Estopa, with a poor sound quality ('Mi primo la tiene y mi vecino también. Y ahora se la van pasando. Una se escucha mal y la otra se escucha peor'). These tapes were seen as a proof of authenticity of the band, since they supposedly included unpublished songs and censored lyrics: 'La maqueta que se la van pasando unos a otros, y hay canciones, la mitad de canciones a lo mejor, que en el compact no salen'; 'Porque son muy fuertes... o cambian palabras'. One interviewee who did not like Estopa even claimed to like only the bootleg version: 'Estopa? L'únic que m'agrada és la maqueta, perquè l'altre...', and another with a sophisticated taste in music also pointed out that he also liked Estopa: 'Però, no sé. *Lo que no chana és que hagin tingut que censurar algunes cançons. Estaven més bé abans...*'.

In conclusion, the way young people had access to musical sounds through recordings was diverse and complex, not only because of the different distribution networks but also due to the creative appropriation and production of records in the whole range of formats, typologies and variations. In contrast to the situation a few decades ago, recordings made it possible for young people to use, combine and manipulate different songs at will. They were, therefore, central in the production and re-production of musical geographies.

Music-playing devices

Apart from 'records', young people's musical experience is also mediated by the technological devices enabling them to listen to music. Contemporary popular music cannot be separated from technological innovation. Consider, for instance, the impact of the electric guitar, recording, microphones, sound systems, sampling or reproduction technologies in the way music is experienced by young people. Or think more precisely of the difference in young people's listening experience depending on whether they have a stereo music-player at home or in their own bedroom, or whether they have a Walkman or an MP3 player. One boy who decided to buy his parents a stereo provides a good illustration of this:

Pedro: Teníem una ràdio...

Roger: Sí.

Pedro: Però era de platina, ràdio i ja està. I el CD el teníem que *ficar* a l'ordinador. Llavors jo vaig *ahorrar*, em vaig comprar una cadena, i ara el meu pare sembla que escolta, posa CDs.

Roger: A la teva cadena?

Pedro: Sí. I posa. Com ell és vellet i [el seu poble] està al costat de Portugal, li agrada la música així *brasilenya*, portuguesa. Posa Roberto Carlos.

Since he had to share the stereo with his parents and sister, he often had to listen to the music they liked ('La meva germana vol *ficar* la seva música, que a mi no m'agrada i jo vull la meva'). They resolved the problem by listening to one CD each, even though his mother did not have any CDs and his father often let his children use his turn, to which the boy sometimes responded by using his own turn to play his parents' music. His experience is naturally quite different from that of most interviewees, who had a playing device in their own bedroom, and could thus use it at will: 'At the moment music is more at home, music is part of everyday life, like wake up in the morning, switch on my stereo, play music, you know? Coming late at night, play music. Just everyday thing'. In any case, several of them recalled the moment when they could have access to a stereo – either personal or shared with other members of their family – as an important one:

Loles: Desde pequeña [he escuchado] flamenco y sevillanas y todo eso. Entonces, cuando hice la comunión, compraron la mini-cadena. Y mi hermano, que tiene cuatro años más que yo, entonces empezó a escuchar *dance* y todo eso, más antiguo, porque ya hace unos seis años o así, pero...

Roger: ¿Y eso cuándo era?

Loles: Cuando tenía diez años u once.

Roger: ¿Y ahí empezaste a escuchar tú también dance?

Loles: Sí.

In contrast to stereos and even computers, Walkmans¹² and MP3 players were individual by definition, and allowed young people to listen to music literally anywhere, anytime ('I think for us music is a very very large part of our life. We listen to it constantly. I fall asleep listening to my music, with my headphones...'). In several of the schools they were forbidden, but young people tended to bring them in anyway, even if they were careful to only use them when they were not seen by teachers ('It's like compulsory for me. It's a rule for me: no Walkman, no bag. My Walkman is with me in my bag right now. (...) You are not supposed to [in the

¹² See an in-depth story of the Sony Walkman in du Gay, Hall, Janes, Mackay & Negus (1997), which analyses the role of the personal stereo in blurring the distinction between the public and private spaces, enabling private listening pleasure in the public domain, as well as its importance in extending the 'perceptive potential'. During the last decade, MP3 players and Ipod have further transformed the listening experience of young people.

school], but...'). The point is that Walkmans were an important way through which taste in music was made visible, generating quite a lot of music talk with friends and acquaintances. Young people knew what others listened to on their Walkmans, because they were constantly talking about it, asking others to let them listen, offering to let them listen to what they had, or just hearing the rhythm because of the high volume ('Pues yo llevo el Walkman y si lo escucho alto y lo oye cualquier persona, si les gusta lo van a escuchar, [tanto] pueden ser las chavalas como pueden ser chicos'). In the same sense that buying or taping music was often seen as a sign or degree of commitment, listening to certain music on the Walkman could also be seen as such, like the following interviewee who liked a style of music for dancing *but not* to listen to it on her Walkman: 'A mi m'agrada ballar-la, o sigui, portar el Walkman i escoltar-la no, però anar amb un lloc i ballar-la sí. The use of Walkmans was sometimes so widespread that those who did not bring them to the school were seen – if they, for instance, did not talk about music either – as 'suspicious' of not liking music: 'Que aquestes no, em sembla que no els hi agrada molt la música, perquè aquestes no parlen, i no porten mai el Walkman'.

The importance of Walkmans was thus crucial in making musical geographies visible, as the following examples illustrate: one boy heard about garage through the Walkmans of a schoolmate ('Well, [I've listened to garage] on the radio sometimes, and like... there's... A kid from the school always listens to it on the Walkmans so sometimes I listen to it...'); another boy said that two schoolmates probably liked the same music as he liked because 'por lo menos al Pere y al Ramón sí, porque más de una vez yo he llevado los *Walkmans* y les he dejado escuchar y les ha *gustao*'; one boy tried to determine the extent to which his schoolmates liked *gitaneo* in terms of what they listened on their Walkmans ('Hombre, a todo el mundo no, pero a bastante gente sí que le gusta, de aquí, bastante. Siempre van con los cascos que escuchan eso...').

Walkmans could also be used to negotiate one's own space at home. Young Moroccans and Pakistanis, in both Birmingham and Barcelona, used them to listen to the music their parents did not want them to listen to, with or without them knowing it: 'Cuando pongo una cinta, si no les gustan, la quitan. Pero cuando tengo el Walkman lo pongo...'

Roger: And what about your parents... do they listen to music at all?

Azhar: No.

Roger: And do they like you listening to music?

Tahar: You don't listen to it. Walkman at night. They won't know.

Roger: (...) But do they know what you listen to?

Tahar: Yes, they know... but at the end of the day...

Azhar: They know we listen to songs, but they don't know what type we are listening to. I bought my Walkman with my dad, he knows I listen... I listen to music, but he doesn't know what type I listen to.

Roger: If you listen to bhangra it's all right?

Tahar: [Laughing] Yeah...

Roger: That's allowed?

Tahar: Yes. That's right.

Roger: And if they knew it would be bad? Would they be disappointed?

Tahar: [*Serious and low voice*] I don't know that...

All these examples point to the indisputable importance of music players in mediating young people's experience with music. The collective or individual ownership of music stereos at home, or the possession of a Walkman or an MP3 player (only mentioned by one of the interviewees in Birmingham), as well as the way young people use all of them, influences the musical experience in a relevant way. Walkmans, paradoxically, were not only a matter of private listening but also of public exchange of musical materials and negotiations of meanings.

Nightlife, concerts and parties

Most interviewees were 15 or 16 years old. Their participation in nightlife activities was thus restricted by legal and parental norms, as well as by monetary resources. Nevertheless, the role of clubs, bars and concerts in their discourses about musical geographies was important, particularly in Barcelona (where there were many under-age bars and clubs that could be legally attended)¹³. Bars and clubs are important carriers of musical traditions, and even if many interviewees did not yet go out at night, or did so only occasionally, they were generally aware of this field of activity and looked forward to being able to participate in it. A drum'n'bass night promoter, who had just left university, explained as follows the importance of clubs in taste in music:

Tom: Well, obviously I think that you first have to go to a nightclub before you can know... decide what you like, because you are otherwise exposed to the charts... And if you don't know that Kool FM is on 105.6... it's unlikely that you stumble across it and listen to it... But once you've seen a little bit... I think that 18, when you start drinking, that's a big point where people start getting into nightclubs and getting interested in different types of music... Because at school I didn't go to nightclubs...

Many of the interviewees were already negotiating their night activities with their parents ('Yeah. I like it. My mum is very concerned... (...) She's let me out several times...'), and quite often attended even over-18 clubs, sometimes using fake IDs, sometimes mixing with older groups of friends among whom their age could pass unnoticed by the 'bouncers'. Only a few interviewees claimed not to be interested in going out at night, some of them even making fun of those who did go to clubs: 'No lo he *probao* [*laughs*]. Porque, en la discoteca que van es mucho de chumba, chumba... Todo el rato así (...) Pero siempre, a las que van, siempre bai-

¹³ See Robert Hollands' *Friday night, Saturday Night* (1995) for a good approach to the experience of going out, and Chatterton & Hollands's *Urban Nightscapes* (2003) for a broader approach to nightlife in the UK.

lan igual. Sí, [laughing] Siempre. (...) Y a mí me taladra eso. (...) No. No me gusta'. The fact is, nevertheless, that both concerts and nightlife experiences were used by young people to cause a good impression on others. They were often seen with admiration and some mystification, particularly if they had exciting things to explain. Going – or pretending to go – to clubs, particularly if they were respected and 'over 18' ones, was generally valued by many interviewees. Indeed, during the last ten or fifteen years, clubbing has gained considerable importance among young people in both Birmingham and Barcelona. Traveling to clubs in other towns was an eccentricity that has now become normal for many youngsters. Besides bars and clubs, concerts were also mentioned as important by interviewees, in that they were often experienced as transcendental moments. Particularly when they were an opportunity to see their favourite artists, interviewees explained how they anticipated that night long before it actually occurred, and projected a good deal of illusion onto it.

Even if – as in all other aspects of youth social space – nightlife was seen in a different manner depending on their location in youth geographies, in general terms 'not going out' was perceived – similarly to 'not listening to music' – as a sign of not participating in youth social space and thus not having much value in youth hierarchies. One interviewee also associated not going out at night to liking the most commercial music: 'Suele ser: a gente que sale menos y así, pues le gusta más música comercial, que es lo único casi que escucha por la tele, por la radio... Mucha música comercial. Los que salen más, escuchan más otras cosas'. This association between not going out and liking commercial music cannot be generalised, but it points to an aspect that will later be analysed in more depth.

Apart from non-commodified parties like house and church parties, mentioned by a few interviewees as a significant way of going out, and as well as hanging around in the street, the most obvious nightlife activity (even though often carried out in the afternoon rather than at night), was going to bars, pubs, clubs and concerts. These (generally) commodified spaces are important because they transcend networks of personal relations and, at the same time, build up spaces of interpersonal contact different from typified media communicative spaces, in that young people see – and are seen by – other 'anonymous' youngsters (even though with regular attendance at the same bars and even clubs, such anonymity was not clear: 'Claro, es que ir a una discoteca es un poco una familia ya, sí porque llegas un sábado por ejemplo y ya te conoces a todo el mundo, y entonces, "este no lo he visto nunca por aquí" y entonces ya sabes quien es'). They are also important because they provide a sensuous experience in the production of which the consumers themselves take an active stance. Bars and clubs are experienced as 'objectified' spaces existing out there but are socially and culturally produced largely by young people themselves every time they attend them. The fact is that private parties and, most of all, bars and clubs often caused a transformative impression on young people, as shown by the following example of Jaume, a boy from the Catalan School in Barcelona:

Jaume: Jo vaig començar a escoltar música més o menys als... Quan vaig arribar aquí, a primer d'ESO, que devia tenir onze anys. Escoltava més la comercial, no escoltava gaire música.

Roger: Recordes com vas començar? O sigui, algú et va donar música, per la ràdio, o si...?

Jaume: No, era... Recordo que... a alguna festa que feien... doncs les noies portaven música, i era música totalment comercial. I nosaltres doncs l'escoltàvem. Després quan nosaltres ja començàvem a escoltar música pel nostre compte, vam canviar una mica...

Roger: I com és? Ho recordes? Allò... el primer canvi?

Jaume: A partir de que vam anar a una discoteca, va començar... Que vam escoltar un que estava a Zeleste. (...) I a partir d'allà que vam escoltar música de discoteca i ens va agradar (...). [Era] *techno* i una mica de *house*.

Roger: Us va agradar l'ambient de la discoteca?

Jaume: Sí, sí.

Roger: Sí? Què tenia?

Jaume: Era molt diferent a totes les altres discoteques que havíem anat. Havíem anat a Up and Down, i, ja vam comparar el que eren discoteques, diguéssim. Per primer cop vam veure...

He first got into 'commercial' music because it was the music that his female classmates brought to parties they attended, but then a clubbing experience made him change his taste in music. Particularly in Barcelona, where there seemed to be more under-18 clubs than in Birmingham, there were a few interviewees who explained similar clubbing experiences. One of them was Karim, who started to like *màkina* after going to a club with his street friends: 'Porque me invitaron a ir a una discoteca y fui con ellos y, no sé, me gustó bastante ¿sabes?'. Maria, in the Catalan School, also mentioned clubs as an influence on her taste for techno music, and the Megaplec dance, an annual dance session in a big sports arena organised by Flaix FM, as an important experience in her introduction to house music ('quan vaig anar l'any passat al "Megaplec", llavors, el house vaig veure que m'encantava, llavors vaig començar a escoltar música'). It is not strange, therefore, that some interviewees, when asked about their musical biographies, explained their shifts in terms of the bars and clubs they frequented.

Sofia: Mira no, antes de, de ir al *house* tuve una época en que me gustaba más lo *guarro*, más la salsa y más el *dance*, más así, más al estilo Montse., que era cuando iba a Lobo y que fue hará tres añitos o por ahí y cuando Dixie. (...) En Marina. Fui a Dixie, después he ido al Lobo, y después, igual: Tuve una amiga que le gustaba todo lo que es más *cholo*, empezamos a ir al Illusion, pero a mi el Illusion no me gustaba, y ahora he acabado en Up and Down, hasta que cambie... [smiles].

Her shift from 'música *guarra*' to *màkina* and then house is explained in terms of the places she attends when going out. She also detailed, for instance, how she felt 'out of place' in a particular *màkina* club because she thought that she was seen as *pija*. Similar 'negative' experiences were told by a few interviewees, like Eli, who strongly disliked a bar in Marina area in the following terms:

Eli: Es una discoteca *guarra*, o sea, se suben cinco tías encima de un... Una vez que fui yo, y dije “no vuelvo más”. A parte de que la gente tienen mala fama, eso, de *guarros*, empezaron a desnudarse... Se estaban quitando hasta el sujetador ya, y el tanguita. ¡Joder tías, que tenéis trece y catorce años! ¿Qué hacéis ahí?

Marina, this nightlife area in Barcelona, produced the same impression on other interviewees (‘Porque no sé, el ambiente que hay allí no, no me gusta. (...) Sí, es que son todos iguales, todos con... con los pelos largos, ue, ue, bailando’). These strong positive and negative experiences are good examples of the ‘sensuous experience’ of going out, where the feeling of pleasure was sensed physically, in very localised environments, and was closely related to the way biographies, knowledge and typifications were culturally produced. Young people, when they choose bars and clubs, are negotiating their lifestyles and its codes: their ways of dressing, dancing, flirting and, in conclusion, socialising. Young people classified – typified – bars, clubs and nightlife areas in terms of the music and general youth style, but often linking them to their sensuous experience in those places, which was related to different atmospheres, levels of toughness, age and many other aspects that are difficult to systematise. This means that even if, as happened with musical geographies, interviewees mapped out different places in terms of distances and proximities, we must understand the localised production of sensuous meanings as a very important aspect of the cultural production of these mental maps. The importance of clubs and bars is that by attending them, by participating in the sensuous experience with actual individuals behaving and socialising in very particular ways, young people build up a combination of sensuous and typified knowledge about the places and, by extension, about the music played there and the people who attended them.

The importance of the (sensuous) experience of going out, and particularly clubbing, in relation to taste in music was pointed out by some interviewees. One boy in the Periphery School said that nobody could claim to like or not like a certain music without having heard it in a club: ‘Sí, algún chavalín... que no sé... Hay gente que [dice] “Ah, a mí me gusta la *màkina*”, [pero lo dicen] pues mira, porque algún hermano o primo les gusta, porque no pueden decir que les gusta una música cuando aun no han ido ni a escucharla a una discoteca’. The same link was established by a few interviewees in Birmingham: ‘Quite a few people [like what I like]... Many are more cheesy... Like ‘Top of the pops’... But quite a few people like the same music as I do... because they get out clubbing and stuff...’; ‘The ones who like the hard dance are] probably the people that go clubbing...’. Alan, a boy in the Dual School, explained as follows the connection between what he called ‘alternative dance’ music and clubbing:

Roger: What’s alternative dance?

Alan: Mmm... stands... it’s not like... mainstream. I mean, most dance music that gets into the charts it’s like... very poppy, like... Alice DJ and stuff like that. Simplistic music. But alternative dance is very like... it’s like mixed... like mixed

with like rap, and different types of music to create that sort of style. So... the Chemical Brothers are alternative dance, really, this is why I like them, you now? It's entirely a different type.

Roger: Which artists? You said Chemical Brothers...

Alan: Emmm... Leftfield...

Roger: Not many people know Leftfield...

Alan: No, mmm... it depends on what kind of people you talk to... I mean, if you talk to people who like going to like... clubs and that sort of stuff, they would've heard of them...

Roger: Which clubs?

Alan: Like the big ones like in Ibiza and stuff like that. Gatecrasher as well in Sheffield... It's maybe like, you know, the big clubs. People who go to them would've heard about Leftfield.

This link between going out and musical experience was verbalised even by two female interviewees from the Catalan School who did not go out much. They anticipated that once they started to do so more frequently they would be more able to map out nightlife and musical geographies:

Susana: No sé, jo crec que quan tinguis els setze anys una mica, no sé, ara et pot agradar una música però com l'escoltes a casa és diferent, no coneixes del tot l'ambient, llavors quan tinguis els setze anys que vagis a diferents discoteques, ja escolliràs més l'ambient, perquè és parlar per endavant per escollir, llavors quan tu vegis l'ambient que hi ha a cada discoteca llavors ja escolliràs.

Roger: Tu creus que també això...?

Maria: Jo crec que em quedaré al *house*, sí, perquè jo ja vaig anar a... Allà al *Megaplec*¹⁴ i a mi el *house* em van encantar. És això...

Again, the meaning of music was related to the 'atmosphere' ('ambience') of the clubs in which it was played. This implies that the meaning of music becomes strongly localised, embedded in very particular social contexts that you need to experience to be able to locate yourself. The sensuous experience of these localised social contexts is not just a matter of music. Epithets that are not strictly musical like '*kevness*', '*cholería*', '*poshness*', '*pijería*', '*moros*', '*gay*' or '*toughness*', for instance, were combined with more directly musical ones like '*màkina*', '*commercial*', '*cheesy*' or '*guarro*' when distinguishing between different bars and clubs.

Mike: There's Godskitchen, The Sanctuary... they're like the two main ones... and then... There's all the other places like the Dome, Exile and Pulse... They're for the *kevs*... There're three main *kev* clubs really...

Roger: And do you know Snobs?

Mike: Snobs yeah, that's like... that's another one...

Roger: And Bakers?

Mike: Bakers, yeah...

¹⁴ Big year festival organised by the dance station Flaix FM.

Roger: Is it for the *kevs* or not?

Mike: Bakers is like half and half really.

Roger: And Godskitchen is half and half as well?

Mike: Probably, but it's kind of different to Bakers, Bakers it's much more posh.

Roger: Bakers it's more posh and Godskitchen is more...

Mike: More relaxed I would say...

Other interviewees, instead of linking certain clubs, bars or nightlife areas to '*kevs*', linked them to 'harder' people, '*moros*', or many other social categories: 'És que és massa *durillo* per a mi... tot això [del Chasis i el Pont Aeri]'; 'Yes, this is another thing, you get all the... all the... *proles* [all laugh a little bit] ... They always go to the Dome, the dance music sort of thing'; 'Me gusta más Chasis, porque Pont Aeri la gente que va, va *del palo*: (...) "¡No me mires!" "¡Me has mirado mal!"... Y *bullas* (...). Y Chasis es más buen *rollo*, no hay tantas peleas. ¡Hombre, peleas hay en todos los sitios!'; "*Kev* clubs like... [the Dome,] that sort of place... Cheesy... (...) The only one who is not is Ramshackle on Saturday night. This is the only one is not at all. It's rock... skateboarders and anyone... But not *kev* at all'; '[En el Zoo], menos marroquíes, [hay] de todo'; '[I do not like Broad Street] because you get like the harder people there, and it's not a very nice atmosphere... I mean, some people would say it's wicked, but I like Hurst Street'; 'Al Piu no hi ha molts gays. Ara, al Royal sí'.

We find, thus, that nightlife was not only verbally typified but sensuously segregated, in the sense that young people not only looked for places where they felt *like at home*, comfortable, but also where they could have more fun and pleasure. Whereas this sensuous segregation could also be a source of attraction in young people's search for 'something new' and 'exciting' (to go to a 'very different', 'rough', 'posh' club), the fact is that the same bars and clubs tended to have a door policy aimed at letting in only those who matched the parameters they expected (several interviewees explained how they were not allowed in clubs and bars because of the colour of their skin or their style of dress). The important point is that sensuous segregation was related to taste in music and youth style, but also to social distinctions like generalised advantage, ethnicity or sexual orientation. One interviewee was very explicit about how class differences made him feel wrong when interacting with upper-class people, not in terms of explicit social control in a club door or dance floor, but in a more sophisticated way. Such differences were important – and often hidden – elements in the sensuous experience of nightlife. 'Poshness' was also repeatedly mentioned during the interviews as an important criterion to typify bars and clubs. In the following quote two *màkina* fans in the Catalan School dismiss two clubs in terms of age and 'poshness':

Roger: ¿Y aquí en Barcelona no hay ninguna así que esté bien?

Juan: En Barcelona, no. (...)

Alberto: Hay discotecas que son o de dieciséis, pero son muy pequeñas, como el Up and Down. O hay luego ya Music Box y esto, pero es lo mismo y el tiempo [la edad] es de catorce años. De la *màkina*...

Juan: Además es lo que antes te decía de *house*, cosas así, de *pijos*, ¿sabes? (...) El ambiente no me gusta.

The experience of bars naturally included many other aspects, like for instance erotic interaction. Several interviewees distinguished different bars and clubs in terms of their suitability for flirting. In some cases, they chose different clubs depending on whether they prioritised 'the music' or 'flirting' ('Si busques *xurris*, jo què sé, vas a llocs més... *housillo* (...). Sí'). Other aspects mentioned in order to map out clubs and bars were roughness, sexual orientation, balance of the sexes, atmosphere, and so on. Importantly, these features were often interlinked, as in the following example where differences within *màkina* music clubs in terms of presence of girls and toughness were put forward by Alberto:

Alberto: Lo que es el X-què, Pont Aeri, no suele haber muchas chicas. Hay más en X-què que en Pont Aeri. Pero lo que es Pont Aeri y Scorpia, por ejemplo, pues al ser más... suelen ser duras y de más peleas, no hay tantas chicas, hay más chicos. En cambio, en lo que es X-què y Chasis suele haber más chicas. Y en Área hay muchas más chicas que chicos.

Alberto not only linked 'toughness' to female attendance, but also to the 'hardness' of the music that was played. The meaning or connotation of a particular bar or club, however, was far from static, since it could be modified in a few weeks. Several interviewees explained that they stopped attending places they liked after such changes occurred: 'Jo me'n vaig cansar bastant... (...) Perquè al final també només hi havien que *cholitots* d'aquests, allà. I tampoc no *mola*...'; 'Ma-remagnum por la noche... Yo antes iba de noche. Ahora ya no, porque se ha... todo lleno de moros. No tengo nada contra ellos, pero yo que sé...'. Nightlife, therefore, and the music played, was in an on-going process of being embodied in actual practices and physical segregation that crucially contributed to the cultural production of musical geographies. Young people were continuously negotiating the meaning of places, and this was explicitly or implicitly related to the music that was played in them. Sensuous experiences were typified and often discussed with other friends, so interviewees did not need to have a direct personal experience of certain bars and clubs to incorporate them in their stock of typical knowledge:

Alan: No ho sé. Però jo... A veure, per lo que m'han explicat amics que he tingut, a mi m'han explicat que abans el Poblenou estava ple de *heaviolos*, *punkos* i no sé... *Vale* que potser també hi haguessin molts *garrulos* i tal, perquè aquesta part de Poblenou tampoc no és que sigui un barri com Pedralbes, m'entens? (...) Però ara, ara hi ha més que abans, ara hi ha més *garrulos* que abans.

Roger: Sí?

Alan: I hi ha menys *heavys* i [menys] *punkos*... I això, no? I la moda dels *cibers* ara *pues*... està molt de moda

Marc: Cada vegada hi ha més.

Alan: I et trobes molt bisexual i molt gai

Marc: Sí, sí, hi ha moltíssimes discoteques.

Nightlife was important because it allowed young people to know what was going on 'outside' their networks of personal relations and neighbourhoods and it did so with a less anonymous – or at least mediated – knowledge than that provided by the media: it was embodied in physical crowds and practices. The rockers in the White School, for instance, explained the meaning of 'rocker' as a typified category ('scary' and 'extravagant' but 'nice' and 'friendly' people) using as a reference point their experience in rock concerts.

Whereas the number of pubs and bars was high, and tended thus to be rather invisible to those who did not frequent them, the number of clubs was much smaller and they tended to be known even to many of those who did not attend them (particularly in Birmingham, a few interviewees clearly distinguished between particular 'nights' as more significant than the club in which they took place). In musical terms, bars could articulate a higher diversity, whereas clubs were easily classified by the interviewees in terms of the music they played and the crowd they had. Young people clearly distinguished bars and clubs not only in terms of their music and youth style, understood in broad terms, but also in terms of their 'commerciality', of their 'mainstream' or 'alternative' character. If we look at the less 'commercial' styles, we find that those who liked garage music, for instance, explained that it was only played in a few venues ('every two weeks they are playing garage [in town]'; 'Silk City they'll (...) book the place, to play there, the venue there')¹⁵. Even more obscure were *blue* (illegal) parties, where underground music could often be pushed further than in commercial venues. Blue parties were in some sense what was left of the 'sound-system' explosion during the late 1970s and 1980s. What once was a 'focal point for association and communication' (Back 1996: 186), introduced by migrants coming from urban working-class areas in Jamaica, had faded out and practically disappeared as a social institution – which was also crucial to the beginning of hip hop in New York – although still existed. One interviewee, who left school during the fieldwork, claimed to attend such parties, where underground hip hop music was played. A 21-year-old interviewee who was at that time trying to promote garage events explained his experience of these parties as follows:

Mike: And it's like... so you get a lot of people, and I used to go to *blueses* and stuff, me and my friend (...). We *got to blueses* with him... mmm... (...) in Moseley Rd... I don't know if it's there anymore! I used to go there every week, and I used to go to [others] in Handsworth, and then I used to... used to be in underground *blueses* and stuff, but I'm feeling a lot... I don't feel it was a right place, because there used to be a lot of crack... and stuff... and people selling drugs. Dangerous surroundings. And you know, you couldn't really go down there, 'cause, it's such a minority music, way back then, people didn't understand it (they still don't understand it today, but...). So, you could only go to like... people's house parties

¹⁵ This was to change a few months after the fieldwork took place, when garage became mainstream club music in Birmingham.

and stuff... *blueses*... no other places. Places like that, where people drink, people fight, trouble, shootings... you know? You got ridiculous people, you got people coming from the other side of Handsworth... You know? They don't mind.

Roger: Have you seen shootings a lot of times?

Mike: I've seen a few. I've seen about five... five, seven. One time was like... It could have been me! That shot! You know? And it's like... That was in the jungle thing, and that was also in the ragga... It's no point, there is really no point.

One adult interviewee who used to attend blue parties declared that they were not as popular as they used to be, precisely because 'people don't like it if they might get shot by accident'¹⁶. Not only shootings, but also fights, spectacular youth styles and extraordinary events were particularly powerful in culturally producing images associated to certain places. As well as the mentioned shootings in Birmingham, several other interviewees in both cities talked about fights and knives, and one even explained that in a certain club 'someone was going around with Aids injecting people with his blood in needles'. These tales – sometimes factual and sometimes mere 'urban legends' – did not need to be true to have real consequences, that is, to influence the typification of certain clubs as a no-go territory.

Returning to the distinction between 'mainstream' and 'alternative' night geographies, the fact is that not only *blue* parties were hidden from the general public, but also clubs playing minority music styles like, for instance, rock music. There were bars and clubs where the music was played, but they were less visible than dance and commercial clubs. The rockers in the White School claimed to have known about small concerts from local media, the internet and the concerts they had previously attended. They liked to go to gigs of a Led Zepellin tribute band in local pubs. Punk fans in the Catalan School in Barcelona had discovered *La Bàscula*, a civic centre specialised in music that programmed hardcore concerts and attended it regularly, both to rehearse with their band and to enjoy live concerts and meet people with whom they identified. They had first heard about it through the civic centre in their neighbourhood, where they used to rehearse before they discovered the much better equipped *La Bàscula*. Other small venues and minority concerts were known through small record shops or specialised media, as well as through networks of personal relations ('[me enteré del Jamboree a través de] amigas que tengo que han ido una vez y les ha gustado; o del cole que van gente allí, todo eso').

At the opposite extreme, we find the very popular bars, clubs and events that were attended by several interviewees and known to almost everybody. In Barcelona, for instance, this was the case of El Lobo, Chasis, the annual 'Megaplec

¹⁶ The moral panic in the tabloids around the many incidents in the gigs of the garage So Solid Crew, including shootings and stabbings, made visible what was otherwise hidden to public opinion. On 2 January 2002, the culture minister Kim Howells blamed the 'idiots like the So Solid Crew glorifying gun culture and violence' after Birmingham teenagers Letisha Shakespeare and Charlene Ellis were shot dead in crossfire between rival gangs (see the article 'Ready to blow', published in *The Observer* on April 24, 2005).

Dance' (organised by Flaix FM), or several 'Los 40 Principales' and Estopa concerts. They were often advertised in mainstream media, and their popularity made them extremely visible even to those who did not attend them. In music terms, they could be notably specialised or play a wide range of music styles. As happened with music in general, there was an on-going dispute over the commerciality of the music played in clubs:

Enrique: [Al Style, una discoteca pequeñita donde voy,] ponen comercial y màkina, al principio siempre suelen poner comercial, y después ponen màkina. (...)

Roger: Y en el Music Box, ¿qué ponen? ¿Comercial?

Enrique: Sí, más bien es todo así, comercial, un poco de house, pero no, nada más. (...)

Roger: Y al Chasis ¿la música qué es?

Enrique: Es que depende, porque hay diferentes salas, hay una sala que es la sala de pachanga, que es pachanga y house, después está la sala de màkina, que es más grande, y... me parece que está la... Ya está, hay dos salas... pero que son grandiosas las dos salas... y está bastante bien.

Particularly in Barcelona, there were many bars and clubs that played a really broad range of music ('Ponen de todo. A la que voy yo ponen de todo'; 'et poden posar des d'una cançó de Metallica al principi i de Nirvana, fins a house, techno i la Britney Spears'). Several of them had different dancefloors and spaces with different music styles, and thus provided access to different musical traditions and, at the same time, culturally produced bridges between them.

Nevertheless, the link between music and nightlife is complex, in that we must understand going out as a social activity, and it was not strange that whereas some youngsters justified the fact that they did not go out with others because the music they liked was different, others clearly distinguished between the music they liked and the music that was played in the places where they went. As we have seen in the case of distinguishing the music one 'buys' or 'tapes' from the music one can listen to on the radio, young people also distinguished the music they really liked from the music that *was all right to dance to*. Marc, who liked heavy metal, was a clear example of this:

Marc: No sé. A veure, és que tu quan... jo que sé, si surts algun dia i te'n vas a alguna discoteca o *algo*, no esperaràs que et *fotin heavy metal* i tot, perquè tampoc... I llavors, *bueno*, si fan alguna cançó màkina, no et desagrada perquè estàs allà amb la penya i et fots a ballar i tot. (...)

Alan: A veure, nosaltres... si sortim per anar a buscar ties, anem a les discoteques, perquè... jo què sé, si anem als bars que anem sempre o així, l'has cagat. Llavors, clar, sempre...

In those bars and clubs where several different music styles were played, many youngsters waited until the music they liked came up to start dancing: 'Lo ponen, pero nosotros ya estamos mientras tomando copas y eso, y cuando ponen ya lo que nos gusta...[es cuando salimos a bailar]'. It is clear, thus, that the tension

between the social and musical aspects of nightlife cannot be reduced to a direct and clear relationship.

In conclusion, in this section we have shown how nightlife experience can be very important in young people's pathways through youth and musical geographies, and musical geographies would not be as they are without the mediation of bars, clubs, concerts, and the sensuous experiences they enable and channel – even if the interviewees were just starting, or looking forward to start, their participation in nightlife activities. The same must be said of artifacts like recordings or playing devices, which enable young people to individually and collectively use music in much more intensive, flexible and open ways than had previously been possible, to make music present in almost all moments of their daily routines. And we cannot forget the centrality of the media, since young people's appropriation and use of the media is also an inherent element of the complex negotiation of meanings through which musical and youth geographies are culturally produced. The role of all these commodified elements in carrying, actualising and mediating musical traditions must thus not be overlooked. These commodified materials are important not only because they are central signs in networks of personal relations, but because they transcend them and point to a broader, typified range of meanings. Through the media, records, record shops, bars, clubs and concerts, young people participate in musical and youth geographies understood as an objectified, external stock of typified knowledge which transcends their localised networks of personal relations. They are a sort of infrastructure that continuously connect, coordinate and tune in to different networks of personal relations – in radio and TV programs, in magazines, in concerts, bars and clubs. The different range of commodified artifacts, events and media spaces, therefore, become carriers and mediators of musical traditions. Without them, these traditions could not be produced and passed on from one generation to the next as happens currently. With networks of people unable to listen to music through records, radio stations, concerts and clubs, music geographies would not be what they are. As mediators of these geographies, the way they, for instance, structure mainstream and alternative, visible and hidden territories, or the myriad of musical genres is of great importance for the cultural production of musical and youth geographies.

Genre categories that make it more real

In our effort to bring to the surface the main carriers of musical traditions from one generation to the next, we have so far analysed the main networks of personal relations and commodified artefacts, places and events that mediate social meanings around music. We have left for this last section the analysis of those genre 'categories' mediating the interpretation and organisation of musical and social geographies. Genre categories like 'house', 'rock', 'techno', '*màkina*' or 'pop' are crucial cultural forms in the production of distances and proximities. Without these categories, which are transmitted and modified from generation to generation, young people would hardly be able to make sense of musical geographies as they do. These terms make musical geographies 'real', they *cut* the world of sounds

into categories that can be related to each other. Genre categories 'inform' young people's experience of their music milieu, becoming the basis – the main co-ordinates – of their typifications. The main point is that those categories, rather than being an objective – in the sense of neutral, technical – representation of reality, in fact mediate and culturally produce it as it is experienced by young people.

In the empirical analysis, we have so far uncritically used genre categories, using the names that were used by the young people in the interviews. These categories, however, were far from clear. Different interviewees often used the same category for different sounds or different categories for the same sounds. In real life, we tend to learn music genres gradually, without necessarily having any systematic knowledge of them. It is not easy to be precise when every individual 'learns' to differentiate rock from pop, blues from soul, techno from house, or heavy metal from hardcore, as it is not clear whether they have an accurate idea of where the limits between genres must be drawn. The large number of existing genres, in fact, are only familiar to a minority of us. Even if interviewees in Birmingham and Barcelona did not know the exact musical meaning of each category, however, they still often used them – or rather some of them – to identify what they liked and what they did not like.

As we have argued in Chapter 2, following Negus (1999), music genre categories are relevant not only to understand young people's experience of music but also the formal organisation of the entertainment industry and the process of music-making itself. At any particular moment, musical geographies are mapped out in a limited set of music genres, that become the basic reference point of music-making, music consumption and the economics of music (Frith 1996; Negus 1999). We do not experience the musical materials around us as chaotic diversity, but as differences organised in genres, all of them with their own codes, conventions and expectations, both musical and social. Genres imply that we experience sounds as familiar, as belonging to a certain musical tradition. It is true, however, that genres are not static and clear-cut realities, but dynamic and to some extent diffuse – in that we can always find a crossover between genres that makes it difficult to identify any particular one. If the fieldwork of this thesis had been carried out twenty years before, the genres organising musical geographies would have been notably different. House, techno, garage and *màkina* music would have not existed, and distances and proximities between other genres that did exist, like rock, punk and pop, would have been notably different. Genre categories in contemporary popular music are historical. We might recall, for instance, that until the 1950s the popular music market was structured in the United States in one basic music genre, Tin Pan Alley (named after the New York area where the centre of the music industry was situated), or that new European and US popular music was often just named, in Barcelona during the 1960s, 'modern music'. The emergence of rock'n'roll transformed the music industry and led to a diversification of the genres. The distinction between rock and pop was introduced later, as were other categories like progressive rock, heavy metal, punk, reggae, disco, rap, house, *màkina* or drum'n'bass, just to name a few.

Figure 4.1 Map of the genre typifications used by the interviewees



Let us take a look at the genre labels and other sort of categories used by the interviewees to map out and pigeon-hole musical sounds (see Figure 4.1). The number of these was endless, and any attempt to organise them in meaningful categories will certainly encounter many problems. Besides the more generic genres like pop, rock, dance, rap or reggae, young people used many loose categories like melodic, romantic, *kevs*, *baladas*, soft and chart music (all of them

close to what we could name pop music), or categories that had a primarily geographical or ethnic rather than a musical meaning (westernised, world, Chinese, Dominican, English, Asian, Indian, Pakistani, Arab, African, Irish, Scottish, Moroccan, Spanish, black, Caribbean, or Jamaican music) or followed a temporal logic (modern, 1950s, 1960s, 1970s or 1980s music). The truth is that the range of genres, subgenres and loose categories was broad, which gives an idea of the amount of symbolic work that adolescents leaving childhood must carry out in order to make sense of – to get familiar with – musical geographies.

We are using the notion of genre as a sociological rather than a formal concept, that is, understanding musical genres not as textual codifications but as expectations and conventions circulating between texts, subjects and the industry¹⁷. Since we will not pay attention to the formal features of music genres, we will include in the analysis all the loose categories combining musical, spatial, ethnic and other aspects of youth geographies. Through networks of personal relations, the media and going out, as well as through the consumption of records and other artefacts, young people linguistically and sensuously learn the definitions of, and boundaries between, genres, their expectations, their codes. Interviewees referred to the learning process of becoming familiar with music genres in the following terms: ‘[Lo he escuchado] en la radio, en la discoteca y todo eso. [Los nombres los he aprendido] de amigos, de amigos o por la tele’; ‘És que et vas introduint poc a poc, no és com una matèria que et donen aquí al cole que et diuen “ah, mira, això”...’.

The existence of a ‘word’ to distinguish one genre of music implies that those adolescents learning it are forced to think about it, and locate it in relation to other genres. In Barcelona, for instance, at the time of the fieldwork several media and clubs were introducing genre distinctions within dance music that were transforming the main division – which had prevailed during the 90s – between what were called ‘*màkina*’, on the one hand, and ‘techno’ (and ‘electronic music’), on the other. As seen in the Figure 4.2, these were general categories used by completely different and segregated groups. If you liked *màkina*, you did not like techno, and the other way around. One group used the term ‘*màkina*’ to describe all electronic music, ranging from commercial dance to obscure hardcore and gabber, associated with the *màkina* and *pelao* youth style, which as we will see often had working-class, Spanish-immigrant and anti-Catalan connotations. During the 1990s young people often distinguished between *hard-màkina* (*màkina dura*) and *soft-màkina* (*màkina suau*)¹⁸, that is, between its more radical and its more commercial versions. On the other hand, techno was used by a different group to describe electronic music perceived – by those who identified with this category, and in sharp contrast with *màkina* music – as more elaborated and artis-

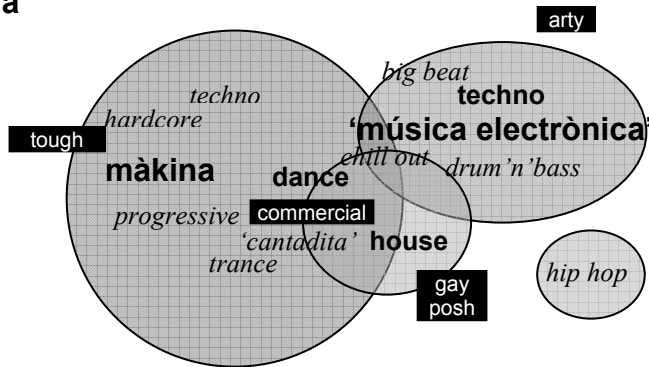
¹⁷ I am drawing here on Steve Neale’s use of it in *Genre* (London: British Film Institute, 1980: 19), as quoted by Keith Negus (1999: 28).

¹⁸ See Martínez & Pérez (1996) for a qualitative and quantitative research of these distinctions in Terrassa (Catalonia) during the mid-nineties.

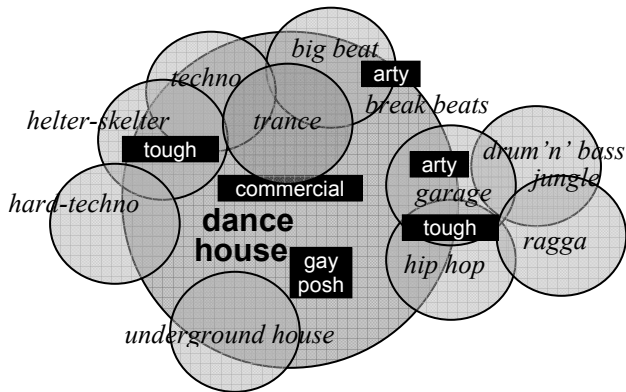
tically superior. This division did not exist in Birmingham in these terms, since the general categories were ‘house’ and ‘dance’ – often seen as equivalent – whereas techno was a minority specialised style¹⁹ and *màkina*, a Catalan category²⁰, did not exist. In Birmingham, moreover, those styles labelled as ‘black’ (drum’n’bass, jungle, garage, ragga, hip hop), in spite of being considered part of dance culture, were seen by the interviewees as a completely different ‘family’ of sounds.

Figure 4.2 Differences in the categorization of electronic music in Birmingham and Barcelona

Barcelona



Birmingham



The fact is that at the time of the fieldwork, both ‘*màkina*’ and ‘techno’ seemed to be losing ground as generic terms for electronic or dance music. The usage of

¹⁹ In personal conversations with youngsters from other parts of the world, like South-Africa, Germany and France, I was told that this use of ‘techno’ – instead of ‘house’ – as the generic category for electronic music was also present in their respective countries.

²⁰ See Oleaque (2004) for a journalistic account of the genealogy of the term and the music and scene it represents, originally in Valencia, where it was named ‘bakalao’, and later imported and transformed in Barcelona.

these categories was being transformed and many sub-genres like progressive, trance, hardcore, jumper, drum'n'bass, ambient, chill-out and many others were gaining importance. The distinction between the two different groups did not seem to be disappearing, but their segregation was probably a little less complete. In any case, the categories to refer to each of them – ‘techno’ and ‘*màkina*’ – were being modified and complexified. The group with an ‘arty’ discourse stopped using ‘techno’ as the generic term, and stuck to ‘electronic music’ alone. ‘Techno’ became, as in Birmingham, a specialised style, not a generic term, and was used to describe music which was liked by sectors of both the former ‘*màkina*’ and ‘techno’ groups. On the other hand, ‘*màkina*’ also seemed to be less used both as a generic term for electronic music – in this sense it was being replaced by ‘dance’ – and as a specific radical music genre – being replaced in this case by ‘progressive’ and ‘hardcore’. At the same time, a third important space within electronic music was being culturally produced around the ‘house’ category. This space was linked to ‘niceness’ – with both a commercial and an extravagant and transgressive edge – and occupied by ‘posh’ and ‘gay’ crowds, as well as by ‘fashion-conscious’ sectors of the working-class, and typified with the stylistic epithet ‘fashion’. This is naturally an extremely reductionist account of the complexity, aimed not at precisely describing these geographies but at understanding the dynamic character of music genre categories. This moment of change offered a privileged ethnographic opportunity, since many interviewees reflexively referred to their experience of it, like Juanma:

Juanma: Hace muy poco [que empecé a hablar de techno y otros estilos además de *màkina*]. Cuando me empecé a enterar de que era distinto y todo esto. (...) Empecé a escucharlo por la... La primera vez fue a los comentaristas de la radio, a esta gente, locutores... Escuchar mucho la música y entonces luego la distingues un poco. (...) Sí, un año, o año y medio... hace que los distingo.

Roberto’s words are illustrative of the ‘objectified’ and ‘reified’ experience young people had with genre categories. When he says that he began to ‘*enterarse*’ that ‘techno’ and *màkina* were different styles he is making clear how the circulation (through radio DJs) of the different terms changed his view of musical geographies. To develop this idea, we will basically focus on the case of *màkina*, a term used by many interviewees. As has been just stated, at the time of the fieldwork many young people still used ‘*màkina*’ as a generic term for electronic music, but many other subgenres had already appeared in their discourses: ‘Yo no entiendo mucho, yo *màkina* lo nombro todo...’; ‘Me parece que [house o dance] son diferentes tipos de *màkina*, no sé. Es que yo no estoy muy metido en estos temas’; ‘[Mi amigo DJ compra] de todo, o sea, compra, progressive, techno... en sí es *màkina* todo’. At the same time, however, the introduction of these subgenres made the meaning of ‘*màkina*’ more imprecise than in the past. In the following quote, Juanma, the boy quoted above, makes a linguistic balance to make himself understood, distinguishing between ‘commercial *màkina*’ and what he calls ‘*màkina*-

màkina (meaning ‘real’ *màkina*), and also referring to other subterms like hardcore, techno and house. Nevertheless, on the whole he kept *màkina* as the generic term:

Juanma: Sí. Sí, alguna, pero *màkina* tipo comercial, canciones de estas famosas, pero *màkina-màkina* no la escuchan.

Roger: Vale. ¿Porque tú lo que dices *house, techno...* también dirías: “Me gusta la *màkina*”? ¿O no? O sea, ¿es lo mismo?.

Juanma: A mí... Yo digo *màkina*. Yo no digo *techno, house*. Para mí todo es...

Roger: O sea, que si a tí te dicen: “¿Te gusta la *màkina*?” Tu dirás: “Sí”

Juanma: Sí. Bueno, pero si me dicen *màkina* y me están hablando de *hardcore*, no.

Roger: Ya.

Juanma: Yo escuchar una canción de *hardcore*, sí, pero escuchar muchas, no...

By contrast, other interviewees had the impression that ‘*màkina*’ was a category which was being lost. Almost all of them still used it, but they combined it with new terms that they perceived to be replacing ‘*màkina*’, like for instance ‘progressive’, ‘techno’, ‘hardcore’ and even ‘house’ – this last one, however, was generally seen as distant and even opposed to ‘*màkina*’ and its substitutes. The following quote is a good example of this perception of change:

Roger: O sea, ¿*màkina* la gente ya no lo llama *màkina*? ¿O se sigue llamando *màkina*?

Eli: Sí, yo muchas veces lo llamo *màkina*...

Rosa: La mayoría de la gente lo llama *hardcore*, ya.

Roger: ¿Sí? O sea, poca gente lo llama *màkina* ya.

Rosa: Poca gente... Porque los DJs ya que van allí ya no lo llaman eh... *màkina*. Lo llaman *hardcore* o lo llaman *techno-hardcore*.

Roger: *Techno-hardcore*, ¿Y *techno*, la música *techno* es diferente o...?

Rosa: La música *techno* del *hardcore*, la música *techno* es más discotequera, es más, mmm... Cogen canciones, por ejemplo... del Alejandro Sanz, que es un decir, y la... y la cambian y ponen otros ritmos.

Roger: ¿Eso sería *techno*?

Rosa: Sí.

Eli: Otros, otras melodías.

Rosa: Eso es *techno*, que se parece mucho al *house*.

The confusion about the limits, features and differences between the music genres is obvious, since the way each interviewee used these categories was different. Some used ‘*màkina*’ as a particular style different from ‘hardcore’, others linked it to ‘techno’ and others said that the new term for what they used to name ‘*màkina*’ was ‘progressive’. And almost all of them used ‘dance’ not as the generic term but as the category for the electronic music that was ‘sung’, ‘soft’ and ‘commercial’. This same definition was often used in relation to ‘house’, even though this often had connotations of ‘poshness’ or ‘homosexuality’ as well. If we pay attention not to the *màkina* group but to those young people whose taste in music would have been labelled as ‘techno’ five years before, we still appreciate the

importance of the division between ‘*màkina*’ and ‘techno’, but with the difference that ‘house’ has entered as a third relevant genre category (and not in the generic sense in which it was used in Birmingham). Joan, for instance, explained that when he started to listen to music, he used ‘techno’ as a generic term, and understood it as radically opposed to both *màkina* and ‘house’: ‘Clar. O sigui, jo sempre he tingut bastant clar el que era techno, el que era house, i lo que era *màkina*’. Jaume and Toni, from the same school, pointed out to the higher ‘artistic value’ of techno, and linked ‘house’ to a more commercial version of it:

Roger: Val, tu dius “*techno*” i tu en canvi dius ‘música electrònica’.

Jaume: O *techno*.

Roger: Que és que us agraden les dues coses o...?

Toni: És que, és el mateix. *Bueno*, clar que hi ha molts tipus i moltes variants.

Roger: Quines?

Toni: Què et diria jo, hi ha des del típic *techno-house*, que és així, com, com més dur, no?

Jaume: No, *techno-house* és *techno* i el *house* seria música electrònica però combinada amb... amb música comercial.

Toni: (...) El *techno* és com si diguéssim més...

Jaume: Més *serio*. (...) *Bueno*, més *serio* poder no és la paraula però..

Toni: No, menys comercial, o sigui, com si deguéssim és... no tant per fer ballar. I com si diguéssim... no sé, és una mica *currat*, és *currat*... (...)

Roger: I la *màkina* és un tipus de *techno*, o la *màkina* és a part?

Jaume: Tipus de *techno* es podria relacionar perquè, *bueno*, la música *màkina* també es fa amb taula de mesclés.

Roger: O sigui la música *màkina*...

Toni: *Bueno*, la música *màkina* és que bàsicament el que es fa amb la música *màkina* és... és com si diguéssim fer mixos.

Jaume: Posar la música *txumba* amb una cançó molt... sol ser...

Toni: Fan coses així, però amb el *techno* com si diguéssim és un treball... més acurat, es calcula una miqueta més bé, i és... Vull dir, les coses es van posar com si diguéssim amb ordre, totes amb ordre perquè quedin bé, ben quadrades totes elles i sonin quan han de sonar, exactament.

As in the others, this quote includes many contradictions, overlappings and imprecisions in young people’s accounts. With regard to electronic music, musical geographies were not clear at all. Every youngster, and group of youngsters, had their own mental map, and were trying to make sense of music categories in a confused mix of sounds and discourses. They verbalised the sudden appearance in radios, records and clubs of new genre categories: ‘Ya se está notando más porque ahora ya en los discos, o en los cedés lo pone, *progressive*, *house*, y ya están diferenciados, pero hace unos años era sólo *màkina*...’. In the face of this complex web of categories, some of them had – or claimed to have – a precise knowledge of genre boundaries, but others were rather confused by the diversity of labels and either showed a clearly tentative knowledge of them or accepted that they did not know the differences between them: ‘me parece’; ‘no lo sé’; ‘¡Es muy difícil

reconocerlos!'; 'A veces [sé distinguirlos], porque hay veces que digo "¿esto qué es?", no sé...'; 'No sé, sí, más o menos sí [que el *house* y el *techno* son diferentes]... Vamos...'; '*Progressive* no sé exactament'; 'O sea lo escuchado per no sé, no sé o cuando es *techno*, cuando es dance o lo que sea'; 'És que no sabria dir-te...'; 'És que hi ha tants estils que jo em faig bastants *lío*'. In several cases, interviewees claimed to 'practically' know the differences but were incapable of systematising them in words: '¿Sabes qué pasa? Que yo no sé distinguir entre las diferencias entre cada uno, pero que si los oigo sé cuál es cual, pero no sé como las diferencio'.

As mentioned above, clubs, radios and recordings were the main mediators of those categories (although networks of personal relations were decisive in young people's interpretation of media representations). One girl in the Catalan School explained that she realised differences between dance music genres when she bought compilation records: 'Te n'adones quan compres un recopilatori d'aquells que recopila, i posa doncs el primer CD dance i pop, el segon CD house, el tercer CD techno, i llavors doncs tu el vas escoltant i decideixes quin t'agrada més dels tres i a partir d'aquí doncs et vas encaminant...'. The terms through which they made sense of the differences between subgenres varied considerably, from those who just thought that 'O sea, más o menos es lo mismo todo', to those who distinguished between them in terms of the presence of vocals or the 'hardness' of the music ('A mi m'agrada més el *palo* dance i això, perquè no sé, no sé... (...) Sí, és com més... saps? Tens la música cantada i això és com més... Per mi és més ritme'; 'Home, sí, [la música del Chasis i del Pont Aeri són molt different.] Home, [el de Pont Aeri és] més dur, és més hardcore, més pum, pum, pum (...). En canvi Chasis és... Tenen les cançons més lletra, són diferents'). Others used more elaborated and systematic musical concepts ('El house és més així... discotequero. (...) Té bases més dels anys setanta... del tipus de música disco dels anys setanta. I... no sé, la màkina és més... espanyol, és més... techno, potser, no sé. Tampoc no en tinc molta idea'). The following quote, with two friends arguing about the real meaning of different categories, is illustrative of the confusion at the moment of the fieldwork:

Maria: A veure...

Susana: És més parlat, perquè el *house-house* en realitat és més sòlid...

Maria: No, no. És més cantat i més... més melòdic. Saps? És això...

Susana: És més típic d'estiu, que surten els Venga Boys...

Maria: Sí, *tipo* això però passat més ràpid, amb més revolucions, [*she la-la-las*], sí...

Susana: Acceleren el ritme.

Roger: I el *house*? Al *house* canten o no?

Maria: El house, el house canten però en realitat coses molt puntuals, a veure, no sé... I al cap d'una estona, "no sé què, no sé *quantos*", perquè clar, és que és una música molt... No sé, m'encanta. És que és posar-te molt dins la música i llavors començar a ballar, perquè a veure...

Susana: Però això és perquè tu t'identifiques molt amb aquesta música, perquè si tu t'identifiques igual amb un altra música et *fots* igual amb el paper, no importa que sigui *house* o màkina, o cap altra. El que importa és que et sentis identificat i et sentis a gust.

Roger: I dintre la màkina, quines diferències hi ha? Hi ha diferents tipus o...?

Susana: De màkina? Sí. O sigui... les més dures, i després les típiques cançons que surten...

Roger: I com ho diries, més dures, més toves, o...?

Susana: Sí, és que no sé... tampoc...

Roger: I el *techno*? És molt diferent al *house*?

Maria: Sí, és que mira, el *techno* com si diguéssim..

Susana: És màkina també.

Maria: No...

Susana: Home, s'assembla una mica..

Maria: No home no, que no, per favor! El *house*...

Susana: És el que més s'assembla...

Maria: No, mira, el *house*... Calla, calla! Que estic parlant jo! El *house vale*, el *house* és més... més amb el volum més baix. *Vale?* Que està la màkina que és més *chillón*, i llavors està el *house* que és més amb el volum més... tum, tum, tum tum tum... entre mig, entre mig...

Susana: Entre mig del *house* i la màkina jo penso que està el *techno*.

Maria: No, no, i llavors, llavors el *techno* és més sense el soroll de fons [*start making noises to resemble the music*]. Saps? *Tipo* això que se *te'n va la bola* però *mogollón*, saps? I clar, i ja pots sentir aquesta música, *pues se't posa molt endins* i llavors com que sóc molt paranoica doncs llavors a ballar...

Roger: (...) I al Flaix FM, una mica parlaven també de *progressive*, o *algo* així..

Maria: Sí, sí, *bueno*, jo... jo... No sé...

Susana: Veus, això és el *tipo* de música que encara no, no hem aconseguit identificar-la...

Roger: I el *trance*, heu sentit? El *trance*?

Maria: El *trance* és... és més maquinota a *pinión*, a *pinión*, a *pinión*, [*she makes noises*]. Escoltes dos segons i *et ratlles*, doncs això.

Roger: Més màkina?

Susana: Sí, més *rallona*.

Maria, when asked about the difficulty of distinguishing between genres, reflected about the learning process it required: 'És que és això, al principi costa un poquet, però després quan ja et vas acostumant... O sigui, jo sé perfectament si a un lloc m'estan posant *dance*, m'estan posant *house* o m'estan posant *techno*...'. She also explained how the radio helped her in this learning process: 'Sí, hi ha programes... A veure, Flaix FM, quan posen les cançons et diuen: "I ara una miqueta de *house*", "una miqueta de no sé què", "i ara *dance* comercial", i t'ho van dient... (...) I inconscientment ho vas *ficant*'.

The meaning of genre categories, nevertheless, must be understood in local and contextual terms, since the same labels can have different meanings depending on the country, the region or even the location within youth geographies. We have seen before how Roxana, the girl from Colombia who had arrived in Barcelona a few months before the fieldwork was carried out, had to learn that what back in Colombia she and her friends called 'trance' was known as '*màkina*' in Barcelona's youth geographies. A girl who spend her holidays in Jaén was also aware of the localised validity of musical geographies. She explained that whereas in Jaén 'hardcore' electronic music was unknown, they listened to '*breakbeat*, a style

that she had not heard in Barcelona ('vas a donde vayas en ningún sitio escucharás breakbeat').

Genre categories not only organised the sounds, but also the social meanings attached to – or mediated by – them. When young people learnt music genres, they also learnt their social connotations. When a female interviewee in Barcelona said that in posh neighbourhoods people probably liked 'dance' ('porque como es una zona de *pijos*...'), and when another one remarked that men liked the harder versions of *màkina* ('Normalmente les gusta más el pum-pum'), they were making explicit the social connotations of different musical genres. The fact is that genre categories and other social categories like 'posh', '*pijo*', '*kev*', '*cholo*', '*guarro*', '*grebo*', 'manly' or 'girly' were inextricably interlinked. In the first place, youth styles, or the categories young people use to identify 'types' of young people, are often based on particular music genres, like 'rockers', '*makineros*', 'rappers', '*garage heads*', 'goths', 'heavies' or 'punks'. There are some categories, however, which have a broader meaning that has more to do with location in social structures than with music. Even in these cases, the categories (like '*pijos*', '*kevs*' or '*cholos*') are generally linked to particular styles of music. In fact, all these categories and their link to musical genre categories were the basis upon which youth geographies were mapped out. A young person or an adult who could not understand and use these categories would not be able to make sense of what youth social space was about.

Needless to say, we could also analyse the same processes in Birmingham, where categories that were generally unknown in Barcelona, like r'n'b and garage, were central in the organisation of musical geographies. Electronic music was there generally known as 'dance' or 'house'. Erving, a boy in the Dual School, explained it with clarity: 'Dance is like... (...) the top of the group. Say you've got dance and then you've got all little subgroups that lead off that, you've got dance, trance, garage... they all follow up'. As happened in Barcelona, nevertheless, not all young people understood music categories in the same way: 'Well, house is more jump up and down kind of feel... Garage you can dance to it more because it's got a swing with it... And dance is basically what you hear in Ibiza...'. In Birmingham, 'black music' worked as a sort of generic term for a musical tradition that compressed those styles that were associated with Afro-Caribbean culture, that is, ska, reggae, ragga, drum'n'bass, jungle, rap and garage²¹. All these styles were seen as close to each other, even if it was true that they could rapidly modify their social connotation. Roughly speaking, we could explain the trajectory of drum'n'bass, for instance, as originally 'Afro-Caribbean' but then 'whitened' when crossing over, to later acquire a very rough edge when what was named the 'gangsta element' mixed with it, until this ended by undermining its popularity, at

²¹ According to Susan J. Smith (1997), in the USA 'ragtime' was, between 1890 and 1920, the first 'black' music to achieve widespread popularity. In spite of its success, or the later success of soul music, it was always thought of as somewhat apart from the mainstream, to the extent that it was often named 'race music' to distinguish it from mainstream white music – the term was later replaced by 'r'n'b'. Jazz and rap music are the less integrationist music of this tradition. The racialization of music will be later analysed in Chapter 7.

which point it went back to the underground, where it was kept alive mainly by predominantly white people. The trajectories were naturally not as simple as that, but this stereotyped account points out the mobile character of the connotations of music genres in Birmingham. At the same time the main meanings did not change, and every generation of young people that entered youth social space, rapidly learnt them. The following Asian boys, for instance, did not know many categories, and had a very imprecise notion of musical geographies, but knew them well enough to locate rap and garage as close to each other and opposed to classical music and rock:

Roger: And people who like garage also like rap?

Hamsa: Yeah.

Roger: And if they go together, what would be the opposite of them?

Hamsa: Classic... and rock.

The fact is that in Birmingham music categories had a broader circulation and a faster cycle of change. Every two or three years young people had the impression that a new wave of music replaced the old one, and this made young people more aware of different categories and their on-going evolution in terms of popularity.

Roger: When do you remember first hearing about garage?

Lyla: No, garage... garage has been for ages... just that now it's... It has been for a long time, and it was underdeveloped. It was, you know? No one was like...

Beth: But now it's everywhere... But at the end of the day...

Roger: When did you first hear about it? Six months, one, two, three years?

Lyla: First jungle was in... Well, jungle took hold of the garage, basically. Jungle has been there for years... Three years?

Beth: It's like jungle and garage, so jungle took over garage, and then garage took over... So now just that... garage.

Roger: Can you explain it again?

Beth: At the beginning it was jungle and garage... So garage has no beat, and jungle took over that, and once that was gone, then it's dance coming, *ini't?* And garage is still there, so everybody wants to listen to the dance, but then garage is going out, and come back to the garage...

Roger: What is dance?

Beth: ...

Lyla: It's like pop music...

Beth: Yeah... some... yeah...

Roger: Different from jungle?

Lyla: Yeah, because jungle it's like sound... fast sound... and like... Whilst garage is rap music, it's rapping... you have a sing in it, you can like mix it with like songs...

Beth: And r'n'b in it.

This experience of music genre categories as something to be learnt, as something that is 'out there', not only in conversations but also in radio programs, records, flyers and the music press, can also be found in relation to other genres

like, for instance, 'punk'. If we look at how 'punk' fans in Barcelona used the categories of music they liked, we will identify a very similar reality. Alfred, a charismatic leader who had introduced many of his classmates to this music, had a very systematic knowledge of the music genres he liked and played with his band:

Alfred: I toquem això, hardcore melòdic, perquè, *bueno*, és que el *hardcore*, és que el *hardcore* melòdic, hi ha diferents tipus de *hardcore*, hi ha el *hardcore Oi!* o *punk*, que és el primer que es va fer, que era molt ràpid, molt ràpid i cridant, el *hardcore* melòdic que és això però mesclat amb *pop*, a part que és molt melòdic, al *hardcore new school*, que és el *hardcore* que es fa que és més mesclat amb *metal* i té molts canvis de ritme i també és amb veu molt cri..., cridant però té molts canvis de ritme. (...) És el que ens agrada més a tot el grup, ens agrada també *lo* altre, però ens agrada a tots en comú. I després el *greencore*, que és *hardcore*, però és *lo* més bèstia de tot. És, és, soroll

His cognitive map of hardcore and punk music was completely different from that of a boy in the Periphery School who came to Offspring and Greenday through mainstream radio. When asked about how he would name the style of music of those bands, he answered with hesitations: 'Offspring... pues puede ser un poco punk, me parece, y Green Day pues... más o menos también. O no... no lo sé...'. In the case of hardcore and punk, since they were rarely played on the radio, music genre categories had to be learnt through friends or specialised record shops or the music press. As we will later analyse, in specialised minority record shops, genre categories tended to be much more detailed than in megastores:

Roger: Té una secció de *punk* la FNAC?

Jose: Sí. (...) La secció de *punk* està allà tota reduïda en un, en un requadre, a la FNAC, normalment anem a la tenda aquella que t'he dit abans [al carrer tallers].

Roger: I la tenda aquesta té diferents estils dintre del *punk*?

Jose and Dani: No.

Jose: *Bueno*, sí, sí.

Dani: Posa *punk*, *ska*, *hardcore*...

Jose: Sí, però, després *fica* allà, *fica Oi!* i el *ska*, després hi ha, entre tot no ho sé...

Dani: Bàsicament és una tenda molt gran que tenen roba i que és on comprem això, i llavors una banda [de la botiga] que posa *punk hardcore*, una... un altre lloc amb *Oi!* i *ska* i un altre amb *punk* espanyol.

As in the case of electronic music, young people not only gradually learnt the music genre categories but also their social connotations. Alfred, for instance, when asked whether those who listened to hardcore had a specific ideological orientation, answered 'Sí, això més als principis quan va començar el hardcore... (...) S'escoltava hardcore més per ideologia que no pas amb la música, però ara la ideologia i les idees que tens, tot això ha anat a la baixa i (...) per exemple al hardcore melòdic, que com si diguéssim és la part comercial del hardcore, ja importa més l'estètica i la música que no pas les ideologies'.

If we contextualise what we are seeing in the light of what we have seen earlier in this chapter, we will become aware that whereas music genre categories were strongly dependant on the labelling processes of the music press, records shops, radio stations and clubs, those youth styles linked to music genres *and* social categories were largely *subterranean* in relation to the media. To be sure, both mainstream and minority media often made an effort to include in their contents the 'existing' youth styles of the moment, but the fact is that young people developed them to a great extent separate from – or parallel to – media representations. These more general categories mapping out youth geographies were culturally produced and learnt through networks of personal relations, not from the media. The genre categories represented by the media were no doubt very relevant to young people (we have seen, for instance, how several interviewees in Barcelona were trying to make sense of the subgenres of electronic music played on Flaix FM), as is the case with broadcast music and the commodified materials related to music in general. However, many of the more meaningful social categories marking social distances and proximities – like 'kev', 'quillo', 'posh', 'pijo', and so on – were not represented in the media. When minority media sometimes gave them a higher visibility, particularly in the case of spectacular youth subcultures, the representations they made were generally considered 'misrepresentations' by young people. Moreover, alongside narrower categories directly linked to music genres like 'punk', 'makinero', 'rocker' or 'heavy', the broader categories like 'cholo', 'catalufo' or the ones mentioned above only occasionally appeared in the media. They were culturally produced, transmitted and negotiated exclusively in informal personal relations.

We are getting to a very important point in our work: musical and youth geographies are inherently produced through the use of commodified artefacts and media representations, but a significant part of their more central meanings are produced in informal personal interactions and transmitted not through the media or from adults to children, but from older to younger youngsters in direct personal relations. This is an important observation, because it implies that whereas musical and youth geographies are inherently dependant on commodified materials, they are also more autonomous from the media and advertising than common wisdom tends to imply. We will thus need to pay attention to both aspects. On the one hand, in Chapter 5, we will analyse the logic of the economics of music, that is, the way commodities were being produced and made available to young people in Birmingham and Barcelona. On the other hand, in Chapter 6, 7 and 8, we will closely discuss the cultural production of musical and youth geographies through young people's networks of personal relations.

5. THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF MUSICAL GEOGRAPHIES

The commodified 'carriers' of music traditions need people and institutions producing and selling them, that is, what we will broadly term the 'music industry' – understood as the industry that supplies music and musical experiences to young people, that is, record companies, records shops, clubs, bars, concert venues, music press, radio and TV stations, among other businesses. The way the music industry decides the music that will be supplied and actually supplies it is highly relevant to the understanding of the cultural production of musical geographies. The question of how CDs, radio and TV programmes, music magazines, concerts and club nights are 'made', 'marketed' and 'distributed' to young people is thus a relevant one in the context of this thesis. The fact that individuals always do symbolic work upon the forms around them, and that subterranean meanings are transmitted through direct personal relations, must not stop us from seeing the important power of the cultural industries in the process of meaning-making. Without the cultural industry, most of these carriers of music traditions would not even exist, at least as we know them, so it is important to ask why they produce some of them and not others, and how they organise the way they are distributed to the young consumers. Musical geographies cannot be correctly understood without paying attention to their political economy, because like many aspects of today's common culture, musical and youth geographies are strongly mediated by commodities, and commodities are subject to the logic of the market and profit-making.

We have already mentioned, in Chapter 1, the importance of the way that the music industry organises its attempt to make a profit out of young people, and pointed to the work of Negus (2002 [1996]; 1999), Hennion (2002 [1993]), Peterson & Anand (2004) and Chatterton & Hollands (2003) as examples showing the way to an approach that pays attention to both the political economy of youth cultures and the creative role of young people in appropriating and culturally producing symbolic forms. Youth cultures research has tended to focus on the 'resistant' or at least 'creative' use of commodities by young people, and neglected the political economy that strongly influences this use. The few approaches dealing with the political economy of popular music have tended to form a different and disconnected tradition from mainstream research on youth cultures and popular music. This means that in the field of youth cultures research, the study of the political economy of youth cultures has been regarded as an old-fashioned and elitist critical perspective which, as a result of its prejudices towards popular culture, only sees in it 'inauthenticity' and 'manipulation'. My argument, as well as that of those previously quoted, is that although we can and must criticise those views that only focus on the manipulation of the 'masses' by the media, advertising and big corporations, this should not deter us from critically analysing the ways the media and the political economy influence our cultural relations. Whereas the

widespread criticisms of Adorno's cultural industry approach as excessively mechanistic and even culturally snobbish are to a great extent appropriate, they become misleading when they overlook his important critical insights into the (then) emerging logic of contemporary forms of cultural relations.

The aim of the following pages, based on a partial fieldwork among those taking decisions on behalf of the music industry in both Birmingham and Barcelona is – without forgetting the active role of young people – to bring to the surface the decisive importance of the political economy of music in the process of cultural production of musical and youth geographies. And this implies analysing both the economic logic of decision-making and also its social and political implications in the cultural production of musical and youth geographies.

Mainstream and underground

In the preceding chapter, *Carriers of musical traditions and commodities*, we have repeatedly referred to the tension between 'commercial' and 'anti-commercial' stances, to the extent that we have centred our analysis of young people's mediascape on the basis of this opposition. Nevertheless, we have not made explicit what we understand by 'commercial' and 'anti-commercial', so we will now spend some time making it clear. We will not make an essentialist definition of the terms. On the contrary, we will be suspicious of any claim of direct correspondence between 'commercial' and 'anti-commercial' stances and actual *practices*, since we will consider them not sociological concepts but typifications used by young people and those working in the music industry not only to orient their practices but also to make sense of musical and youth geographies and their place in them, as well as to present themselves vis-à-vis others. In this section of the present chapter we will scrutinise how the commercial/anti-commercial divide is articulated from the point of view of the political economy, whereas in the following chapters we will focus on its role in young people's everyday cultural production of musical and youth geographies.

First of all, we will point out two aspects that we must bear in mind before we continue. The first is that practically all popular music is by definition subject to commodification – to forming part of 'commerce' – in one sense or another. Even the more alternative spaces of popular music are to some extent dependant on the commodified character of the musical form, not only because any tradition within contemporary popular music is 'carried' and 'mediated' by commodities (minority tastes in music need records, record labels, concerts, clubs and media spaces to be actualised and maintained), but also because any location within musical geographies is also dependant on the co-ordinates drawn by the most visible and 'commercial' music forms (if you do not have a commercial centre *against which* to define yourself, you can hardly have an 'anti-commercial' attitude). As seen in the previous chapter, the power of mainstream media is its visibility: exposure is synonymous with social resonance. At the same time, however, there are subterranean networks where cultural meanings implying strong 'anti-commercial' attitudes are transmitted from generation to generation. In both cases, there are cultural indus-

tries, however small and 'independent', trying to make a profit – or at least earn a living – out of young people.

The second aspect we must bear in mind is that in popular music the border between consumption and production is not clear. Many of those working in the music industry with both anti-commercial and commercial stances, explained their transition from consumers to 'producers' – not always in the sense of music-making but of making music available, as promoters or managers. There are no big steps from listening to music to making tapes, and from there to DJing at a friend's party and then in a bar, or perhaps organising and promoting with a few friends who DJ a bar night and then a club night and then perhaps getting to know people and writing in a music magazine and later who knows, perhaps being part of the music industry. And there are no huge steps from clubbing to working in a small club collecting glasses, and then being behind the bar, and then being in charge of the light in the cabin, and then DJing on some nights, and then getting a well-paid job in a bigger club. And there are no high barriers from running a fanzine with a few friends and then organising a few parties in a bar to promote it, and then being allowed to DJ a few minutes in the bar and then starting to DJ in other bars and clubs. All these are real examples provided by interviewees of both cities. Particularly in the so-called 'underground' scenes within popular music, professional and amateur contributions are combined to keep them alive: musicians, producers and promoters that are taking their first steps in their entrepreneurial careers represent an important amount of the human resources of the underground music industry (as John, one of the interviewees, put it, 'What happens in England is that this freelance promotion's become a non-paid job for a lot of people, which I don't think is fair...').

Making money and pushing music forward

When I say that our understanding of commercial and anti-commercial stances does not see them as essentialist realities, but as typifications used by young people and those working in the music industry to orient their practices and also to make sense of musical and youth geographies, their location within them and their presentation vis-à-vis others, I am arguing that we will understand them as *attitudes towards what is perceived* as the 'commercial centre'. In other words, the distinction between 'commercial' and 'anti-commercial', or between mainstream and underground, is better understood if we focus on the social meanings surrounding the music than on the music itself. I am not only arguing that 'commerciality' cannot be measured in terms of the musical form (since there are many examples of 'underground' songs which have become 'commercial'), but also that 'commerciality' can not be measured in terms of commercial success either, since there are failed businesses that will be seen as 'commercial' initiatives and there are very profitable businesses which are seen as 'underground'. An artist, a record label or a club can be making a lot of money or be extremely popular and be seen as credible and, to a some extent, pushing things forward, or the other way around: another artist, record label or club might not be making any money

but be seen as 'selling out' or 'going commercial'. As pointed out by Negus (2002 [1996]: 43), many independent companies make records not because of a commitment to particular musical sounds or artistic beliefs, but due to their attempt to make money within the system.

The fact is, therefore, that there is a complex equilibrium in the way those working in the music industry – as well as young people consuming their products, as we will see later – make sense of 'commerciality' and its derived concepts like 'sales', 'attendance numbers', 'being credible', 'pushing it', 'selling out', or 'going commercial'. In English, the matter is made more complex by the expression – non-existent in either Catalan or Spanish – 'crossing over': sometimes it could be seen as synonymous with 'going commercial' but sometimes with underground success in 'making it'¹. English pop history, full of 'credible' and 'previously underground' sounds that have 'made the charts', apparently shows a more fluid and complex link between the underground and the mainstream than is the case in Catalonia². The question we will attempt to solve, therefore, is not so much what is commercial and what is underground or alternative, but *how those working in the music industry make sense of these concepts*³ in their everyday activities.

In both Birmingham and Barcelona, those in the music industry often referred to the commercial, mainstream, majority, minority, specialised, independent, or underground character of the music or experiences they provided. In Birmingham, for instance, not only artists or clubs but whole music categories or genres were seen as 'becoming commercial' or 'going back underground'. Two underground night promoters, for instance, identified house music as having become commercial. One of them was Paul, who promoted – and DJed in – a hip hop night at a venue that claimed to programme underground music. He explained as follows the difficulty in distinguishing between commercial and 'credible' house music:

Paul: I mean... probably the house... I'll say this quite carefully. I think the house scene is probably... quite easily the biggest in terms of the num... I mean, you know? We are really... probably the only hip hop night and then there's a few sort of big beat orientated nights playing similar stuff, whereas house nights you can

¹ Hesmondhalgh (1998), for instance, refers to the contradictory attitudes towards popularity within the independent record companies: 'While some sections of a 'subcultural' music believe that they should be hard in the mainstream, others argue that the music's force comes from its resistance to co-optation. But many audiences and producers believe both at the same time' (1998: 240).

² As pointed out by Simon Frith (1996), it is also important to note that we cannot simply identify market success and popularity: often we buy something and we get disappointed; and some market failures have been very popular and influential, like the Velvet Underground. In the 60s, 'the soundtrack of *The Sound of Music* topped the British album charts for more weeks than the Beatles', and in the 70s 'punk records sold far less than Elton John LPs' (ibid.: 15-16).

³ See Negus *Popular Music in Theory* (2002 [1996]) for a discussion of the academic perspectives on the supposed conflict between commerce and creativity, which from his point of view would be better understood as a dispute about what is creative and what is to be made commercial. Hesmondhalgh (1998) is also sceptical about what he calls 'the ideology of independence', although he acknowledges that it 'can serve to limit the power of the major entertainment corporations' (1998: 246).

count them by hands, you know? There's lots. But having said that, the crossover between house music and mainstream commercial chart music has become so blurred, that like... I think that house it's the mainstream now. It's very sad, you know? Because I think that there's a lot of quality house music that goes on, but I don't think there's a great deal of people who pays attention to it anymore.

Roger: No? House is going down then?

Paul: Well... there's a lot... There's quite a few promoters of house in Birmingham, who have been into it for years and years, and who have a genuine passion for music, but I think what they find more and more... I mean, I don't have a huge connection with that kind of scene, so everything I will say it's based on the few people I do know... but those I do know, they kind of feel... Well "I love this music, and you know? I've always loved it, and I want to put on quality house music". But on the whole the crowd they attract is fairly mainstream... And I think they don't really feel fully...

Roger: Because I don't get yet which kind of crowd house music has...

Paul: Well, as far as I understand, house music sort of scene, well... In Birmingham particularly, [house music] kind of had its peak three or four years ago, when it was kind of still perceived as fairly underground but had a big popularity, if you know what I mean. But from then onwards it's kind of got more and more commercialised, which is kind of indicated by the number of house music which is in the charts and that sort of thing.

Tom, the second promoter of underground nights discussing the evolution of house music to a 'commercial' status, was just starting to promote a drum'n'bass night. He considered house music to be still respected, but 'turning to a big commercial enterprise' and thus avoided by those *who really liked music* (what Paul calls 'a genuine passion for music'). Both examples point to the analytical distinction we will use to conceptualise the difference between the 'underground' anti-commercial and the 'mainstream' commercial music industries: whereas what is seen as the 'mainstream commercial' music industry seeks primarily – or preferably – to make as much money as possible out of music, 'underground' music has as its basic – or at least inescapable – aim to 'push things forward', that is, to promote (what is perceived as) good and generally new music. Paul provided a good illustration of this attitude:

Paul: There's hip hop and rap... kind of fairly... kind of commercial sense, which is massively popular. But then the hip hop we play is quite underground, the more independent labels, the more sort of slightly Leftfield kind of sound. And... you know? It's not... For example, rap singles sell millions and millions of copies in the States, but yet the kind of music that we play, some of which comes from the States, Saint Antonio... it's almost like two different journeys, there's the mainstream pop-orientated-hip-hop, and also kind of formerly underground artists that crossed over into the mainstream, which like sell a huge amount of records, which isn't really the kind of sound we are pushing really. We are kind of more interested in the independent kind of stuff.

Roger: But would you like to be massive, or not? Or you prefer to remain underground?

Paul: I think if you can stay underground and sell a lot of records that's brilliant, you know? But I don't think it really happens.

Roger: And then there's not a lot of communication between these communities?

Paul: Yeah, I mean, from time to time you get the people come down and saying "why aren't you playing this?" and "why aren't you playing that?", and they kind of ask him for... usually for the kind of artists that were formerly seen as underground but kind of crossed over to mainstream, and they sort of say, you know, "we wanna sort of push things a little bit, you know?".

As in the case of young people, this distinction does not have clear limits and can often be more ideological than analytically accurate, but as we will see it will prove useful in differentiating between different logics of decision-making that must be seen as 'ideal poles' of what in fact is a diffuse continuum. It is difficult to know the extent to which interviewees were sincere or accurate in their statements, but it was obvious that certain sectors of the music industry – those closer to the 'underground' or 'alternative' pole – were highly concerned about the music they provided, even when acknowledging the importance of making money out of it⁴. Although they talked about the need to make money to make the music viable, they were less disposed to adjust the music to the majority taste:

Guillem: Però *bueno*, és la caixa *lo* que decidirà si segueix aquest local en peu o no, llavors és important. I en general els propietaris estan... Donen confiança als qui promouen la sala però sempre estan una mica així, "hòstia, que no se'ls *hi vagi massa l'olla* perquè segons com...". És important la música i la *moguda* que hi ha, perquè es pot fer buidar o omplir una sala. Llavors és un tema important i nosaltres som conscients que juguem amb això quan treballem, no? Tant amb l'audiovisual com pel que fa a DJs. Tenim uns límits també. Si ens diuen "Aquí música comercial", *pues* no, que punxi un altre. M'entens? O que t'ho munti un altre.

It is clear, therefore, that those who produce more or less underground music are also responsive to their audiences. The need to make the music viable – and this means at least breaking even ('és la caixa que decidirà si segueix aquest local en peu o no') – means that the negotiation exists, but with the significant difference that it has strong musical limits that can not be crossed, a 'no-go territory'. The stronger the underground or anti-commercial stance, the stronger these limits will be. In general, however, there is a wide scope for negotiation. DJ Fun, who has worked in several alternative clubs in Barcelona, discusses this as follows:

DJ Fun: [*smiling*] És un gran tema de discussió i jo crec que és trobar l'equilibri, no? I jo també he tingut èpoques d'anar de super *guais*, d'anar en plan de "Jo *fico* les meves novetats, *fico lo* que a mi m'agrada i si el públic no ho coneix que els *donin pel*

⁴ There were other positions that were not based on the underground/commercial distinction but in the profit-making/community-engaged one, like David, from an organisation carrying out community music projects, who stated that if he had wanted, he could have been rich at the time of the interview, but that he had preferred to spend a lot of time involved with his community.

cul, saps?” Vull dir, a mi m’és igual. O sigui, jo *lo* que vull és *ficar lo* meu i crear i innovar a la pista.

Roger: I quan fas això és més difícil que et funcioni a la pista o no?

DJ Fun: És més difícil.

Roger: Depèn del públic, també no?

DJ Fun: Clar. Depèn del públic i del local. I [hi ha] altres èpoques que dius *bueno...* “Vaig a... em venc una mica i vaig a fer content al públic i realment a posar-los *lo* que ells volen sentir i escoltar”. Però això tampoc és perquè... Entre aquest públic potser hi ha un petit tant per cent que van a aquell local perquè sap que escoltarà novetats, coses que ell no tindrà o que no haurà vist a les botigues o a la ràdio o on sigui. Llavors és trobar una mica el punt, no? O sigui dins d’una línia...

He points to the fact that in more or less underground and alternative scenes there is a part of the audience that *expects to listen to new things*. It might be the case, therefore, that in some contexts, playing underground records can be the key to be commercially viable – as long as there is a large enough crowd expecting such records. Consequently, we are talking not so much about heroic music makers or entrepreneurs giving up the chance to make money or earn a living, but rather as small communities with different grounded aesthetics making it possible to make money or earn a living out of ‘non-commercial’ music. The opposite reality was explained by a commercial dance DJ who could not play all the music he liked because when he did the crowd left the dance floor. However, he knew and had experienced clubs where things were different: ‘El Fibra Òptica tenia un públic ja predisposat, no? Que ja estava *al loro* de la música que *tenia que vindre*. (...) Aquí és diferent’. When there is a crowd that not only expects but also demands underground records, it is naturally easier to combine the goals of ‘making a profit’ and ‘pushing things forward’.

Within the limits imposed by the need to ‘be profitable’, each club develops its non-strictly economic and often implicit musical expectations and criteria for recognition. Innovation within these limits – even when they are underground expectations – can be equally risky. Even in underground businesses, DJs must adjust to the expectations of their audience to some extent. Nevertheless, in the case of those businesses with an ‘anti-commercial’ or ‘alternative’ stance, where the music is supposed to be important enough not to be completely subordinated to the money it can make, those who are taking the decisions will more often talk about music not as a simple ‘means’ to make money, but as an expressive aspect of what they do. It is in these cases when the claim that ‘there is a line to be drawn’ (in relation to adjusting to the demands of the audience) will be more present in their discourses about the music. This is the case of Mark, promoter and DJ of an indie night:

Roger: And do you see that some tracks you play... people don't like and you need to change them? How do you decide what you play?

Mark: Mmm.. I mean there's always gonna be people on there that don't really like what you're doing... and... and if that's the case... we'll take that into consideration, and if is... you know, if there's a lot of people that are asking for a certain thing that we don't particularly like we might think about including it, but

only if still fits in what we try to do, because there's bands like Offspring and people like that that we... I just don't like it at all. But you're gonna get people coming to our club who are into bands like that, a bit more rocky than what we wanna be doing, and because I really don't like... you know... There's a line to be drawn and I... these bands... If they're really determined to hear those bands they can go somewhere else. What we're doing is working... so we don't need... too much... We need to believe in what we are doing, stick to that... (...) We do drop in quite a lot of things that people don't know and it still works, because we work that sort of dancy element, they're already dancing and feeling the beat, and they trust us, now, I think, which is very good.

Roger: Then you're pushing a little bit?

Mark: Yes, because I love being able to push new music, a record that I really think is good... I'll play it big time if I think it's gonna work...

Roger: Then is a combination of commercial dancy thing... not commercial but things that people already know...

Mark: Yes, I mean, you know? I don't know how many times we play a Stone Roses song in our club, you know? It's a regular tune that we'll get.

In the case of those businesses closer to the commercial pole of the music industry, DJs and promoters equally declared sometimes that 'there's a line to be drawn', but not because of the goal to push things forward or develop the music they like but because they wanted to orient what they played to a specific segment of their potential customers. On the commercial side, music is seen as a means to making a profit, without any – or with a secondary – expressive or artistic pretension. This does not mean that creativity and artistic pretension are absent, but they are explicitly subordinated to profit. A good archetypical example of this attitude is provided by James, the manager of a big commercial club in Birmingham:

James: There's only really... half a dozen... you know? [There's only] five or six types of [music] policy which will attract a wide range of audience. Smaller clubs... (...) have been in the past slightly more specialised early in the week. So if you only have a 6 or 7 hundred capacity club you can put on a music policy which may have a more specialist following. Because you don't need to find 2 or 3 thousand, you only need to find 4 or 5 hundred. But it's different in a place like this, you need to be quite sure that these people will find an appeal, or certainly when they arrive they don't find it so widely anti their taste. If they don't like it, they won't come back.

When profit is the primary – or even only – goal, 'commercial' and 'chart' music are generally seen as the best way to achieve it, particularly if you need large numbers of customers to be profitable. 'Commercial' music is by definition music liked by most people, so if you focus on 'commercial' music you have a wider public from which to attract customers. Artistic creativity is then downplayed in the sense that it is popularity, not the music criteria, that is the determining factor. In this context, selling and playing music are seen as crafts, not as expressive or artistic activities. All interviewed record shop managers, for instance, had to choose between stocking the music they or their workers liked or believed was

good and the music they knew was going to sell and make more profit. All commercial radio stations had the commercial pressure to basically play the music that was more successful. (When they tried songs that were not accepted by the audience, they just dropped them). The same happened in mainstream commercial clubs, where DJs were seen as craftsmen – a very few of them were women – rather than artists. James, the manager of the big commercial club quoted above, explained that he saw a DJ as someone skilled at certain things, and that he would hire him ‘for his personality, his drive, his entertainment understanding rather than his musical understanding’. He justified it in the following terms: ‘Because I can tell him what music to play, but I want him to present it well’.

These two poles – ‘making profit’ and ‘pushing things forward’ – are, as mentioned above, poles of what in fact tends to be a continuum in which those who push things forward are also careful to make money, or at least to break even, and those who want to make money also care for the music in one sense or another, even if it is just to project a ‘credible’ image to their customers. Mainstream commercial radio stations, for instance, ran specialised minority programs on the periphery of their schedules. Big commercial music stores often stocked specialised music, even if it was not profitable to have it occupying the space of other records that could sell more. Mainstream commercial clubs had also – at least partially – specialised nights. We can illustrate it with three examples. First, a chain of record megastores in Barcelona, which even if it was clearly profit-oriented and commercial, tried to be perceived as having a specialised edge in relation to other megastores. The assistants knew the area of music where they worked, and combined their main focus on sales figures with a margin, however small, for ‘pushing things forward’. Francisco and Albert, assistants in one of the megastores in Barcelona, put it as follows:

Francisco: En principio lo que intentamos es dar una imagen de especialista.

Albert: Això és filosofia de [l’empresa].

Francisco: Es la filosofía. Lo que pasa es que bueno con el tiempo parece ser que se tiende un poco a ser un poco más comerciales y dedicarse directamente a lo que son las ventas masivas.

Roger: Per què la [Oficina] Central no deixa? O sigui vol més maximització, o sigui com...

Francisco: Sí, nos piden mejores resultados, márgenes más altos y tienen mejores resultados desde luego. Lo que pasa es que intentamos disimular un poco e intentamos dar la imagen de especialistas. Es un poco un tira y afloja.

Albert: No, però nosaltres sí intentem... Està clar que quan surt una novetat gran doncs encara que sigui comercial l’exposem bé i la posem la primera perquè també ens agrada vendre carretades com als altres, però intentem tenir un fons de catàleg prou bo per diferenciar-nos d’altres grans llocs...

Even though they saw their shop as a commercial one, they felt that they had some autonomy to ‘push things forward’: ‘Jo sempre faig apostes per artistes que no estiguin molt coneguts, i potenciar això, no? Perquè d’alguna manera, el client

se'n porta un *disco* que no està anunciat a cap revista ni mitjà de comunicació i el *tio* està contentíssim... Aquest rotllo, no? La teva inquietud perquè la gent s'emporti a casa coses que no estan anunciades'. Another example of this tension between commerciality and pushing things forward is offered by another big club in Birmingham, which, although it was clearly commercial and hosted the star English DJs, was marketed and generally seen as being more 'credible' than other mainstream commercial clubs:

Arthur: [The music we play is] house, trance, a bit of techno-house... (...) Yes. We are not underground, in the sense that we won't play drum 'n' bass, for instance, but we are not as commercial as the Dome. We are in between, we have a balance. We want to make money, and therefore we don't play underground music, that would narrow our audience, but we want to be seen as a glamorous club as well.

Because the club is 'in between' – neither underground nor 'as commercial as The Dome'⁵ – the managers would not tell the DJs what to play, although they will chat with them about the crowd to make sure they have an approximate idea of the type of people on the dancefloor: 'We won't tell them which tunes to play, of course, but we talk about them about the people that come, what they like and so on'. The third and final illustration is provided by Alex, manager of a bar in the most commercial street in Birmingham, Broad Street, which also tried to position itself as being a partially commercial and partially specialised venue. In this case, they did so by hiring popular radio DJs and playing tunes before they were released:

Alex: [Our customers] get... whether they know it or not... they get to hear new music before it becomes mainstream, and I think that's good. They may not remember where they had heard it first, but I think it's quite important.

When explaining the different nights they have during the week, she distinguished between the more specialised and the more commercial ones: 'On Monday and Tuesday... (...) the music tends to be a little bit more commercial, a little bit more mainstream'. The fact is that even if all DJs were sensitive to the dance floor when choosing the music they played, they provided a good illustration of the range of different negotiations of the tension between an 'arty' stance with a 'strong line that would not be crossed' and a 'craftsman' willingness to adjust to the customers' demands. This willingness can be illustrated by the DJ of a commercial dance club in Barcelona who was unable to play the music he most liked, 'non-commercial' house music:

DJ Fiesta: El que passa que jo el *house* que *fico* és el *house* comercial que... És el que comentàvem abans, és el que sent la gent per la ràdio, no? Al Flaix, als 40

⁵ The Dome II was a big club in Birmingham that many interviewees identified as the paradigm of commerciality.

Principales... A mi m'agrada més una mica més radical, més *raro*, més sons, més paranoic, potser amb una paraula.

Roger: I això al tipus de públic li costa...

DJ Fiesta: Sí. No ni ha gaire d'aquest públic. (...)

Roger: I a les sessions que tu *et fots* també... Dius que normalment les coses que poses tu més d'importació o el que sigui *no entren*, però n'hi ha algunes que sí que *t'entren* i algunes que no? O bàsicament acabes posant tot del que ja sona per la ràdio...

DJ Fiesta: Sí, acabo *ficant* tot. Quan m'arriba alguna d'aquestes cançons les *fico* pel mig, però ja et dic...

Roger: I algunes sí que et funcionen?

DJ Fiesta: Acostumen a no funcionar, no? Per això sempre les *fico* quan crec que és el moment que més gent tinc. Perquè es noti menys. Perquè si *fiques* aquesta cançó que no has *ficat* mai en un moment que no hi ha gent ja *cagada la hemos*. Si la *fiques* en el moment que tens la pista plena, tu notes que a la gent no li està agradant, però clar, al tenir la pista plena costa que se't buidi. Són *trucos* que tenim nosaltres, no? Per fer les proves... I quan has fet aquesta prova tres o quatre vegades, de vegades la gent accepta la cançó i comença a ballar-la i de vegades dius: "Este disco no lo pongo más".

It is clear, therefore, that even if interviewees in the music industry clearly showed different attitudes in relation to the tension between 'making money' and 'pushing music forward', there were many intermediate positions that must be taken into account. The music could only be pushed forward as long as there was a crowd to make it profitable. We must bear in mind, moreover, that many places that were labelled as 'alternative' or even 'underground', were not necessarily pushing things forward but repeating an already known formula – even if it was a non-commercial one – that allowed them to make money. In spite of this difficulty in clearly distinguishing the two stances – 'making money' and 'pushing the music' – the truth is that the music industry and those working in it tended to recognise different initiatives on the basis of their commercial/underground attitude. Pere, from a dance radio station, shows in the following quote how far the cleavage between arty anti-commercial stances and mainstream commercial ones could go:

Pere: Hi ha com un submón que aquí nosaltres anomenem d'il·luminats, i és com una ... El famós Sónar, no? El Sónar va d'un pal, però va d'un pal, no és que ho sigui. Una cosa és anar-hi i una altra ser-ho. Nosaltres no ens agrada anar del que no som. Sí que podríem anar d'elitistes i no sé què, i posar el mateix i vendre la moto. Al Sónar la mateixa gent que ve a [la nostra festa anual] se'n va al Sónar, m'entens? I li tiren les *valles* al terra. I te'n vas al Sónar i veus al David Morales posant les cançons que sonen a [la nostra ràdio]. Ara, que aquella gent es pensin que són no sé què i tal, *bueno!* També quan els hi parles diuen "No, no, és que jo faig discos no per vendre"... Home, llavors perquè els fas? Fes-te'l a casa i te'l guardes i te l'escoltes tu. El que passa que això són excuses. O sigui quan un fa un disc i el vol editar, hòstia ho vol perquè li agradi a la gent i aquesta mania de pensar "És que la gent no en té ni puta idea"... Això és una equivocació. Escolta, la gent escull *lo* que li

agrada. I és cert que hi ha coses que costa que entrin i que a *lo* millor estan ben fetes, però necessiten un procés, però el que no pots anar és [dient]: “*Hosti*, com ara això li agrada a tothom, això és una merda, perquè és clar, això és comercial”. I abans que no li agradava... que no li agradava a ningú, “Ep! Això era de puta mare”. *Tio*, a mi és que això em posa molt nerviós. (...) I *bueno*, és trist, no sé. I és el que et dic. Els números u són números u per cinc mil raons, perquè es posa a la ràdio, perquè la gent paga, per *lo* que vulguis, però en definitiva és perquè enganxen, m’entens? I si la Macarena té el rècord de setmanes número u als Estats Units, *tio*, doncs jo que vols que et digui? *Pues* que li agradava a la gent, m’entens?

His depiction of the two different crowds of electronic music in Barcelona is illustrative of what we are discussing, as it is his rejection of many taken-for-granted beliefs about the commercial/underground divide, like for instance the pretension that underground artists make music just for the sake of music, or the assumption that commercial music cannot be good music. The radical separation between commercial and underground music, even if pointing to an important difference in the way the music is produced, often becomes an essentialist belief that hides more than it shows.

Maximisation of profit and the profits of the underground

The question is how different businesses or entrepreneurial initiatives dealt with the need to make a profit out of what they offered to young people. Let us start with those businesses with large audiences or numbers of consumers which are clearly focused on making money. We have seen above how James, the manager of a big commercial club, explained the difference between a club with a capacity of 600 or 700 from another that needed 2,000 or 3,000 customers to make a profit. With a small club, he claimed, it was easier to focus on specialised styles, since you just had to attract a smaller section of young people. If you have a 2,000 capacity club, he said, you only have ‘five or six types of [music] policy which will attract a wide range of audience’. His choice was to play the more commercial music, liked – or at least not strongly disliked – by a broad section of young people. To this end, his policy was to play only chart music. A new style could be played in his club provided it was in the charts. When asked about whether he played rap music, for instance, he replied as follows:

James: On the Saturday night and a Thursday night, and to a little extent on the Monday, there would be some r'n'b type of rap, you know? It won't be much more than Lauryn Hill type of approach, you know? Will Smith and people like that. It's not heavy. It's big but still needs to reflect the charts... you know? And on a Saturday, on a Monday, you put the radio, BRMB or Radio1 on, and the records we were playing will fit with Radio1.

In big commercial clubs, even if they were somewhat specialised, managers would often talk with DJs to recommend or negotiate the music they played. The more specialised the music was, the less influence they had on DJs other than to

stop hiring them. In the following quote Adam, the manager of a commercial house club in Birmingham, explained the difference between his more commercial and more specialised nights:

Adam: Mmm... The Saturday it's harder to tell the DJs what I want them to play, because on the Saturday we have bigger name DJs, and if I go to them and I say to him that I think it's too hard, that I think I should be more uplifting, then they mostly spit at me and leave... because they think they know better because they've been DJing for a long time and have a credible name that is supposed to attract people. On the Friday, we have our own resident DJs so it's easier... you know? I can go and say "it's too hard", or "it needs to be speeded up".

The quote perfectly reflects the difference between considering DJs as craftsmen or as artists. His more clearly commercial nights were filled by what he described as 're-mixed... A lot of remixed chart stuff, whereas his specialised ones included less mainstream tunes. In any case, both managers clearly talked about their music policy in terms of the large numbers of people they needed in order to fill their venue and maximise profit. Size, indeed, was always an important factor, since big businesses required big expenses and were usually owned by corporations or individuals who saw it as a money-making entity.

Commercial radio stations were also valued in terms of the audience they attracted, and were mainly oriented to the music that either was already in the charts – either general charts or dance charts, this latter when specialised in dance music – or might shortly be in them. Focusing on specialised styles was seen as directly leading to a decreasing numbers of listeners and, consequently, smaller profit, so they generally chose from the music that was sent to them by the big record companies. In the same sense, big record shops did not think about focusing on specialised popular music styles because this would lessen their profit margins. They could decide to stock music styles or particular CDs that were not profitable as long as they contributed to the image they wanted to project in order to attract customers who would spend on the 'big sellers' they wanted to sell. This was the reason why Steve, manager of the a record megastore in Birmingham, claimed to maintain the classical music section, or Francisco and Albert, employers of another megastore in Barcelona, explained they had a significant back catalogue that was not profitable. Nevertheless, the general orientation of record megastores was profit-making, and in general specialised styles were only stocked as long as they brought in enough profit to be kept in place. The decision to have a particular record in stock in megastores was primarily based on centralised national forecasts of the sales for each artist. The interest was not at all in the music itself but in the number of records that could be sold:

Roger: How do you decide the music you sell?

Steve: Well, the decision isn't made in these doors, it's made centrally by product managers in the head office in London, who will decide to stock the type of music that the store sells more often than others, and then when an artist releases an

album or a single they will assign quantities to each store depending on how well they think that it will sell it. (...) The sales information will be captured by the computer system, and they look at that and when making the decision of whether to stock in the store or what quantity... (...)

Roger: And the degree of specialist music that you sell, like artists that are not mainstream and so... is also decided by the central office in London?

Steve: It is, it is, but, if we then do very well in a particular genre of music, like world music, or folk, then to some extent we can dictate how much of that range we carry, and we can have some influence over that.

Roger: And you have more specialised types of music...

Steve: Yes, that's right. We can either influence that by actively selling that genre of music, or we can just put a proposal to the managers that we stock... As long as we have space available for doing so it's usually approved.

The case of Barcelona's megastore was the same in that the stocks were first determined by the selling forecasts of the central office in Madrid. The difference was, however, that the company's attempt to project a specialised image led it to hire knowledgeable employees who, with relative autonomy, combined the profit-oriented policy with continuous attempts to push forward the music they considered to be good: 'Però això depèn una mica del venedor, perquè jo he fet apostes per discos que no coneixia ningú... [I han funcionat,] allò de dir, "tens la informació, doncs jo demano més còpies, perquè la gent se l'escolti i se l'agafi"...'. The pressure they had to continuously increase sales, however, was important enough to reduce their scope of action to the margins of their activity.

In contrast with these big companies, the smaller shops, venues and music magazines had more options in their attempt to make a profit, in that they could specialise and still attract enough customers to earn money, even good money. In some cases, they had no choice but to specialise. This is the case of many small record shops. Let us see, for instance, how Matt, the manager of an indie record shop in Birmingham, explained his situation:

Matt: Yeah. At the moment we've changed in that we are going back more into second hand music, definitely into second hand and collector stuff. But this is simply because every shop in town sells the same... the same records and CDs. The music is there... something like say... the new Oasis album which is out next month, we are seriously considering not even stocking it...

Roger: Not even stocking it?

Matt: We might just take five or something like that. The reason is... that everybody is gonna be giving it away... it will be like in supermarkets... 10.99 or 9.99.

Roger: You don't sell even these 'peak' releases?

Matt: It will be on sale absolutely everywhere, every record shop in the world will be full of it.

Roger: And people really discriminate depending on the price? Won't you sell a lot of them anyway?

Matt: Well... we might sell it here... but to sell it here it'd have to be the same price as everywhere else... and it will be cheaper everywhere. And yes, people

discriminate. Supermarkets will be selling it at 9.99 or 10.99. If I tell you that the price of the CDs is 9.14 plus VAT, so when you sell a CD for 10.99 you don't make any money whatsoever, and so there's no point in getting 100 CDs, to sell 100 CDs for nothing. It's a gamble. Because if you get stocked with 10... if you get stocked with 1, you've lost... you know? You need to sell huge quantities to... with very small profit margins. There's no point.

As a result of this situation, he decided that instead of entering into a 'price war' with the megastores he would specialise in rare and collectors' records. To this end, he had recently put more vinyl in the shop. The same problem was mentioned by Jason, one of the workers of another indie record shop specialised in indie, soul and underground dance music. They used to stock pop hits and singles but in their attempt to 'get the optimum', they found that they could not compete with the lower prices of megastores. In their case, they made their profit basically out of what Jason called 'hardcore customers':

Roger: Do you have a reputation of selling underground... hard to find records...

Jason: Oh, yeah. I'd probably say... I'd say that 60% of the money we take it's probably taken by that... 30% of the customers that are coming. So, if it wasn't for the hard core customers, we'd not... We're not looking for a passing trade... We tend to get the money from the hardcore [customers]... So we concentrate on people that we know that will come back, come back... You get to know your customers... So for instance, on Saturday, I saw a chap come in and he was into rock music, and... I mean, generally, if it was a normal... if it was a megastore you can't do this, but... I saw him come in and I showed him ten albums, and I said, 'You will like this'. And he ended playing a little bit of everything, and he ended by buying around 7 albums, spending about 80 pounds. And that's a good thing, if you get regular customers you tend to know what they like... I mean, we listen to all the albums that come in, or most of them... So we recommend people... We know regular customers...

The point of these small business is that since they had lower expenses and needed fewer customers to be profitable, they could focus on specialised styles of music. Jason himself, for instance, explained that within their parameters, alternative music can sell 'loads':

Jason: Oh yeah, absolutely, the alternative stuff sells probably loads. There's a lot of bands I've never heard of... They will never get in the charts, but in the indie circuits... you know? In the alternative clubs, these bands are huge... I mean, the kids know that we're probably the only shop in Birmingham... that we've got a wide range... (...) It never gets into the charts [now, but] it's got a core following...

Even heavy rock can have a 'steady stream of customers': 'It's not a huge market, but there's... people in their late 20s to late 40s... they'll keep buying... a lot of the stuff.' Underground or alternative businesses, thus, even if they are more interested in pushing the music than the strictly commercial premises, can also

make a profit. The hip hop promoter Paul, who as we have explained was involved in the underground hip hop scene, explained that ‘even sort of underground hip hop now is still quite a big market as far as record sales are concerned... (...) Not compared to the more mainstream, but still a commercial sort of market in its own sort of way’. Manuel, at Barcelona’s megastore, also explained that sometimes alternative or minority records commercially ‘exploded’ among the ‘big underground mass’. Even if the scale of the business of small record shops could not be compared to record megastores, or the commercial success of minority records to mainstream commercial records, or small bars to superclubs and pirate radio stations to mainstream media, the fact is that alternative, minority and underground initiatives could and generally tried to make a profit out of their activity. Noel, the manager of the bar where Paul hold his underground hip hop night, described the music in his venue as ‘Anything but mainstream... just more musical, really’, and did not hesitate to describe his bar as underground. From his point of view, there was a potential for opening venues where the same music could be played: ‘Yeah, I do... Not a huge... but Birmingham yeah, as a potential, there’s more room... Probably for a big club really doing what I do... A thousand capacity club’.

It is true that the underground was often viable because even if venues or record shops needed to be profitable, those making or promoting the music often did it for nothing, and even took the financial risk of their initiatives. Noel’s bar in Birmingham or a concert venue in Barcelona are good examples of this: they let or opened the venue to alternative acts (in the case of Barcelona’s concert venue to almost any act that was not mainstream enough to need a bigger venue) and made profits on the drinks sold during the concert. Whereas it is true that the venue would only make a profit as long as it attracted a considerable crowd, the fact is that the promoter of those nights took a considerable part of the risk. John, the promoter of several events in Birmingham in the past, claimed that in fact many owners of underground venues were only interested in making money, and that contrary to appearances, commercial music was not always the best way of making money:

John: No! No. Because there’re commercial nights... If you find the [underground] thing what you do, and it’s making money, you carry on making money. I mean, what makes money is selling alcohol... So if you fill a venue with people who drink alcohol, then you make money... And if you do a commercial night, you might not necessarily do that... Now if people don’t come, promoters get the loss.

The importance of selling alcohol to make money is also highlighted by the concert manager of a club in Barcelona, who does not mix his personal taste in music with his job:

Juan: A veure, a mi m’interessa molt més un concert de públic adult, per pur egoisme, no? Perquè beuen més i tenen més diners. A mi concerts de gent molt jove, no. Per exemple, ara fem un concert amb 40 Principales que s’ha de demanar un permís per menors, *pues* llavors, clar, no podem vendre alcohol i *bueno*, no podem vendre res perquè amb gent de catorze, quinze anys no, vull dir, no.. (...) A mi [el

grup] m'és igual, o sigui... Ara ja, el que tinguin una edat [sí que m'interessa]. El grup em pot agradar més, personalment, o no, com tipus de gent, vull dir, però com a sala de concerts a mi m'és igual. (...) M'és igual. És un negoci. Hi ha coses que m'ho passo bé, i hi ha concerts que no m'interessen res.

Even those committed to pushing the music, if they are to stay in the business for long, need to find ways of at least earning a living. A DJ with a strong anti-commercial discourse who was in charge of the music policy of a bar in Barcelona, explained that he had started a record label because of his love of art *and* because two incomes would be welcome. A promoter in Birmingham who was just doing his job for the sake of it, and who was suspicious of those who were making money out of music, was aware of the difficulty of ignoring the profits of what he did: 'Like I said, I'm not interested in money, but give me 5 years, and if it worked really well, and I want a house, and a wife and whatever, and obviously, all of a sudden, your priorities change a bit, so...'.¹

The separation between underground and commercial attitudes is, therefore, not as clear as it often seems. It is not only the fact that big corporations continuously try to co-opt small successful independent initiatives, but also that small successful initiatives often feel obliged, or just decide, to abandon their commitment to their anti-commercial stance and prioritise the economic logic of profit.

Segmentation and specialisation

It is already clear by now that mainstream and underground are difficult concepts. We have seen that the underground can provide good profits and that mainstream businesses often have specialised products. Commercial clubs and bars, for instance, were in no doubt that they needed to segment the nights they provided in order to maximise profits. Instead of trying to attract the same crowd different nights a week, they were convinced that it was better to try to attract different crowds through different nights. James, the manager of the already mentioned big commercial club, clearly explained the logic of segmentation of a big business:

James: I have to fill a 3,000 capacity club 4 or 5 nights a week (well, this is my job, I don't always do it). My job is to fill a 3,000 capacity club, 4-5 times a week, out of (...) probably 100,000 people [who live in Birmingham and are between 18 and 35 or 40 years old]. If you assume that 30 per cent (probably more) of that 100,000 wouldn't even consider coming into a discotheque or any environment such as this, the amount of people I need to attract and appeal to is getting smaller and smaller. But I do have a 3,000 capacity club. So I'm looking for 12 to 15,000 people a week. (...) My policy is to segment the audience as much as I possibly can, so as I can put strong appeal to say... an older audience for the early part of the week, but make the entertainment so appealing that they would come at the earlier part of the week, and try to attract people away from the weekend. (...) Otherwise all my audience will just fall at the weekend, and I need to get a lot of people in over a week. So I segment the market. The obvious segmentation is students. Number one students. University students. The second obvious segmentation is young 18-19-20-year-olds

who live in the town. Town people. Non-students. The third segment is the older customer. The customer who ten years previously would listen to the chart music, the radio, and very keen on discotheques, on being a weekend customer, yes, would be a 20-year-old, but now perhaps might have married, perhaps have settled down, perhaps not so interested in the new music, or the new chart music. But still wants somewhere to go. The number four segment is the weekend customer. A lot of couples, and boys and girls, want to go out on the weekend and go to a big discotheque.

He believed that each segment required a different music policy. The student night on Mondays required a 'quite varied' music because it was 'quite a varied group'. His strategy was to play chart-based music from the past five years – 70 percent current and 30 percent less current. The 'towny night' on Thursdays for 18- to 20-year-olds needed to be 'slightly more specialised', although without abandoning a mainstream orientation: '[B]ut still 80 per cent of the records we play on Thursday you will probably hear on Radio1, maybe after 6 o'clock, the later more specialised programmes'. Instead of playing 30 percent of up to five years old records, though, all of them were 'new records, very new records (...). They'll be basic 'anthems' and good strong records from the last 6 months, and a lot of records that have been released over the last month or so'. The 'older customer' night on Friday required a stage show with lots of dancers and disc-jockey-presenters who 'entertain people with music of long ago. Retrospective view of things'. Finally, on Saturday, he tried to 'have a very wide appeal, while still remaining current and modern', so the music policy was a combination of all the other nights, with a change in the type of music every 15 or 20 minutes.

In this case, segmentation was no more than small variations of the same policy based on the charts: 'If you use the charts, the UK charts and the dance charts... you don't go too far wrong'. It is clear, therefore, that the music policy of the club was 'all pretty centrally driven, with just a little bit of nuance'. In other commercial clubs, however, segmentation sometimes implied different attitudes in relation to 'commerciality'. For instance Adam, the manager of the club playing commercial dance music and attracting around 500 people on Wednesday and between 1,000 and 1,200 on Friday and Saturday, saw one of his nights as being 'very underground':

Adam: The Saturday it's very underground, it's quite hard, quite *trancy* on the Saturday. (...) And the Friday night is (...) quite cheesy as far as a dance club goes, but people like it, they love it. (...) Wednesday it's a... it's kind of a student night on the Wednesday. It's more anthems... It's the old dance stuff that we've played...

There were several other bars and clubs with a clearly commercial orientation which, in their effort to segment their offer, specialised in either less commercial or 'newer' music, that is, music that would shortly be in the 'charts'. This is a specialisation that plays with the circle of change of popular music, which instead of looking for an alternative sound, tries to differentiate through being slightly

ahead of what is popular at the time. A good example is the bar in Broad Street in Birmingham. Alex, one of the managers, also saw segmentation as her only option: 'Different nights, different music, brings different people, you know? We don't have one customer that would be here every night of the week, because they don't'. Their answer to this need was to orient the bar at weekends to a modern dance crowd: 'Once you get to Friday and Saturday, it's dance. Uplifting house and dance. All the way through. Not so much what you hear on the radio, but very much new music'. This strategy was part of their attempt to simultaneously adjust to, and distinguish themselves from, what the other bars in Broad Street offered to young people:

Alex: Because... well... Broad Street is very trendy. Some places play mainstream commercial, chart music, dance music... But we are more specialised, we are one of the only places that has DJs every night of the week. Our competitors next door: same music policy, but they don't have DJs, so we can get that. Very spontaneous. The sort of clientele we want, especially on Friday and Saturday... We want... early to mid-20s [customers], smart dress, people who make an effort, and who like to be seen in this environment.

In clubs, segmentation could also be made not through different nights but different dance-floors (as one interviewee put it, 'downstairs is the more mature audience, the ones who don't go out a lot. Upstairs, on the contrary, you have the more trendy people, the people who will be there every weekend, a little bit younger'). In the case of radio-stations, segmentation could be carried out by being committed to a specialised (in its commercial side) style of music, like Galaxy with r'n'b and dance, Flaix FM with dance or Radio Tele-Taxi with *'flamenqueo'*, but also using evenings and nights as a space for specialised programmes that could attract a minority audience and give the station more credibility. We have already seen how the megastore in Barcelona had a similar strategy, that is, to project a specialised image through knowledgeable employees and a stock of CDs that were not profitable but enhanced reputation: 'Dóna prestigi, i això dóna que un dia un senyor, senyora o nen, el que sigui, digui, "Hòstia, mira, vaig a la [allà] que sempre el trobaré".' Manuel, who was in charge of the *'noves tendències'* section in one megastore, explained that the fact the he was specialised in the music he sold helped the shop to be more sensitive to records that even if minority could sell quite well. Other quite commercial enterprises such as multinational music magazines, which focused on punk, hip hop or dance music, had to balance the expressive and commercial goals. Ramon, de director of a magazine committed to 'rock' and 'punk' music, illustrated quite well how he did not write in terms of his personal taste, but personal 'criterion':

Ramon: El gusto personal no. (...) No, no el gusto no: "Criterio" personal, que no es lo mismo. (...) O sea, de lo que tu crees que... pero no es gusto personal. Quiero decirte... es muy diferente. Una cosa es tener criterio y otra cosa es tener gusto. Entonces quiero decirte cuando... Y te lo digo, como *disc jockey* me pasaba lo mismo,

o sea... la gente a veces venía y me decía "Oye tío, pon buena música". Digo "Mira tengo la gente aquí sudando como cabrones, bailando como cabrones. Esta música es buena. Ahora si quieres que ponga música...", cogí y ponía la novena sinfonía de Bethoven. Se me quedaban así mirando. "¿No me has pedido buena música? Esta es buena música. No es adecuada, pero es buena". Claro. ¿Qué es buena música? O sea, bueno... lo que has de tener es el criterio de saber conjugar tus gustos, o no, pero intentar saber los gustos de tu público. Entonces la elección es esta, o sea...

All of the more or less 'underground' or 'alternative' industry could also be understood as looking for a particular 'segment' of young people, that is, those youngsters of a particular style with a strong anti-commercial stance. In any case, the internal diversity, even if such differences were more about 'nuances' than marked variety, shows us the difficulty of clearly identifying the meaning of 'mainstream' and 'underground' or 'alternative'. The distinction is useful, however, to grasp the way young people and those working in the music industry *make sense* of their music practices, since they continuously use these concepts to understand their surrounding reality. As we have seen, however, they do not always reflect the assumption that commercial businesses just use the music as a means to the maximisation of profit and 'underground' or 'alternative' businesses as a means to push the music as an expressive tool. This distinction is not as clear as it may seem, since both the expressive content of 'commercial' music and the profit-making aspects of 'underground' music are also present. It is clear that the logic of decision-making of an unashamedly commercial and a committed underground businesses are quite different, which implies that the distinction is analytically relevant and useful, but at the same time the limit between them is not always as clear as the social discourses tend to assume.

The importance of segmentation within the commercial side of the political economy of music also reminds us of the fact that rather than a homogeneous commercial 'centre', we should think of musical geographies as having a slightly fragmented, or at least 'diverse' and 'specialised' commercial core, with internal distinctions that correspond to different 'segments' of consumers. In Barcelona, for instance, those commercial record companies specialising in dance music (Vale Music, Blanco y Negro, Tempo Music and Big Music) sold more records, according to Pere (of a popular dance radio station) than the big music corporations focused on general pop music. Among them, there were differences in their specialised orientation. Pere saw it as follows: 'Vale és una empresa que aposta molt per la comercialitat de les coses i Blanco és una companyia que ha intentat ser un pèl més elitista amb *house* i tal però és que el *house* no ven; el *house* agrada encara però encara no ven'. In general, both Pere and Bob, of an equally popular dance and r'n'b radio station in Birmingham, saw their dance radio stations as more 'youthful' and 'real' than their more general pop counterparts ('*Los 40 Principales*' and BRMB).

In conclusion, those trying to make money – or at least not lose money – out of a particular music activity could be understood as facing the dilemma between pushing the music they believed in and adjusting to what they perceived to be the

demand of their actual or potential customers. Even though at the commercial pole the music one believes in was more clearly subordinated to the need to make money, there are many examples where the tension was present, just as at the underground pole the logic of profit was also present. Commercially oriented initiatives, moreover, can orient their offer to specialised sections of young people not because they want to push the music but because they see an occasion to make a profit. It is what we have called the process of 'segmentation'. As Chatterton & Hollands (2003: 27) remark, one of the main features of contemporary urban entertainment economy is the social and spatial segmentation of consumer markets, not as opposed to, but as an inherent trend of, standardisation and corporate concentration (we will deal with these aspects later when we focus on the market power structure). To better understand the complex interplay of factors in the political economy of music, in the following section we will focus on the process of decision-making.

Trial and error

To understand the decision-making logic of the music industry, as it was explained in the interviews with those working in it, we will focus on how those trying to make a profit out of music and young people decide on the music they offer and their marketing strategy. This does not pretend to be a comprehensive account, but simply an illustration to help to make sense of the role of the cultural industry in the cultural production of musical geographies.

Strategy and myopia

There is a widespread perception of the music industry as 'inventing' fads and 'imposing' them on the public, that is, as 'manipulating' the market at will. There is no doubt that the music industry, and particularly big corporations, have considerable power through their influence on media, distribution and marketing strategies, but it is also true that the consumers always have some degree of choice, some active role in influencing the music that will be profitable. The music industry, from record companies to small bars, from big record stores to pirate radio stations, combine in their decisions efficient and subtle marketing strategies as well as a manifest myopia and uncertainty that will only prove profitable through what we will term 'social selection', that is, the filter of young people's buying behaviour⁶. We must distinguish, therefore, between the strategy of imposing a particular artist or style of music from general marketing orientations.

Those taking decisions explained their music policy as the result of multiple attempts to adjust it to the demands of the public. In general, their decisions, rather than merely following an openly 'manipulative' strategy, were the result of

⁶ For descriptions of the unpredictability, instability and uncertainty of the music industry see, for instance, Negus (1999) and Scott (1999).

a quite blind *trial and error* process. This can be illustrated, for instance, in the way the manager of the bar in Birmingham's Broad Street talked about the trance night which, at the time of the interview, they were trying out but which did not seem to work very well:

Roger: And Thursdays?

Alex: On Thursdays, at the moment it's a trance night. It's quite mellow. I don't know whether it's working. It's not bringing enough of a crowd.

Roger: Is it new?

Alex: We've been doing it for four or five weeks. We may change that.

All businesses found at some point the problem that several of their attempts to attract customers were not 'doing well', and then tried to modify their offer until they found a niche that was profitable enough. Rather than decision makers clearly knowing each segment and scientifically working out a strategy to attract it, the rationale was rather to try something that might work based on a general strategy in the light of past experiences, knowledge about the current market, and intuition, and then see what happened. A good example of this was the recently appointed manager of a bar in the Arcadia Centre, who had just began drawing up the broad lines of his music policy and was trying 'a bit of everything' to have an idea of what could work in the future. Instead of playing techno and trance, the music of the bar before he arrived, he was trying rare grooves on Thursdays, house and garage on Fridays, and live acts on Sundays, just to see what happened. He decided this first attempt to attract a public on the basis of what other bars and clubs were playing in the area, trying to do something similar ('But you find over there... [in that bar they] play mostly house and garage, [in the other one] they play drum 'n' bass, house, garage, a bit of everything. And here we play everything, for the moment') but different ('no one is doing live bands around here'). We can clearly identify his trial-and-error strategy in the following quote:

James: A mixture really, because we don't know what we are doing. We just play a bit of everything. And the same on Saturday. Mainly house and that sort of thing, you know. This is what seems to work... garage as well seems to get on well. (...) We are just getting a mixture at the moment. We haven't really focused in one certain crowd, you know? It's all a great big mixture of different types of people. Thursdays we've primarily students. (...) I'm trying to find out what the people want. That's what I'm doing at the moment. I'm trying a bit of everything.

Contrary to what is generally expected, even big commercial initiatives could be read in terms of a trial-and-error strategy. A good example is that of a very popular dance radio station in Catalonia which had some failures before finding the formula of its success:

Roger: Hi han hagut en la història de [l'emissora] moments allò claus? De prendre decisions en quant a la música a posar, o com posar-la...

Pere: Sí, sí. El moment més clau va ser al 98 que va ser transformar-la en emissora *dance*. Abans era... Mira va començant essent *urban*, vale? En totes les seves tendències, *rap*, *r'n'b*...

Roger: I no funcionava això?

Pere: I no va funcionar. Si ... O sigui quatre deien "Quina emissora! Brutal. Quina música! Quina qualitat! Hòstia, moltes gràcies. *Foteu* un producte de collons": *Bueno*, vam intentar evolucionar i...

Roger: *Urban* amb vocació comercial, era?

Pere: Sí, *bueno*, no... era... tot era... tot el que ens arribava. O sigui, no posaven res d'aquí. Tot era d'import d'Estats Units, els *hits* d'allà, agafàvem el *Billboard*, [el llistat de vendes dels Estats Units,] el *rap*...

Roger: Val, i no funcionava, dius?

Pere: No funcionava. Tothom que ha provat a fer funcionar coses d'aquestes aquí s'ha *fotut* una hòstia. Sí, *bueno* perquè és realitat cultural *tio*. Aquí no estem encara... *Bueno* si les *ties*, les Destiny's Child, et venen quatre discos i *punto*. *Bueno* és que el *rap*, clar, és que hi ha molts milions de negres allà *tio*, aquí no. És que no té més. Llavors vam canviar i ens vam ja tirar cap al *pop-rock*. Després el *pop-rock* vam barrejar una mica de *dance*. Llavors era un poti-poti que no aguantava ningú, fins que es va dir, "*Bueno*, prou. Anem a marcar i tal".

In cases where, as well as the goal of making the business profitable, there was an expressive intention, the trial-and-error strategy could be loosely or closely combined with personal taste. This was the case of Mark, promoter and DJ of an indie night in a big club (1,500 capacity) in Birmingham.

Mark: [There was an indie club in the city which] used to be very busy but now it's kind of died off a little bit. So when we moved over here there was [that one], who was doing the more alternative thing, and [another one] who is very purely indie. And there's another club who does rock. And the club we were doing is a big club, it's like fifteen hundred capacity. So we actually decided what we we're gonna do... is it gonna be still the music we are into, or also are we gonna have something different from anybody else, something that's gonna attract a lot of people? Because we need a lot of people to make it work. So me and the other DJ (...), and is on the flyers, we just decided to stick with what we like, rather than try to get it purely from the crowd. We stick with what we like, which is very varied... you know? We are into the dance stuff, we are into the... some of the rocky alternative stuff, some of the indie stuff, especially like the old indie, Stone Roses and bands like that. They've got more of the dance feel to it, they're easy to dance to when you're in a club. So we tried to drag elements from all different styles of music, but things that would work, that work on a dance floor. So obviously... there's a lot of bands that we are into and we'd never play in the club, just because they haven't got that kind of slightly dancy beat to the music, do you know what I mean? So we just wanted to do something that was very varied, stay away from the house thing, because that has just been done to death in Birmingham basically. You've got God's Kitchen on the Friday night (...), but they are big... big house night, and they get Paul Oakenfold, and Judge Jules and get all those people there. So we wanted to do something completely different to that but still... something that was gonna be a big night out.

In cases like that of Mark that claimed to circumscribe the commercial imperatives to more or less narrow expressive goals, personal tastes played a bigger role. One promotor in Barcelona explained his disagreement with a club who asked him to set up an electronic music night but did not like his techno-house approach to it. The owners wanted a break-beat night because they considered that techno-house was the same as *màkina* and they did not want to be a '*màkina* club'. The outcome was that he ended by dropping the night because he felt that both the managers and the public 'encara estaven amb això "Tú què? Màkina o rock?" Llavors, això no s'ho han pogut treure. I llavors és allò "Tio que ja està, ja ha passat aquesta època. Aquesta etapa ja està superada". He had previously DJed rock, pop and punk music in the venue, and felt disappointed every time he introduced any electronic music in the set: 'A la que posava dos temes que eren una mica com aquest, per exemple, la gent "Ai, treu la màkina, treu màkina tio, no sé què..." [*mokering tone*]'.

Men and women taking these decisions did not only decide in terms of the music they liked, or the segment of young people they wanted to attract, but also in terms of their positioning among the audience, the image they were projecting – or wanted to project – and how this fitted into the available night-life offer: 'I think they see us a little bit more specialised [than other bars in the area]; 'I hope we come across as more classy'; 'Yes, [I could change the music I play on Saturdays,] possibly. Maybe... keeping in line... with what the club is doing next door, trying to fit it with them. If they have a regular Saturday night with the same music policy every week, then we would try to do something around that, probably'; 'Well, unfortunately the club has a reputation as a kind of meat market (...). It's all right, because it is one more reason why people come here. It's seen as a singles' club'; 'I think people see it as quite unique, quite cool and trendy, really... You know?'; 'People tend to know about [our record store]... you know? Reputation grows... and people come up specially... I know this is the only shop you can buy certain material in the Midlands... at least, so they'll make a special journey...'; '[En nuestra revista] puede que salgan grupos peores, si quieres, pero toda la revista tiene una coherencia. (...) Yo creo que la ventaja que tiene es que, ya te digo, un grupo te podrá gustar más o menos, interesarte más o menos, pero todos están en la misma línea o similar'; '[la nostra] és una emissora que ha revolucionat, que s'ha decantat per un estil temàtic, per una manera de fer, tal, tal tal. *Vale*, per això sí. Ara, per la massa (...) és makinera, deixa't d'hòsties, la gent no sap diferenciar-ho... Els que ens escolten sí'.

For those businesses that focused on at least partially underground or alternative music, a positioning as knowledgeable and specialist was particularly important. Once the commercial centre was abandoned, specialised music knowledge was important for both reputation and commercial viability. As the manager of an independent record shop put it, 'You can get your fingers burned if you don't know what you are doing... You've got to really know what are you

doing, otherwise you will just have lots of records and nobody will buy them, and you lose a lot of money’.

As well as choosing and negotiating a music policy, a segment to attract, and the positioning of the business, there was another element that played an important role in the process of decision-making: the sensuous experience they provided. Record shops, radio stations, bars and clubs provided not only music and discourses about music, but also an ‘experience’, as it was called by many interviewees (although naturally this experience required customers to have the right cultural attitudes to accept it as ‘sensuous’ and meaningful). This was particularly obvious in the nightlife economy, but record shops and radio stations were also important in providing young people with sensuous enjoyment that we could hardly put into words. Such ‘sensuous experiences’ were crucial for the actualisations of youth geographies. In the case of the more commercial bars and clubs, this was made explicit by for example James, the manager of the big commercial club in Birmingham we have already quoted more than once:

James: The entertainment not only comes from the music and people [saying] ‘Oh, I like this song, I like this record’. It also comes from the presentation of the disc jockey to his audience. So it’s very upbeat, very fun, the presentation. A lot of calling out to the audience and encouraging them to party. But to get the texture to the night, the sort of entertainment texture, it will be frenetic, it will be excitable, and it will... yeah.

He considered that the music his club played was seen as not very good by most people, but people came because they felt safe, had a good time and could afford it: ‘They come for the social interaction. Boys meeting girls. Girls meeting boys. And good fun with their friends. We can provide that’. In fact, he considered that he could not provide an ‘environment for specialist music heads’ because it would not help him to ‘create an environment of fun, frivolity’. A dance music DJ in Barcelona explained the importance of lighting, go-gos and images in providing his audience with a good experience:

DJ Fiesta: És clar, a part de la música també acompanya molt *lo* que són les llums, que tots tenim el *light-jockey*, que es diu, que és el que porta les llums al ritme de la música. Quan hi ha parades a la música doncs ell es dedica a tirar una miqueta de fum, a fote una mica de conjunt en tot, no? Les *go-gos* també ajuden molt. *Lo* que *fotem* ara per ordinador que *fiquem* a part de punxar jo *fico* imatges al ritme de la música per la pantalla i pels monitors. És tot una mica.

The manager of a bar in Birmingham’s city centre that just played songs provided by a company through a computer system, considered nevertheless that the music was definitely important to create the atmosphere of the bar. After explaining that he played garage some nights, he pointed out that he could not play anything other than ‘softer easy-going stuff’ because since they were owned by a company they had to be careful with what they did ‘to keep it within the brand’.

He had to orient his business to the mass market rather than thinking of specialists nights, and the music was important to create the right atmosphere in this direction. Sean, of a music bar in Broad Street, when asked about the image of his bar, referred to the music he played as helping him to create a good sexy atmosphere:

Sean: It's a happy place, female friendly. This is what it is. With a good atmosphere. The atmosphere is everything. This is what's important: the atmosphere. And I want a girl on her own to be able to come in and walk around without any problem, not with those guys that jump on her. This is what I want. This is a sexy place, and the music is sexy too.

The manager of the record megastore in Birmingham, as we have seen, also pointed to the importance of providing a family shopping experience in the decision to maintain a classical music section that could otherwise be removed. The 'neutral' and inclusive experience that he wanted to provide strongly contrasted with the atmosphere in specialised record shops. Jason, of one of them, acknowledged that the shop could be intimidating: 'Because people coming for the first time, they can feel left out, it can be intimidating... Because we are laughing with regulars, listening to some music...'. On the one hand, alternative and underground initiatives were easily perceived as exclusivist and elitist because of their specialised music and style. The more specialised, underground or alternative a record shop, a bar or a club was, the more 'intimidating' it could be felt by potential customers who were not familiar with them. One bar manager in Barcelona explained that the more ordinary customers often left the bar because they felt uncomfortable. He consciously wanted to give his bar a relaxed but cool atmosphere, so if the bar was busy, he did not let in some 'normal' or 'ordinary' customers. He claimed that having a relatively strict door policy could help to make the bar 'cooler'. Noel, the manager of the bar in Birmingham hosting underground music, was also aware that his bar was perceived as intimidating by many people: 'I know people usually think it's quite cliquy... (...) Yeah, elitist... You know? But we are not at all, it's just...'. Commercial businesses, on the other hand, could in some cases be very inclusive and in others markedly exclusive. Besides the social closure generated, intentionally or not, by the anti-commercial stance, there were other initiatives that strategically sought a selective atmosphere in terms not of the music but of what was seen as glamour, trendiness or social position. Many interviewees talked about a couple of nightlife venues as having a strict door policy or as being a 'footballers' place', implying that it attracted celebrities and Very Important Persons. Another club was mentioned by several interviewees as being distinctive not so much because of the music it played but because of its door policy: 'They make it really difficult to get in... It's pretty famous... They make a point of making it very difficult to get in, and by doing that, people come! You know?'

A few interviewees, when talking about a music scene or a certain bar, explicitly referred to the importance of acquiring the status of 'the place where you have

to be seen'. A garage music promoter explained that 'Garage now is like... is taking over from jungle as being the trend, where everyone's got to be seen'. A bar manager in Broad Street, with a specialised but commercial orientation, also referred to the importance of being fashionable enough to be considered the right place to be seen. A DJ in Barcelona complained that nightlife was full of people who went to bars and clubs not because of the music but just to be seen. One underground promoter explained that he stopped being interested in house music when house clubs started to be more interested in their door policy than in the music.

The logic of exclusivity and reputation within the nightlife economy meant that most places went through a cycle that combined periods of exclusivity ('I can afford to be choosy now') and periods of accepting all comers ('going downhill'). The importance of all this is that it clearly shows the importance of consumption, particularly nightlife consumption in what concerns us here, in the sensuous experience of exclusion and inclusion, that is, of social closure and its hierarchical implications. This aspect was taken into account and often promoted, consciously or not, by those making decisions in the nightlife economy, as well as the general music economy. The managing of 'cool' and its attached 'authenticity' through marketing strategies is a crucial aspect of the music industry. Fun, enjoyment, frivolity, sexiness, exclusivity (in any of its variations), friendliness, inclusiveness, collective identification and many other sensuous experiences can be decisive in the success of a particular initiative, and the music industry was well aware of it. Alongside the music and any possible typified discourse about it, this aspect was always taken into consideration when making decisions. And the music was often considered in these terms. In general, therefore, managers had an idea of what they wanted, but they were not always successful in achieving it. As mentioned above, there was a considerable myopia in their decisions, in that instead of following an informed manipulative strategy, as they are often portrayed by both consumers and academics, they tended to apply a simpler trial-and-error pattern.

The strategies to attract customers were varied. One very important focus of attention of nightlife initiatives was the importance of attracting women. Both commercial and underground premises took decisions that served this goal, from making sure women would feel comfortable ('Tenía claro que quería que fuese el tipo de sitio donde una chica puede venir sola sin sentirse acosada') to making access easier for them (charging them a lower entry price, for instance) or playing the music they liked:

DJ Fiesta: Jo sóc el típic discjòquei que mira la pista i sempre intento tenir *ties* a la pista, perquè el que està clar que si no hi ha *ties*, al moment que s'omple de *tios*, [és] quan comencen a marxar els *tios* [i aleshores] ja és molt difícil tornar a omplir la pista. Sempre he de *ficar* cançons que els *hi* agradi segur a les *ties* per sempre intentar tenir durant tota la sessió *ties* a la pista.

Roger: I aquestes cançons què són? Més cantades? Més...?

DJ Fiesta: Més cantadetes, més *mariconcillas*, diguem-ne no? Però *bueno*...

Sex, gender and even sexuality, as we can see, are part of the way those taking decisions think about what they provide for young people. All knew that being seen as a place where – as one interviewee put it – ‘*hay nivel*’, was a guarantee of success. Door and security policy were also crucial. For a bar or a club, having enough customers to make selection necessary could be seen as a good asset (‘Before we couldn’t afford to be choosy because we didn’t have a good enough reputation, but now that we do, we can afford to keep people away. We can afford to say ‘You can’t come in because you’ve got trainers on’. You know?’).

Another important marketing strategy was of course advertising through flyers, radio ads and the press, among others. In general, managers just tried different things and through the years developed their own ‘theories’ about what worked and what did not. Richard, a promoter of indie concerts, puts forward his reflections:

Roger: And do you find that sometimes you organise a gig it’s a complete failure? Nobody turns in?

Richard: No, not that often. No. I think it’s due to experience. Certainly when I first started there was a number of badly attended gigs...

Roger: And what where the factors you learnt?

Richard: Mmm... Obviously getting to know a lot of people is a very important thing. Getting a good relationship with the press, a good relationship with the people in record shops where you put posters, mmm... Obviously getting to know the bands you put on, because, you know? Just basically making sure that the audience that you’ve got is loyal to you and will come back, is happy, and has a good time really. (...)

Roger: What do you think is the best way of advertising?

Richard: Mmm... I was thinking about it the other day. I think the best way of advertising is doing as much as possible, because you can’t ever really find out which of the things you are doing is having the most effect. So I mean... I’ve got like the gig guides in the press, which is handed to... bring posters into the records shops, give to the bands themselves flyers to hand out, there’s flyers around the table, posters in there, mm... there’s so many things you do, but I don’t know which one of them, really... (...)

Roger: And the radio?

Richard: The radio around here isn’t particularly good. It used to be a bit better. We used to have, you know? Have a show where they’d be looking after local bands and playing their records, and going to see their gigs, but I guess nobody was listening to it, so they don’t do very well radio around here now.

There are many differences between a bar in Broad Street or a record shop in the city centre, with an important passing trade, and a remote and isolated small bar or record shop in the middle of nowhere. Geographical location was also important in terms of the segment of young people amongst whom specialised nights wanted to promote their offer. A promoter pushing a new night at the bar with underground music explained that even though he saw students as his main potential customers, since the event was in the middle of the week, he found it

difficult to reach them: 'In Manchester or Liverpool the students are all central, whereas in Birmingham they're quite spread out, so it's really hard, particularly for me to give out flyers... (...) They are not all in one place, so spread out...'. Out of the 15 nights that preceded his first event, he spent 10 of them outside clubs handing out flyers to young people. There were businesses that only started to promote or advertise their initiatives long after they were running. A bar in Barcelona, for instance, did not do any promotion during its first two years, but then felt that it needed some and started doing flyers in some selected music and clothing shops. Others used mainstream radio advertisements or hired popular radio DJs: 'It's just important that we keep strong DJs. We use a lot of DJs from Galaxy, the radio station. (...) So that... ties in... You hear their music on the radio, and then come here, and hear their music live'.

The power of mainstream commercial businesses was that they had access to what were considered the most influential promotion medium, that is, mainstream TV and radio. These were seen as the crucial gatekeepers of musical geographies, as we will analyse later. Other media were also perceived as influential, although always in lower terms than television and radio. Mainstream newspapers with important music sections, like *El País* or *La Vanguardia* in Barcelona, or minority specialised radio like Radio 3, were perceived as having a considerable influence (even though they knew that it was much lower than those in Madrid). Some megastores had 'listening points' that also worked as 'gatekeepers' with a decisive influence on sales numbers, and these were thus key aspects of their negotiations with record labels. They acknowledged the pressure of the record industry to be given 'listening points', but claimed that they would also use them to promote the music they considered good and that had a commercial potential.

Francisco: Están por un lado lo que son las grandes novedades que sabes que todo el mundo quiere escuchar y por otro lado (...) unas apuestas tuyas, de decir "Este disco es interesante, no lo conoce la gente pero si lo pongo en un punto de escucha se venderá porque es un buen producto".

Albert: Però hi ha productes que a vegades el punt d'escolta ja ve com, com... No obligatori, però com si donat...

Francisco: Si te vienen quinientos discos de un producto y se apuesta por él...

Albert:... i la [Oficina] Central fa un pacte amb Universal de comprar-li tres mil Rosanas i aquí ens n'arriben cinc-centes o set-centes, el descompte el tindràs, està clar, perquè la Universal vendrà molt.

Roger: Noteu que el punt d'escolta fa vendre molt?

Francisco: Sí, pero también puede hacer que no se venda.

Albert: En general, fa que es vengui.

Francisco: Menos pero los hay.

Albert: En general, fa que es vengui molt. Hem guanyat. Tenint ara més punts d'escolta es guanya. O sigui tira...

There was also an emerging medium, internet, which, even if it was foreseen as an important promoter of change in the near future, at the time of the fieldwork did not yet seem to play a very significant role in most initiatives. Many of the

businesses already had websites and even distribution lists, but none of them considered these as relevant to their marketing strategy.

Big record labels used not only media and distribution strategies, but also nightlife as a promotional space, for instance by arranging special parties or handing out free copies of their records to DJs and clubs. The different businesses within the music economy must in fact be seen as a network of mutual interests that was always negotiating their alliances and synergies, both on the more commercial and the alternative or underground sides. At the same time, even if all these different means of attracting customers were naturally important, they did not seem to guarantee the success of particular initiatives. Strategy was seen as important, but was developed rather as a general framework and a grounded theory based on past experiences. The myopia and uncertainty of the music industry appeared to be predominant, so different ways of getting to know what was going on were central for those taking decisions.

Feedback and social selection

Once we have seen the myopia of decisions and the grounded character of the strategy that permeated them, we are left with the question of how decision-makers got information in order to ratify, modify or abandon the way their businesses were trying to get customers. The music industry is based on economic results, and is thus very sensitive to the reception of their products by young people – this being a notable difference in comparison to services provided by the authorities. The profit they could make, or their economic viability, depended on it. Consequently, sales numbers are the most important feedback they got about what they were doing. At the same time, they had many other ways of getting information about their customers and the reception of the products they supplied. We will analyse how they used feedback of different kinds from their customers – apart from the cash they made – in order to modify and adjust their ‘product’, which will help us to understand the logics of the political economy of music.

Although many people think that the big media ‘impose’ commercial music on their audience, all interviewees working within the music industry claimed to be very sensitive to the inputs they received from their customers. Take the example of commercial radio: it needs as many listeners as possible, and its whole strategy is always subordinated to this aim. It is true that radio stations have a considerable influence in making a particular song popular, and interviewees working for them were well aware of it. The following quote of Pere, of a dance station in Barcelona, is a good example:

Pere: El que passa que... és que el *dance* és un tipus de producte que el fet de matxacar-lo compta molt. O sigui, el fet que el radiïs moltes vegades canvia el concepte. Una cançó que el primer dia et pot semblar zero o que no et diu res, a base d’escoltar-la et queda. És un tipus de música que és això, és molt repetitiva i, per tant, doncs el fet que la radiïs molt va entrant i va enganxant.

At the same time, they did not think that they could impose *any* particular record. On the contrary, they felt that they needed to respond to what their listeners liked. In the case of this radio station, big dance record labels sent the records from which the radio station chose the ones that would be played. Record labels, therefore, had an important but not decisive influence. In the words of Pere: 'Doncs s'escull tal i com estan les condicions del mercat. (...) Ells presenten totes les coses que treuen, les porten i a partir d'aquí nosaltres les escoltem'. In some cases, record labels had a very clear objective that would be immediately assumed by the station, whereas in the opposite direction some records would be included in the daily 'formula' because their being played on specialised programmes had raised enthusiasm in the audience and club crowds. Other aspects that counted were the individual criteria of the person who chose the records sent by record labels, as well as the past success of records imported from other countries. Once a record was selected, they kept it on air or dropped it depending on the reactions it produced. Pere explained that they got an impression of what was happening through the interaction with the audience: all their programmes, for instance, received live calls and used internet xats, which helped them to sense the reaction of the audience to all the songs they played.

Pere: I tant a vegades passa, que una cosa que... per la que no has apostat o no tens previst apostar, veus que la gent reacciona molt bé amb *lo* qual poc a poc es va convertint en un èxit, per tant provoca la gent. I altres cops és al revés, coses que tens molts clares, hosti! Veus que la reacció de la gent és absolutament zero, vull dir passa totalment desapercebuda. I tu mateix te'n vas adonant de que no passa res.

The reaction of the crowd in the weekly parties they organised across the territory was another key source of feedback to test the records. From his point of view, this was more than enough to know how a particular record was working. In Birmingham, by contrast, the two commercial radio stations that I contacted used market research to get information about how the songs they played were being received by the audience. Ian, of the one committed to pop, explained that the records to be played were chosen by him and another person after listening to everything that was sent by record labels. If the music fitted the brand image, they decided to play it. During the time a particular record was played, its impact on the audience was known through market research. On the basis of this research, he would decide whether to drop a song or maintain it, increase or decrease its presence in the mix: 'It's a feeling, really. If the research says it's not doing well, you move it to another category'. Bob, of the one committed to dance and r'n'b, also explained how research was used 'to know what people want to hear':

Bob: We have information about what our audience wants to hear, but we do as well research about what people that don't listen to us would like us to play. And then we try to get more audience, but at the same time trying not lose the listeners we have now. It is difficult really.

He explained that – ‘like all radio stations at the moment’ – they had all the music in a computer programme stored in different categories that concerned the type of music (‘current’, ‘new music’, ‘very new music’, ‘only evenings’) and the frequency with which they had to be broadcast. Their market research provided information about how each song was doing each week. So they ‘sit down and decide what to include and what not to include’. Paying ‘attention to the lists of requests’, they also had to decide what to drop:

Bob: Well, each week we have usually 2-3 new songs, and 1 or 2 may need to be dropped because of doing bad. But sometimes we have more new songs. It depends really. For example, we have Gabrielle, which has been on air for many weeks, but is still doing well. Therefore, it would be stupid to drop it. But now there is the new single, and we need space to include it. Sometimes it's difficult to fit all the new songs you want, because the others are still doing well, and in this case it's stupid to drop them. We also have, of course, different levels: some are played more than others, and you move them from one level to the other depending on the results.

Pere, of the dance radio station in Barcelona, did not believe in using market research as the basis of their decisions. They were aware that radio stations in France were doing it, but did not feel that it would improve what they did.

Pere: Per mi és molt més significatiu a la discoteca, quan ja fa tres mesos que el poses a ràdio i llavors el discjòquei nostre mateix el posa i veus com la gent crida i el canta, denota que és èxit. I si el poses fa tres mesos i la gent el posa i balla com un més, doncs ja no és tant èxit, no?

Mainstream commercial radio was thus not indifferent to what the public wanted. On the contrary, they said that they could not play underground music other than in a few specialised programmes because it would make them lose thousands of listeners. In the case of commercial clubs, they were sensitive to what their customers wanted in very different ways. They took as serious information about the music they were – or might be – playing not only the obvious reaction of customers on the dance-floor to each song, but also their requests to the DJ. Decisions were not simple. Chart garage records, for instance, were introduced in the big commercial club in Birmingham because they were in the charts, because they were becoming more requested, because there were more records being released and because the ‘soulful’ sound was thought to attract women:

James: What I was noticing in the audience was that it was getting very boysy. Do you know what I mean? (...) If you look at the audience, there might be 60 to 70 per cent men against girls. Not the audience but the dance floor. The music we were playing was becoming more housy and it was appealing more to boys... men. So I was looking for a way to bring that back... to make it more girl-friendly. There's lots of things on the promotional side that I can do to try to attract girls, but the main product is to dance, so I need to make sure that it was appealing to girls to come and dance. And that helped tremendously.

So even when big commercial clubs were trying to adjust to what people wanted, they were also playing with sounds and records to manage their marketing strategy. The final decision, however, was always in the hands of the audience. Any business would be nothing without them. Sean, of a bar in Borad Street, explained that he played what people wanted, so even though he played and remixed the music he personally liked, the limit was always the audience: 'Sometimes I'll try to push something, but if it fails three times and people don't start liking it, then I'll drop it. I give people what they want'. James, at the big commercial club, also said that in general, if a record did not work after a couple of days, it would not be played again. He saw music just as a tool to help people enjoy the environment, so he only played music that his customers found pleasant. This willingness to adjust to the audience – perceived by those with a strong anti-commercial stance as 'selling out' – was often experienced as a proof of respect and craftsmanship by commercial DJs. Music was not something that has to be 'discovered' by the audience, but 'enjoyed' from the very first minute. The role of their business, therefore, was not to push the music but to provide a good experience. The respect for their customers' tastes was thus high:

DJ Fiesta: Sí. Estem en contacte amb el públic i sí la gent de tant en tant demana cançons. (...) Vindran dos o tres per sessió, però no molt.

Roger: Llavors, tu els hi fas cas? T'agobia? T'agrada?

DJ Fiesta: No, no. A mi m'agrada, perquè m'agrada escoltar totes les opinions. Com si em diuen que un *disco* no els *hi* ha agradat, m'agrada *sapiguer-ho*, no? Perquè si molta gent m'ho diu, collons, tindrà... calculo i dic "Hòstia, seré jo el que m'equivoco i no la gent, no?" Va bé escoltar la gent. Igual que alguna vegada també m'han portat un disc que jo no coneixia, m'han dit el títol, l'he comprat i ha sigut un èxit. Per això m'agrada escoltar la gent.

Roger: O sigui que a vegades fas cas de la gent.

DJ Fiesta: Sempre, sempre escolto, sempre escolto.

Roger: I si et diuen "Posa una cançó" si t'agrada...

DJ Fiesta: Si crec que és el moment de *ficar-la*, la *fico*.

He played dance music and explained that he had successfully introduced what he called '*makineta*' and 'house' to the club. He was aware of his prerogative to push some styles and records and not others: 'Sí, sí. O sigui si creus en un *disco* i si el comences a *matxacar*, és que es vendre tu el producte, buscar el moment adequat i és tot un conjunt. No és el mateix *ficar* un disc *pel morro* i estar allà que *ficar* el disc, viure-ho, incitar a la gent amb el micro. És molt diferent'. At the same time, he was conscious of the limits of this prerogative. He had not been able, for instance, to make his crowd dance to progressive and more underground house music (the music he liked): 'Ho hem intentat però és que el públic es veu que no ho accepta, no?'. He explained that when attendance at the club decreased, the music and the DJ were always the first things a club would change: 'I *bueno*, sempre es fan els experiments fins que tornes a agafar el fil. Que no sempre és agafar el fil,

potser que a vegades sembla que has estat tu qui ha agafat el fil però és per inèrcia que la gent ha tornat a *vindre*'.

John, of another club in Birmingham, also ensured that the music they played was 'imposed' by the type of clientele they had. Arthur, of another club that hired celebrity DJs, said that they did informal surveys: 'We do surveys. But not marketing survey, written questions and so on, but seeing people, talking to them, asking them. And then you get an impression'. Andy, of a 'professionals' bar in the city centre of Birmingham who hired a DJ to play dance and garage music on Saturday nights, explained that he had previously tried to play some jazz to get a different crowd, but that 'it just didn't take off', so they decided to play chart music using a computer music system provided by a company that sent them updates three times a month as the new chart music came out. Chart music was seen as a neutral and secure music policy. It is true, however, that this was not always the case. Alex explained that six months before the interview the company that owned the bar in Broad Street where she worked decided that the music had to be more commercial and mainstream. The result of this change was that the bar lost many customers and they decided to go back to specialised dance and house, and 'picked them back up again'. She pointed out that it depended on the crowd you had, since on Monday, her student night, the crowd liked cheesy music, whereas at the weekend she had a more mature audience who made an effort and dressed up to go out, and wanted 'something a bit better than that'. At the moment, as we have already noted, they were also trying a 'trance night' that was not enjoying much success.

Alex: The trance... I don't think it's the right decision. We'll give it another few weeks and...

Roger: Why do you think... is because is not popular any more?

Alex: I don't think people want to go out and listen to trance on a Thursday night over a pint. I think if people want to go to listen trance they go to a club, more at the weekends. I wouldn't choose to go and sit in a bar and listen to trance on a Thursday night. No. It's too much.

Another example of a night which did not work was the country night tried by the big commercial club. After giving it a try, the manager realised that with line dancing his dance floor would only allow one third of its normal capacity, so after three weeks he decided that it was not going to be profitable and dropped it. He explained that he had to be very careful in his experiments, since it was a 'very expensive club to just open', and failures could cost a lot of money.

We can see once and again how those working in the music industry were just trying to guess what the audience would like, and gradually making their own grounded theory about it, sometimes with the help of market research, sometimes just by the feedback they got from their customers. Adam, the manager of the house commercial club in Birmingham, when asked about the reason why they had decided a year before the interview to segment the weekend into one mainstream commercial night and another harder and more specialised one, answered as follows:

Adam: I think it's more luck than judgement, to be honest. It's just the way it happened. (...) One of the deputies here, created [a night], on Friday. And it worked, so we will have two separate crowds... Because it's a bit risky to have two nights with exactly the same, because one will become stronger than the other and take away from the other night... But the way we've got it... We've been quite lucky that we've got two separate crowds...

In the less commercial initiatives, the same logic applied. Ramon, from a punk music magazine, pointed out that the sales numbers were often much of a surprise, and that even if he had an experienced commercial criterion to choose one front page or another, he had had a lot of surprises. Mark, of the indie night at a big club in Birmingham, explained that after one of the bands they brought, with 'quite a very high profile', did not work, they decided to 'stick with bands that have a bit more following...'. Jorge, of a concert venue in Barcelona, also explained surprises he had from time to time, even though the limited capacity of the venue made big failures unlikely. Experience had taught him to predict more or less accurately the crowd he would get for each concert.

Another good example of the way music policy was often modified more by chance than premeditation is provided by a bar that occasionally held indie parties organised by the authors of a fanzine in order to promote it. The parties managed to attract more and more people to each subsequent event and the resident DJ ended by incorporating in his regular set much of the music that was played in the parties.

DJ Fun: Perquè el públic de normal [del bar on fèiem les festes] era bastant públic [de la zona], era més guitarrero, una mica més *guarro*, entre cometes. I a través de les festes vam aconseguir que un públic... (tothom [era] de Barcelona i gent molt més jove, que li anava el *rotllo* més *pop* i més *tranqui*) anés allà, ¿no? I el públic va començar a anar-hi a part de les festes, els dies normals, i aleshores es va veure obligat a canviar una mica l'estil...

Even segmentation, which would seem to be a clearly strategic decision, was often implemented more as a reaction than as an intent to attract different customers. A club and concert venue in Barcelona, decided to stop its traditional philosophy of allowing those who attended concerts to remain in the club because it was creating problems.

Juan: Ara estan molt separats... (...) Jo crec que ara estan, vull dir, jo que sé, per un costat el *neo-hippy-mestizo*, que no té res a veure amb els *indies*, i que no es troben bé junts. Perquè aquí ha fet trencar una mica la filosofia de la sala aquesta de concert i continuar amb la discoteca: no funcionava perquè ni es sentia còmoda la gent que venia al concert, ni es sentia bé la gent que venia a la discoteca, perquè es mesclaven, hi havia... no ho sé, una química negativa, reacció negativa...

Roger: I per això vau començar a tancar?

Juan: I per això vam començar a tancar, i de fet, *va haver* la prova. A mi m'agradava més abans, però la prova és que el negoci funcionava millor. Abans teníem molt problemes i ara la gent que ve a la nit sap on va i sap què es trobarà, i no té cap

problema, ni es creua amb el que ha vingut a veure... potser amb algú amb les girenys per aquí [fins l'esquena], a veure, i això incòmoda.

John, the manager of one of the Birmingham's clubs, also pointed to the impossibility of mixing different crowds. His mid-week student nights and the Saturday nights were completely different, and the different crowds did not mix: 'No, no. They don't mix. Because if they come at the weekend, the audience is so different that they don't feel comfortable'. A similar thing happened in the bar playing underground music in Birmingham, when they moved a specialist night from Thursdays to Saturdays. The organiser, Paul, explained that as a result of this they got more people than they expected but that many of them were not there for what they did. He felt that there was a clash between the people who were there to see what they did and people who would have been there anyway.

This last example provides a good illustration of how non-mainstream initiatives also had their own economic logics of money-making and decision-making. Besides its general orientation to more or less underground music, the strategy was, as we have already noted, to host different nights organised by external promoters, often amateurs. The manager made his profit from the drinks, and the promoters took the risk of bringing artists and relied on the tickets they sold to break even or make some profit. At that moment the bar hosted 15 different styles of music rotating through the different nights, so there was an on-going social selection of those who managed to attract a sufficient crowd to the bar.

In the case of record shops, megastores explained that even if their stocks were *forecast* and decided by their central offices, they had a margin to modify some of them, not only because their knowledge about the local media and local scenes helped them to anticipate a demand for a particular record, but also because of certain customer requests. Steve, of the record megastore in Birmingham, explains:

Roger: But you would never have very specialist, very underground, collectionist...

Steve: Not usually, no, no. Mmm... but, having said that, we can order for anyone anything that's available. That's another way we can influence what we stock, because if we have a lot of orders, we might decide to stock it.

Roger: Even from underground labels?

Steve: Yes, as long as it's available and legal.

Roger: And people ask a lot for them? They come here for that?

Steve: Yes, yeah, they know that they can get anything that's available, and they do, yes. And if a trend emerges and we find people asking a lot for the same artists that we don't stock, then we'd stock it.

Roger: Do you need 5 or 10 people? More? Less?

Steve: Mmm... that would probably be... I'd say that 5 to 10 would be an argument to stock it, because you don't know how many other people are coming, not being able to find it, and then not asking and just going away.

The same decision process was explained by FNAC in Barcelona ('Home, suposo que si ja te'l demanen un parell de persones o tres...'; 'Piensa que una persona normalmente... Por cada persona que te pide un producto que no

encuentra, pues no sé, posiblemente se han ido diez pensando que no lo tenían. No todo el mundo pregunta'). Small and specialised record shops tended to have a very personal relationship with hardcore customers. Jason, of Tempest records, explained how profitable each section was in the following terms:

James: The dance floor always takes a lot of money (...). And all the underground indie stuff... (...) And (...) on our floor, we've got a steady stream of heavy rock, I mean, we couldn't stop selling it... because we're making a profit on that... The rock and pop, not so much... But we have to keep it for the passing [trade]... And the soul, it all depends on the week... And with dance music, it's a steady stream... There's always new stuff... Whereas soul and jazz, you have to... big albums basically...

From year to year, they incorporated, modified and even dropped sections depending on the profits they could make, though they decided to continue the general 'rock and pop' section to keep some attraction for the 'passing trade'. It is a good example of how a minority business, thanks to a marked sensitivity to minority crowds, could also be profitable.

In this section we have seen how both big commercial and small specialised businesses are clearly responsive to their customers. We have seen that consumer behaviour has a direct impact on the music all of them provide. This does not mean, however, that we should just see all of these initiatives as democratically responding to the taste of their consumers. We must not forget that the power of commercial music lies in its visibility through media exposure and nightlife presence, and is thus more likely to be known and listened to. At the same time, we have seen how big commercial mainstream businesses need to pay constant attention to what their customers and audiences select among everything that is offered. In other words, rather than seeing the 'commercial' music industry as imposing whatever music they want, we should rather see it as functioning as a 'gatekeeper' of the centre of musical geographies. We will analyse it later, when dealing with what we call the market's power structure.

View of musical and youth geographies

We have seen the way individuals taking decisions in the music industry use different sources of feedback from their consumers to decide the music they will use or try to sell. This does not necessarily mean that they have an accurate idea of the coordinates of musical and youth geographies as a whole. One thing is to know that one's own customers are not dancing to a song, or are making more requests for a particular style of music, or are different from the bar next door, and a completely different thing is to know how they are positioned within general youth and musical geographies. In this section we will analyse what their view is about general musical and youth geographies from the perspective of their particular businesses.

It is clear that when they segmented their offer, or took into account their positioning in the market, they were implicitly referring to youth and social

geographies. When they compared their business to others in the city, saying for instance that 'I'd say it's a bit trendier down here', or arguing that 'Broad Street is more tacky, yeah, if you go to Broad Street you're gonna get... you find a lot more people that are called Trevor and Sharon, whereas here it's a lot of alternative people, it's all different, a bit of a mixture of people', it is obvious that they had an implicit view on youth geographies. Mark, the DJ and promoter of an indie night, put it as follows:

Mark: There is a difference between what you may call a 'credible' music scene as opposed to the 'mainstream chart' scene. Yes. I think the mainstream chart sound is getting worse and worse. They are worse than ever. So that's... that's a bit discouraging... It's just kids, I think... Kids buying the singles. Like... how many new Britney Spears are over there? It's like the music industry sees that as easy money, and it works, obviously...

Those night bars that segmented their nights believed that different music policies implied different crowds. In other words, the industry was always taking into consideration, reflexively or not, the particular crowd to which it was oriented, and this was not only about taste in music, but often also about social features like generalised advantage, spending power, ethnicity, sex or age.

Typifying one's customers

Sean, of a bar playing commercial music, explained that he attracted 'people with jobs, with proper jobs, with money to spend'. He proudly pointed out that his bar looked for middle-class customers: 'Do you see the type of people? (...) Middle class, this is what we look for. Up, up!'. Adam, of one of the house clubs in Birmingham, distinguished between a 'more student-oriented' crowd on Fridays and a 'more working-class-oriented' crowd on Saturdays. As for house music, he would not say that it was a mainly white thing, whereas Alex, at a bar in Broad Street, considered it to be more widespread and 'predominantly white'. The crowd in the bar was defined by Alex as 'possibly bordering on middle class (...). Some young professionals, probably mainly working class, but working-class people who want to dress up and want to go up. (...) It's a young trendy crowd, with a comfortable disposable income'. She distinguished it from both an exclusive people's bar and also from places that played garage music, which she considered to be 'more a working-class thing'. In the club and concert venue in Barcelona, Juan explained that the club, after failing to attract a diverse crowd, as it used to do in the 80s, ended by attracting a middle-upper-class crowd, or at least a crowd with a high spending capacity. The DJ of a dance club in the same city, on the other hand, assured me that his crowd was a real mix that could not be identified as either '*pijo*' or '*garrulo*': 'És un públic bastant comú. O sigui, no pots definir que tenim un públic *pijo*, o un públic *garrulo*, o un públic tal. És una barreja de gent. Hi ha de tot'. He explained that their younger male customers tended to like harder beats.

Not only those working in the nightlife economy but also in other businesses like record shops developed their particular views on musical and youth geographies as a result of their interaction with their customers. Matt, of an specialised record shop, when asked to identify his customers in terms of class, ethnicity and gender, was willing to do so, although with caution and regarding his words merely as a broad generalisation:

Matt: Probably more middle class. Yeah, yeah, definitely. The working class tends to be... just the two basic types of music: you've got the dance stuff... house... and the garage... That's very working class and we don't stock that at all... (...) When the people come to the store, you can tell the working class kids, they always ask for garage [*laughing*] or they ask for... you know? Any other... just completely different type of... (...) There's also basic sort of heavy metal...'

Roger: In the same sense about middle class... what about ethnicity? Black, Asian, white...

Matt: Mmm... In this city... mmmm... Well, most of the black guys who come in are over rap, hip hop, drum 'n' bass... reggae... We stopped selling r'n'b. The old classic soul stuff, 60s soul, 70s soul, seems to be white guys buying that. (...) The strange thing about the reggae stuff... if a black guy buys reggae he never buys dub. They always buy the vocal stuff. It's white guys who buy the dub.

Roger: And also the vocal? Or only dub?

Matt: Well, he'll buy both, but... because there's a black guy who told me. He said: "When you look at the sections, if you notice", he says, "Black guys all buy the poets, the songs, and white guys always buy the dub". There's exceptions, but it's true.

Roger: And is it only men who come here?

Matt: Yeah, yeah. You do get women, but it's a small percentage. It's always been... history...

He said, however, that the overlap between music styles and social origins was stronger than it used to be when he was young. He recalled youth and musical geographies when he was young, between 'working class skinhead guys', 'soul boys' and 'rock boys', without any contact between them whatsoever. His impression from rock concerts he had attended in other European countries was that music fans in the rest of Europe were not so classified in age groups and different styles as in England.

Jason, of the other specialised record shop in Birmingham included in the fieldwork, was also able to distinguish the customers in the different sections of the shop: 'It's mainly white downstairs, [*in the indie section*] (...). And then, upstairs [*in the underground dance section*] it's all predominantly black... It tends to...'. In terms of class, however, he could not make any generalisation ('It's just a mix. It's all kids. (...) They follow fashions... so they all come with all the make up... They try to be individual but they are all the same... It's bizarre...'). In terms of sex, he also explained that the DJs' section only got about 10% women, whereas the other ones had more balanced proportions. He believed that there was

an important difference between men and women when it comes to music, in that men are more interested in developing a knowledgeable and discriminating taste⁷:

Jason: If a man hears a record on the radio, if he is into it, he has to know what it is and buy it, whereas a woman will say, 'That's nice', but she doesn't mind whether... But that's a generalisation, of course, there's a lot of women coming in and spending a fortune, but generally the people who spend the money on our floor, it's the men... Generally...

His knowledge about record sales led him to explain that the Midlands had its own specificity, consisting in selling a lot of soul albums that would not sell much in the rest of the country. Steve, at the record megastore, also mentioned the specificity of Birmingham in relation to other cities in England:

Steve: Birmingham does well at r'n'b, and... not so well at other types of dance music [like] house and garage (...). And you will find different stores through the country that do better at other types of music. For example, country music is very big in Norwich.

Roger: What about indie and rock music?

Steve: Mmm... rock music... we do reasonably well with rock music here... It's... mmm... mostly older rock rather than newer guitar-based rock.

He added that his customers tended to be predominantly male (about 65% of all customers), although he did not focus on them ('It's the same in all the stores'). Girls, he explained, tended to buy more singles. In terms of class, he considered it to be very diverse. In terms of ethnicity, he said that, as a very broad generalisation, 'r'n'b customers do tend to be black... but not always'.

James, of the big commercial dance club, had an idea about the imbrication between musical and youth geographies. We have already shown how he saw garage music as attracting a higher proportion of girls, as long as he stuck to its chart versions. But in terms of ethnicity, he claimed that the specialised styles were the ones that could be linked to particular ethnic groups:

James: The more specialist it goes... perhaps there's an ethnicity about it, it becomes more a black thing, an Asian thing. (...) Certainly there's more non-white on the Thursday than there is on the Friday, because on the Friday it's pop, it's pop music. Although having said that, a lot of the Asian, West Indian, white.... a lot of them would just come here because they enjoy the environment, an open friendly environment with the opportunity of speaking to members of the opposite sex. This is just as important as music in this particular venue.

Any music that made the charts was immediately considered 'pop' – in the sense of 'popular'. The 'charts' were the guarantee of what he considered to be a

⁷ See Martínez (2002) for an analysis of this type of generalisations about male and female dispositions in relation to youth styles and popular music.

rather 'neutral' music to play in his club. Just the opposite of those who promoted nights at the bar playing underground music. Paul, who did a hip hop night, described his crowd as a 'pretty even mix': 'Maybe half, maybe slightly more, are sort of... probably students, on the whole white, probably middle class. I don't know, it's a guess really. And I'd say probably about half, and maybe less, of sort of... non-students, I don't know, class is anybody's guess. I don't know, everywhere between middle and lower. I don't know, it's impossible to say really. I think it's quite evenly spread, really'. Paul, as many of the interviewees, did not like to generalise and felt uncomfortable doing it. Hip hop was, from his point of view, 'such a diverse thing' that it was not fair to make any generalisation, since it could be commercial but also underground, rough but also arty avant-garde when mixed with jazz and poetry. He distinguished between the underground hip hop scene and commercial rap, r'n'b and garage music, which he considered to be Afro-Caribbean 'mainstream music':

Paul: And I think that the kind of people that are into the kind of commercial kind of hip hop are more likely to be sort of... to cross over in the sort of other commercial scenes, like the r'n'b, the garage and that sort of thing. Yeah, the kind of nights, in the more sort of commercial you've got also played r'n'b and garage, which is sort of... I guess perceived as the kind of like... commercial end of black mainstream music, I suppose, you know? Whereas I think... hip hop as we see in the more underground sound it was very black, but now there's not this identification, it's... it's equally black and white.

The manager of the bar was also reluctant to 'stereotype' his customers and insisted that it was more 'fluid' than any categorisation would make it seem. He identified a lot of students and also an important section that would probably be working class, and explained how trip hop tended to appeal to students, and broadly speaking rock and indie music tended to be liked more by the middle class, whereas dance music attracted more working class people, although he always insisted that 'there's nothing definitive about it'. Tom, the promoter who was trying to push a drum'n'bass night at the bar, insisted on the importance of students for many of the underground events, particularly events in the middle of the week; at the same time he identified the Afro-Caribbean and Asian source of innovation within most underground scenes.

Richard, the interviewee who promoted indie concerts in Birmingham, stressed that this was a difficult matter to talk about (because of the danger and risk of making excessive generalisations) apart from the obvious: 'I'd say there's more white male people, the gigs, than there're black people or women for that matter. It's a boys' thing, really, guitars...' (the two gigs I attended were indeed all-white and overwhelmingly male). He was also aware that even if there were as many bands as in the past, they were rapidly growing older; instead of having ten teenage bands, he only had 2 or 3 at the time of the interview. The others were in their twenties or thirties. Mark, the promoter and DJ of the indie club night, explained that his crowd was mainly composed of students and that he had an

balanced participation of boys and girls, which was good from his point of view. He attributed this high presence of girls to the fact that he did not play 'the rockier bands like Offspring'. He explained it as follows: 'I think that these bands would appeal slightly more to the boys... And because we play... less of that... and throw in a lot of funky... funky music... And the girls like that... So maybe we do get more girls than the average because of that'.

All these examples show that those working in the industries around music had an idea of the social composition of their customers not only in terms of the music or youth style that defined them, but also their 'structural' features. In terms of musical geographies, they had an idea of what was mainstream, popular or trendy, and also what was going on – however imprecisely – in alternative scenes. In terms of their imbrication with social hierarchies, they often tried to typify their customers and other young people through words like 'high spending capacity', 'tacky', 'towny', 'boyish', 'student', 'black', 'garrulo', 'pijo', and so on. At the same time, nevertheless, their view on general musical and youth geographies did not tend to be a clear-cut map but an imprecise and diffuse image. Depending on the perspective of their business, they got a different impression about *what was going on* in the city as a whole, as well as how it was evolving. The social knowledge about musical and youth geographies is unequally distributed, so even if they were professionally committed to the field, they had only a partial knowledge of them. We will illustrate it through one example: Matt, at one specialised record shop, thought that it didn't seem to be an indie scene at the moment, whereas Jason, from another one not far from the first one, had just the opposite impression on the basis of the constant flow of young kids buying indie records in his shop. And yet another interviewee, the garage MC Mike, perceived rock music in general to be an out-of-date music that was not for young people. He said that it was difficult to find in Birmingham. Three different views on indie and guitar music in general that make clear how the perspective of each of them produced different knowledge about musical geographies. This also happened in relation to their imbrication with social hierarchies. Garage music is a good example, in that whereas for most interviewees it was 'black' music that might bring 'trouble' to their businesses, for a few others it was – even if generally in its more 'commercial' versions – a 'soulful' and 'trendy' music that would help them to attract more women.

Megastores, because of the wide varieties of music they sold, had the opportunity to balance the selling power of different music genres across time (even though they were not a good indicator of many minority music styles that were predominantly sold in small independent record shops). Take, for instance, the rise of the electronic music in Barcelona that the megastore grouped under the categories '*noves tendències*' and 'dance':

Francisco: El *dance* ha hecho como tres crecimientos.

Albert: Noves tendències, tres.

Francisco: Y si pudiéramos crecería más todavía.

Roger: Sí? Noteu que falta una mica d'espai?

Francisco: Sí. Sí.

Albert: Sí. Sí perquè això va a l'alça total.

In the same shop, the pop-rock section had stable selling figures, and other styles like country and blues had suffered sharp falls during the previous few years, as well as classic rock'n'roll and French music. Others, like hard-rock, had slightly decreased the records sold. Francisco and Albert made their own generalisations about their customers: they identified them as being from a quite high social level (the megastore was in a wealthy neighbourhood). In terms of age, some products like dance compilations were seen as attracting a particularly young customer, and others like '*noves tendències*' a more adult and professional clientele:

Francisco: Por lo que vemos, nuevas tendencias, hostia, ves gente que luego te vas enterando, uno es médico porque le llaman por móvil y te enteras de la profesión [*laughing*], director, por ejemplo, del centro comercial (...)... Entonces vas detectando de que, otras, es gente de un poder adquisitivo alto. En cambio el alternativo pues... es más bohemio; es como dice él gente con *pearcings* i... Puede haber también gente un poco más elitista.

Their sections also got more men than women, but some sections like 'melòdics' attracted more women. In general, the shop attracted a more Catalan-speaking clientele, but again, dance compilations inverted this trend ('potser tira més castellà, però no massa més'). They also discriminated their customers in terms of their attitude towards music: some were very well informed and looked for artists that could not even be found in specialised magazines, others came to the store without any clear idea; others just came with the latest thing that they had heard on the radio, and still others came everyday to check whether the shop had any new releases.

Commercial radio stations were also in a privileged position to gain a broad picture of musical geographies. Since they had a limited personal knowledge about their customers – or at least visual personal knowledge – as we have already noted, they tended to use marketing surveys as a source of information about the sociographic features of their audience, both actual and potential. Bob, of a dance radio station in Birmingham, describes his audience:

Roger: How is your audience? You said that it's 20-29...

Bob: Well, the main part of our audience is 15-24, and we still have a quite big amount of people which is 25-34.

Roger: It is mainly Afro-Caribbean? Or you have a lot of whites?

Bob: Yeah, I guess you could say that we have a fair amount of Afro-Caribbean listening to [our station]. Let's put it this way, 40-50 per cent of the Afro-Caribbean young people listen to [it] at least once a week.

Roger: And what about social class?

Bob: We do have a lot of working class people listening to [us], but also a fair amount of middle class people. We do get a lot of middle class audience.

Ian, of one of the more commercial radios in Birmingham, also explained that they also asked what young people who did not listen to them would like them to play. Big commercial radio stations were thus aware of the different sensibilities in musical and youth geographies.

In conclusion, those working in the music industry did have an impression – and often tried to make sense – of musical and youth geographies, as well as of their articulation with social hierarchies, although in general they just had a vague idea about them. They no doubt tended to be more informed about different scenes than average youngsters, but the fact is that they generally only had deep systematic knowledge about their particular scenes. Their main concern was their business and customers, and their typified knowledge about more general aspects was rather blurred and imprecise. In some cases, it was even considerably limited. They comprehended musical and youth geographies through the window of their businesses and network of personal and professional relations. Far from having a complete knowledge of what was going on in the city, therefore, they had a partial and incomplete impression of it. We will better understand the way they produced knowledge about musical and youth geographies if we look at the way the nightlife economy managed what was called ‘the wrong crowd’.

The wrong crowd and door policy

As we have seen, many of those taking decisions in the music industry were well aware of the socioeconomic status of their customers in terms of occupational profile, ethnicity or gender composition. Both socioeconomic position and ethnicity, however, had a particular importance in the nightlife economy inasmuch as they were directly related to what was called ‘the wrong crowd’, that is, those customers that were seen as trouble-makers and thus very dangerous for the atmosphere of a given bar or club or even a ‘scene’. The ‘wrong crowd’ was a key aspect of night-life differentiation, and different music styles were seen as attracting or not what were seen as ‘wrong crowds’.

Garage music in Birmingham and *màkina* music in Barcelona were often identified by interviewees with ‘the wrong crowd’, and this directly influenced the music policies of many bars and clubs. Alex, of a bar in Broad Street in Birmingham, offers a good illustration:

Alex: We are open to try everything... There're some things that we won't try... We won't do a garage night.

Roger: Why?

Alex: Because of the type of clientele that it brings. It tends to be a young crowd... and a more drug-based crowd. The soul night was very much a risk for us, and still is. We must have a lot of security here, because it brings in drugs, and they are very moody. So you really got to think about the type of music... We don't do bhangra, as a rule, because it brings an Asian crowd that can kick off a fight amongst themselves as quick as anything.

Roger: Yeah? It's easier among black and Asian then?

Alex: They tend to be more moody yeah. You can feel that. I can have... a night when we don't have any Asian or black and a fight kicks off, you don't know that. But I think people who are very serious about their music, it can bring an attitude with them, and that's why we've got to be careful.

Roger: And you don't do drum 'n' bass.

Alex: We don't have drum 'n' bass, no. We'll have sometimes during the day, because some of my staff do drum 'n' bass DJing. But it's not... again it's not... Drum 'n' bass, for me, carries the same sort of garage crowd... It's young...

Their r'n'b or soul night attracted an Afro-Caribbean crowd, and their occasional bhangra night (where garage and some r'n'b were also played) an Asian crowd. John, the manager of a club in Broad Street explained that he once did a bhangra night, but that he would never do it again 'because they bring the wrong type of crowd':

John: One time we did a bhangra night, because we got the offer and we didn't know that it was gonna be bhangra music, and it was horrible. I don't say it because they were Indian, I hate to say that, but because they had a really bad attitude. You could smell drugs in the air, they were bumping into each other and starting fights. It was a nightmare. (...) And never again. And it's a pity really, because I enjoyed the music. I wouldn't have listened to it if it were not for that night, but no way.

This did not imply that they did not play bhangra or garage music at all. Many places would do so if the songs made the charts. It was not important not to play the music, but the nights must not be perceived as 'bhangra' or 'garage' nights, so they would just play the more commercial versions of each style and mix them within house or varied sets. Peter, the new manager of a bar in Birmingham, explained that 'apparently before [I came, the previous manager] did put a garage night on. And it got too muddy. It gets a bit the wrong crowd, too much garage always does that'. Peter saw that when he played garage there was 'more of a reaction' from his customers, but he considered that he could not play it 'too much' because it would then attract unwelcome elements: 'If you have a regular garage night you will attract the wrong crowd, so we just throw it in with the rest of the mix... and that's it'.

Adam, at the house club in Birmingham, defined the music he played in the club as 'house and garage', but then explained that apart from some popular tunes mixed with house music, he would not play garage: 'I don't like to say it, but if you play garage, two-step, drum 'n' bass, jungle... you will attract trouble...'. He identified these different styles with the same type of people ('the soul crowd'). He was nevertheless aware that, depending on how it was advertised, it was possible to play garage without attracting what he considered to be 'bad people':

Adam: If you do it in say (...) a big venue, then you will attract a mixture of people and some people don't know what to expect... When there's a big mixture of a crowd you're always gonna get trouble, and it's hard to police. But as I said, when you advertise as a house club, people pretty much know what they're coming to

hear, so somebody who likes drum 'n' bass or jungle wouldn't come to a house club, because they know what sort of music is gonna be played...

He considered garage to be a more working-class music. The link between social class and ethnicity was implicit rather than explicit in many of the interviewees' words. In Birmingham there was a clear belief that Afro-Caribbean or Asian specialised music could more easily attract trouble. This belief, however, lacked any nuanced approach to these ethnicities, as if it was impossible to distinguish between them, as distinct from the white customers. These ethnic minorities were diverse, as was the white 'crowd', and different nights could therefore attract different 'segments' of them, but this was not made explicit by most interviewees. John, the club manager who said that he would never hold an Asian night again, was very happy about his 'salsa' night, which attracted a considerable number of black people and Latinos:

John: The atmosphere is great. They drink much less, and they come specially because they want to dance (...). To be honest, I prefer the atmosphere on Thursday night than any other day. It's such a good crowd. It's a great night (...) This is because (touch wood) we have done things well. The promoters of the night are very professional people, and the right sort of crowd follow them wherever they go. That has been a good thing.

He did not believe that the 'wrong crowd' was limited to bhangra or garage music, but to any style of music: 'In everything there is the good crowd and the bad crowd, isn't that right?'. Several interviewees referred to clubs playing other styles of music having to deal with trouble on their premises. Arthur, of the dance club attracting star DJs, mentioned that they had problems but had solved them. Sean, of a bar in Broad Street, explained that he played half commercial music because 'if you play too hardcore, then you have the people with pills, and we don't want that. We want happy people who come here and drink. If not you only sell water, and we want to sell drinks, to make money'.

In Barcelona, *màkina* music was the style that was clearly linked to the 'wrong crowd', even though not with the same intensity. The DJ of a commercial dance club said that he avoided playing hard *màkina* music, or being identified as a *màkina* club, because it could bring in 'violència, drogues'. Consequently, he stuck to – as he put it – the more commercial *màkina*: 'La màkina més cantadeta':

DJ Fiesta: No. Nosaltres o sigui al principi de la màkina, la màkina era una música que portava un públic que "en teoria" nosaltres no volíem perquè aquest públic "en teoria" és el que porta problemes, no? Que hi ha baralles als pàrquings, baralles dins i tota la història, no? Llavors quan la màkina ja es va introduir del tot no vam tenir més nassos que *ficar algo* de màkina per guanyar públic, però no aquest públic del tot... O sigui *ficar* una màkina que no fos massa forta. Una màkina cantadeta. (...) Sempre dins d'un estil *lo* més comercial possible. (...) I va funcionar bé.

As happened with garage in Birmingham, they played the more commercial versions of *màkina*, since it was very popular, but advertised it in ways that kept what they saw as ‘the bad crowd’ away from the club, for instance by not specifying the music they played in the flyers, or by simply saying it was ‘dance’ and ‘house’. They would never put in black and white that they played *màkina* ‘per no portar aquest tipus de gent’.

At one concert venue they explained that they would play any music but hip hop because when they had had hip hop concerts in the past, even if they had increased the security measures, there had always been some graffiti in the toilets. And a different club manager explained that he avoided the hip hop crowd in Barcelona: ‘El hip hop és una moguda de barri, *barriobajera* i, és que clar, personalment, del rotllo aquest de “ja, ja” no, em posa nerviós, i no’.

There were also several bars and clubs that did not consider fights and drugs as a potential problem. Those in charge of the Medicine bar and indie concerts and club nights claimed that their events were very peaceful, even though their door policy was much more relaxed than most others. Paul explained that they hadn’t had any trouble on their hip hop night. Tom, a drum ‘n’ bass promoter who regularly attended Paul’s hip hop night, considered that on those nights there was a ‘bigger mix than anywhere else’, in the sense that even if it was a predominantly white event, there was a considerable racial mix, which can be taken as another example of the fact that trouble could not be straightforwardly identified with certain music styles or ethnicities, but rather with a combination of ingredients..

Trouble, indeed, was very unevenly distributed among different bars and clubs. Richard, the indie concert promoter, explained that in the 150 gigs a year he had organised over the last 10 years, he had had to deal with just two fights. Mark, of the indie club, said that he had much less trouble with fights than most clubs: ‘I think that every club, at some point, has [to deal with fights]... But we can go nights, quite a few nights without any trouble at all’. They had just started the same night in a club in another city of the Midlands and after the first four nights the management of the club told them that their crowd was far better behaved than most. James, the manager of the big commercial club, explained how his different nights brought different levels of trouble:

James: If you are aware that over the week there may be seven to eight thousand people coming to the club, I will need to deal with probably ten incidents. And possibly two incidents that may be requiring ambulance. So yes, it’s horrible, and it’s not good. However, out of 7 or 8 thousand people is, you know, it’s probably 2 dozen people involved.

Roger: It’s more on the weekends? Or it’s random?

James: It’s random.

Roger: Student nights as well?

James: Student nights actually are OK, they are not badly behaved, once or twice, you know?

Roger: It’s more quiet, more pacific, then?

James: Yes, in terms of fighting, they are not really... Aggression, no.

In his club, students were better behaved than the other crowds, who were of 'lower' social status. According to two interviewees, however, apart from social status, stylistic aspects played an important role in that even if dance and cheesy clubs often shared similar customers in terms of social origin, the former tended to suffer much less 'trouble' than the latter. As Adam, manager of a house club, pointed out, 'The dance scene isn't really associated with fighting... I think you find that more so with the cheese clubs that play the chart music, because it's very beer orientated...'. Tom, a promoter of a night in a bar, also pointed to the nights with 'people who drink a lot of beer, and then try to pull women and that sort of thing' as those who would get people fighting.

The expression 'wrong crowd' codified to a great extent the way social categories like generalised advantage or ethnicity were experienced and typified, not straightforwardly but in rather complex and indirect ways, that is, through youth and musical stylistic differentiations. This means that it was not social position or ethnicity what was typified, but their combination with stylistic identifications. In Birmingham, the extreme styles identified with the pole of 'trouble' were what several interviewees called 'the gangsta element', that is, those individuals and gangs involved in crime and drug-dealing who used violence as a means to acquire respect. According to many interviewees, the imbrication between music and the 'gangsta element' was very important, in that those involved in crime and drug-dealing always looked for the trendiest music scene, but as soon as they got in there, they made it dangerous and thus spoiled it:

Mike: Drum 'n' bass, yeah. Hard. Proper hard music. And it was more mainly like white people. And... it was a good scene, it was a good scene! And then, it was like... it changed [*complaining*]. Then we got the MCs style, because that was all about having a good time basically, I'm talking about drugs, Ecstasy and stuff like that... And then the jungle scene... Drum 'n' bass turned to jungle scene, and the jungle scene... more black people started to get involved in it, more ethnic minorities, started to mix up. (...) It was like... the cultures were starting to mix. When they came, now, they brought the gangsta element into it. They brought that into it because... you've got... eh... you've got different places like Manchester, and when you get to Manchester you've got places which are not nice really [*emphasising*]... and they've got their own gangland element and stuff like that, and they brought it into the music, and they brought... it's mixed up... the Manchester is the main one, and then in Birmingham you've got the main one. And then when they mix, it's like a war zone in some places. So... it killed the scene, when the gangsta element came into it. And it killed it. Then... what's next? What's the next best thing?

Mike linked the entrance of Afro-Caribbean people into the jungle scene to the introduction of 'heavier beats' and 'ragga samples' into the music. It also changed the bass line, which started to get harder. After seeing a few shootings on several

nights out, he quit the scene because he felt that it was too dangerous⁸. As he saw it, the problem was that the trendiest scene was used by gangs as the stage for their fight for reputation.

Mike: They go out, a lot of the time, just to show off, basically, it's all show-off, it's all show... If they go out, people see... the people stood all there around, it's like this. It's like this, yeah. They go to this... there'll be enough people in there, just go in there, just to be seen. It's the latest thing at the moment, it's the craze, it's where everyone's gonna be there... They've got to go there, even if they don't make any trouble, they've got to be seen, you know? Cause some type of disturbance, so everyone would say, "Oh... such and such, I'll mess with him". Then, if no one sees them, no one really knows. If no one sees them, you can't fear them. But if you see them out, nearly every club you go to... (...) Just being dangerous, you know? Like, giving the attitude, having the attitude, you know? People is gonna say, "such and such, such and such reputation", that's how it's gonna be. And that's what they want, and that attracts trouble from the other people who are out there looking for a reputation, you have the people above you and the people below you. If you wanna have a reputation, the best way... you want to cause as much trouble as possible, and that'll be a big reputation. They go after someone, in there, and go after him. Everyone will be talking about it. Because there's no drama unless people is talking about it. So that's basically what it is: go out, show off.

Nightlife was not only a stage for their search for reputation, but a fantastic opportunity to make money. As one music promoter pointed out, large clubs and events were likely to attract trouble through drug dealing: 'There's lots of people there, and a lot of money to be made...'. Another promoter said that door firms competed against each other and in their attempt to keep trouble off the premises, and often negotiated the drug-selling business with gangs: 'Because of course... it was who was selling the drugs in the nightclub, and the door firm, and da, da, da...'. Another interviewee who was doing occasional big nights explained that he had hired as a security team one of the most renowned gangs in the area because it was the best way of keeping trouble away from his event⁹.

Mike, a pirate radio MC, claimed that the pirate radio station had changed things in that it had allowed young people to hear garage music 'without having to go to any dodgy clubs in dodgy areas'. The problem was, however, that al-

⁸ As noted in a previous footnote, the recurrence of shootings in the garage scene later occupied many tabloid pages following the many incidents accompanying the So Solid Crew, at the top of the charts in 2001. These included stabbings, shootings and some deaths at their gigs, as well as some of their members facing criminal charges for murder.

⁹ See Sanders (2005) for an ethnographic account of the participation of bouncers (security guards) in ecstasy drug dealing in clubs. The article analyses the normalisation of drug consumption in the club and quotes one of the bouncers saying that 'Yeah, basically the way it works in most English clubs is the doormen try and control the drug trade. One: because there's a lot of money to be made. And two: if they control the drug trade then they know who they are up against – themselves' (2005: 252). Chatterton & Hollands (2003) also noted the need to clarify the link sometimes found between door cultures and criminal cultures.

though these people all listened to the radio and rang the station, they did not go to the raves. He guessed that the reason could be ‘the fear... the fear of shooting and the fear of stuff like that’. At the same time, the ‘gangsta element’ had become a major attraction among young people. As Noel, the manager of the bar playing underground music, pointed out, ‘The thing that sells in some ways is that gangsta bad boy... It sells a lot of music... Garage and drum ‘n’ bass and things like that...’. Mike, the garage MC, claimed that gangsta rap would never be accepted on the radio because the lyrics could not go mainstream. Dean, a garage DJ dismissed those who were incorporating the romanticisation of the gangsta element into the genre: ‘Tunes attract the wrong element. [*he plays a record with shooting in it*]. (...) I won’t play, I won’t promote it, but basically all the DJs don’t give a fuck’.

Safety and a good atmosphere were thus important aspects for people in the nightlife economy. Besides the music they played and ‘advertising’, there was another main tool that bars and clubs used to avoid having the wrong crowd on their premises: their door policy. This issue is too complex and delicate to be analysed in depth from the few generic interviews of this research, but we can highlight several aspects. First of all, it must be understood that door policy is a strong segregation instrument in the hands of bar and club managers. It is not only that in Birmingham students’ nights, for instance, were policed through student IDs (a practice that did not exist, as far as I know, in Barcelona), but also that in many bars and clubs the doormen selected the people that could get in to make sure they (at least apparently) matched the type of customer that was expected. The manager of a club, for instance, believed that the good atmosphere in his club was due largely to the good job of their doormen:

John: [*Security*] is important but it’s not a problem. The men who is on the door have been here for many years, and they do their job very well. We have a reputation for having a strict door policy, and they do it very well.

Roger: What do you mean by ‘do it very well’?

John: I mean that they select people very well, so the audience will feel safe inside and a good atmosphere will be guaranteed.

Long after the fieldwork was carried out, in 2006, the indie club Snobs claimed on its website¹⁰ that it had ‘probably the best door policy in Birmingham’, and justified it as follows:

[S]trictly no chavs! We like our punters to have a good time so we’ve banned the burberry wearing trouble makers you find at other clubs. We don’t want the “chav” crowd ruining the nights at Snobs, just the happy, friendly good time people to come along and have the best time they can... So if you’re the type to wear football tops, caps, Rockport, Burberry, or Hackett you probably won’t get in!

¹⁰ <http://www.snobsnightclub.co.uk/aboutus.html> (consulted January 3, 2006)

The truth is that this ‘sanitisation’¹¹ of nightlife premises involved an important amount of direct physical¹² and symbolic violence. Door policies, when collectively implemented, lead to a situation where a strong segregation occurred in terms of physical appearance. As we will see later, an Afro-Caribbean interviewee explained that he had heard – but could not confirm – that Broad Street and city centre bars had a 2 percent diversity policy, which would mean that they accepted customers from ethnic minorities, but tried to limit them to a maximum of one in fifty. Observation clearly confirmed that Broad Street and the city centre did attract very few young Asians and Afro-Caribbeans, although this does not prove that this was the result of intentional door policies. None of the interviewees made any reference to this rule, although it was clear that the music styles that could clearly attract ethnic minorities were consciously avoided with the argument that they attracted more trouble and thus tended to involve higher security costs. This justification must be contrasted with the fact that when white crowds created trouble, as we will analyse later, more selective and nuanced strategies were implemented. Arthur, of the dance club with star DJs, explained that when they had a problem of fights in the club, they just implemented a strict dress code to filter out some of the people they saw as causing trouble:

Arthur: Because of the strict dress code, it's a specific type of crowd. Because at the beginning we had a lot of people that after Broad Street came over, and created a lot of trouble. And then we got more strict with the dress code, and for example we don't allow some labels, like Knickers and so on. And now we don't have fights at all. Now it's a very nice atmosphere.

A club in Barcelona that tried to avoid attracting ‘hard’ *makineros*, also used a particular dress code to keep them out. Those wearing trainers, short hair or Bomber jackets were generally not allowed into the club. A techno promoter also explained the problems they faced when *makineros* attended their events:

Guillem: Clar, però *bueno* el públic sí que segons com... Això ens hi hem trobat nosaltres al muntar a vegades festes o locals amb música *techno* que se't colen *ex-makineros* o *makineros* que et vénen allà perquè els hi *mola* també allò però que... (...) Ens hi hem trobat bastant i ha sigut un dels problemes que hi ha hagut. Anem a muntar una sala de música electrònica i que se t'omple de *makineros* o de semi-xusma, que no interessa, no? Llavors la gent que no li agrada això hòstia es queixen i... és un equilibri molt difícil. Llavors ja entres amb els problemes que fas a la porta? Deixes entrar aquests o aquests no? I per què? Quins criteris segueixes? És

¹¹ See Chatterton & Hollands (2003) for an analysis of the relevance of ‘sanitisation’ in the segregation of different social groups in the nightlife economy.

¹² See Winlow *et al.* (2001) for a vivid account of the violence implied in the everyday experience of bouncers. As they remark, ‘Just as bouncers had to engage in violence, they also had to witness it with alarming regularity (...). [During the fieldwork i]t quickly became apparent that violence was indeed a major part of the bouncer’s culture, self-identity and working environment’ (2001: 545-6).

un tema delicat. (...) I en principi, doncs... clar, porta problemes. T'hi trobes bàsicament... [*he gestualizes taking pills*]

Roger: Més òbviament o que? Per què les drogues hi són igualment, no?

Guillem: Sí, hi són igualment però... Nosaltres sempre hem intentat buscar un ambient que fos més heterogeni, o sigui que hi hagués gent normal. Evidentment no et vindrà gent amb una tendència estètica perquè és dissabte a la nit i es posen guapos o guapes, però hem intentat que fos un ambient relativament "normal"... Perquè ja hi ha aquesta tendència, no? Cap als extrems una mica. Però amb les drogues sempre hi ha problemes. Sempre hi ha problemes perquè la gent... I ja no diguem amb els porros que això és *lo* de menys, però gent allà un es fot a prendre pastilles, l'altre... Els lavabos col·lapsats de *penya fotent-se ratlles*. S'ha de vigilar, fotre *segurates*, pot ser que hi hagi algun merder, *bueno*. És un tema delicat aquet.

Pere, of a dance radio station, was well aware that people identified the *màkina* scene with pills, '*pelaos*' and aggressiveness, and the house scene with gays and drag-queens, but he did not like such generalisations because he considered them misleading. He claimed that it was much more complex than that. Through the examples of different clubs and the events promoted by Guillem, we see how without the need to change the style of music, clubs attempted to manage and avoid trouble.

The aggregate result of the diversity of door policies was a very regulated organisation of crowds that to a great extent kept them segregated. It is true that young people also played and negotiated them, and many young people adjusted their physical appearance to the expectations of the places they attended. They explained that in some clubs they could not get in with trainers, very short hair, Alpha jackets or any other '*pelaó*' sign, so they tried to avoid these signs: 'Claro ¿qué pasa? Que todos se empiezan a dejar el pelo largo, lo que les ha pasado a mis amigos'. This means that door policy was an important cultural producer of youth geographies, since young people had to adjust to the imposed codes in their search for fun and pleasure.

In Barcelona not only hardcore *màkina* fans or '*pelaos*', but ethnic immigrant minorities would also be mistrusted by many bars and clubs. In the city centre, a nightlife area *and also* the neighbourhood with an important number of immigrants from ethnic minorities, several bars did not allow in young Arabs and Asians. By contrast, young black people were not generally perceived as a threat. The discourse was the same as in Birmingham: 'Es veten individus que semblen perillosos, que te la poden liar'. The obvious consequence of this policy was that those who were not allowed in felt discriminated. A few Afro-Caribbean, Asian, Moroccan and Pakistani interviewees in Birmingham and Barcelona referred to this: 'No me dejan entrar'; 'Hay porteros que no te dejan pasar... Si, si. Y siempre tienen una excusa, para no decirte que... no se, no tan fuerte como que eres negro, o eres de tal, no, te dicen porque llevas bambas, porque llevas una camiseta que no me gusta...'.

It is clear, therefore, that those in the music industry did not see music as a neutral cultural activity, but rather made sense of their customers in terms of their relative position within musical geographies and social hierarchies. They were

continually making meaning about their customers in their attempt to adjust what was offered. Their typifications about their clientele combined musical and social meanings, that is, considerations about the mainstream or specialised character of the music, but also social aspects ranging from ethnicity to disposable income, from sex to roughness, from age to drug habits. The adjustment of what they provided to what their actual or intended customers demanded was a difficult operation that combined intentional decisions and post-facto adjustments. The way they typified and made sense of young people was rather practical. They saw youth geographies as an opaque reality that manifested itself through particular behaviours (buying decisions, trouble making, clothing, and so on), and rather than producing knowledge about the whole youth social space, they just tried to identify the aspects that helped them to adjust what they did to their actual or potential customers, even if it was more through a trial-and-error process than through an intentional strategy. As we have already noted in the previous chapters, music 'genres' and 'categories' were important tools to try to control and organise the chaos of musical and youth geographies.

Music categories and time

Music categories are the way we try to control what would otherwise be a chaotic conglomeration of sounds. As we have already underlined in Chapter 2 and Chapter 4, music genre categories are relevant to the understanding of both young people's experience of music *and* the formal organisation of the entertainment industry and the process of music-making itself. Consumers, music makers and the music industry use them as a classifying system to organise expectations in both the production and reception of music. Analysing how those taking decisions within the music industry manage and use labels will help us to understand their role in the cultural production of musical geographies. When a club, a radio station, a record shop or a music magazine uses certain music categories, they are 'reifying' them in the eyes of their customers. By objectivating them in flyers, printed pages, radio programmes or labels in a record shop, they are making young people experience them as 'real'.

However, as we have already pointed out, music categories and music genres are not as self-evident as they may seem. On the contrary, they are to a great extent a historical construction that not only relates to musical conventions but also to marketing and consumption strategies. They are 'social' rather than merely 'musical' typifications. Those working in record shops, for instance, found it difficult to choose the music categories to organise their records *and* the actual music category in which to place some records that would not perfectly fit any of them, or would be appropriate in more than one of them. Manuel, in charge of the 'dance' section of the megastore in Barcelona, illustrates it perfectly when explaining the organisation of different artists and music genres in his shop:

Roger: El més *r'n'b* estaria aquí...?

Manuel: Sí. El que és més *r'n'b* i tal doncs... Que tampoc és *hip hop*, encara que hi hagin coses...

Roger: Per exemple, el Craig David estaria aquí...

Manuel: El Craig David...

Roger: I el Artful Dodger? On el posaries?

Manuel: Aquí, mira... (...) Ara el que està de moda allà a Anglaterra és el *dub*... Una mica actualitzat, però ara està *pegant* molt, molt, molt... (...)

Roger: I el teniu allà [a l'altra banda]?

Manuel: Sí, aquest és un altre problema...

Roger: Perquè el *reggae* on és?

Manuel: Aquí [*leading me to another place of the shop*]. A músiques del món. És músiques del món, d'alguna manera, que és *lo* que et deia jo del *dub*, com prové del *reggae*, d'alguna manera, el que... El nou *dub*, el *new dub*, el *tindria que tenir jo*, perquè està més funcionant en electrònica que en instruments... No és de fusió... Clar, el que jo tinc és fusió... De vegades costa de classificar un disc...

Roger: Un mal de cap...

Manuel: Per exemple, aquest, és un grup que fa molt semblant a Portishead, és un *trip hop*, però està aquí a alternatiu. O grups així semblants, per això que posar etiquetes... De vegades és un problema i cada vegada molt més...

It is not only that particular records combine different music genres or that the same artist changes direction or the type of music genre, but also that he or she becomes popular enough to be considered a pop artist instead of a country, indie or world music one. Music categories not only referred to the music itself, but also to its reception and marketing strategies, as the following quote of the manager of a record megastore illustrates it:

Steve: Sometimes an artist moves from one to the other. Particularly if they become popular. Shania Twain, before the last big album was in the country section, but that album was a big seller and we started to put it in rock and pop. But the music was exactly the same, just that it become more accessible and people find it on the ground floor with pop.

World music is a perfect example. The label 'world music' does not point to a specific music genre, but to a commercial category. The pop singer Enrique Iglesias, for instance, was stocked in his megastore in Birmingham as 'world music' until he sang in English and made the charts: 'Yes, (...) when a world artist become popular, we will probably move it into rock and pop. The most recent example is Enrique Iglesias who used to be in world music and went straight to rock and pop'.

Even if categories might pose a problem to the music industry, they were very useful in reducing uncertainty and organising their economic processes. They were part of their organisational structure, their marketing strategies and their communication with customers. Underground and alternative initiatives tended to use more specialised styles, whereas commercial businesses generally used general music categories that could attract a wide audience. Ian, of a commercial pop Birmingham's radio station, for instance, defined the music they played as just

'contemporary hit music', and Adam, of the house nightclub, only used the 'house' category to avoid being seen as too specialised.

Adam: Mmm... It's easier to say 'house' because house can cover a big range of things... If you label it on the flyer and say Step-garage, or two-step, or something else, you will attract a certain amount of people that want to hear just that, and then when they come to your club and you are not playing that, they will be pissed off and they wanna know why, because you advertised that... If you advertise house you can play whatever you like, really, to be honest with you. It's like the garage scene, the garage scene it's going through a really big change at the moment... because [suddenly], like this garage [tune that] was number one last week on the charts... (...) But yeah, there's a lot of labels you can... you can get a flyer with fifty or sixty little names on it, but then you just confuse everybody...

Roger: So you use just "house"...

Adam: Just house, yeah. People know that when they come to the club that's what they are gonna hear... (...)

Roger: And do you use trance in the flyers?

Adam: No, I don't use trance but we do play trance... If you tend to advertise trance, 80% of the crowd don't like trance, again it goes back to the garage thing as I said: we'll play one or two trance tracks which are quite big, but if you advertise it just as trance, they won't be interested...

Roger: Trance is more underground?

Adam: Yeah, it's heavier, yeah, it's more a specialised taste...

Roger: All right, since it was very big last year I thought it had become completely mainstream...

Adam: Trance, trance's quite heavy. In the early days of rave it was quite big, but now... It's been a little come-back now, a lot of people are playing trance now...

Adam explained that there was a 'massive difference' between a 'house' crowd and a drum 'n' bass one; whereas house was 'far more easy listening, easy to the ear', drum 'n' bass was 'very, very, very hard, it's just too fast!'. There were, naturally, many differences within the 'house' crowd, from more mainstream to more specialised versions of it, but in general it was considered a broad category different from those narrower specialised terms. Arthur, of the club with star DJs, defined the music they played as follows: 'In one [room] we play vocal house, a bit of garage, this kind of stuff. The second one is more or less the same, but a little bit more funky house, progressive and that. In the main room we have the top DJs, and the music depends on what they play really'. Alex, of one of the bars in Broad Street, defined their music policy as 'uplifting house music and dance'. Peter, of a bar in the city centre, in his flyers talked about 'funky, house, rare grooves, club classics'. All of them were general terms that could appeal to a wide clientele.

The status of 'house' music as 'easy listening' and 'mainstream' matches the perception of those who were in the more underground or alternative side of the music industry, who, as has already been noted, often defined what they did as very different from 'house'. We have seen how managers of venues closer to the underground pole tried to stay away from anything that was seen as 'house' music.

John, a night promoter, even defined the dance music he played in his events as 'not-house music': 'We always make not-house music. Whatever is the alternative to house music at the time... Not the mainstream dance music... Whatever the alternative at the time...'. Within alternative dance clubs and bars, music categories were much narrower and relevant, full of nuances and differentiations that could define quite separate crowds. Paul, a hip hop DJ explained that when he arrived in Birmingham, he found that the main music was 'deep house kind of stuff', but that 'they were also quite interested in other different styles of music' like the sort he played, and could thus have a night playing hip hop, dub and 'anything, anything sort of break-based really'. Nevertheless, he explained that as music categories and music genres developed, they lead to completely different 'cultures':

Paul: Well, this is an awkward one. I think drum 'n' bass has grown up from the same element. The early drum 'n' bass was quite orientated around break beats, which is basically the fundamental element of early hip hop as well. Then the music sort of grew up from the same root. But I think that at this point in time they've become so far apart from each other that there's not really a heavy identification. Probably a few years back it was more an identification between the two cultures, but I think... well... for me personally, because I like, you know... a lot of different types of music as I said before... hip hop has always been my main love. But I'm interested in all sorts of music really, and there was a lot of drum 'n' bass around a few years back... There was a quite heavily kind of jazz influence into that, you know? A lot of that it's very good music. But I think it's progressed to a certain extent now... There's not really a lot of drum 'n' bass now that really appeals me, because it's the more hard kind of techno edge to it, and the soulfulness, and the funk it's kind of lost for me really. You know, as they grow apart there's less kind of identification between the two.

The quote above is a good example of the complexity that the differences between music categories can have. A record shop in Barcelona had a vinyl section for DJs that almost seemed to have as many music categories (headings) as records. The DJ who was in charge of the section, just tried to classify all the records in really specific categories that did justice to the records and helped the buyers, but this would no doubt completely baffle most passing customers. His effort obviously required complex symbolic work with records and music categories, and the result was an organisation of sounds that customers had to negotiate when looking for what they wanted.

Different music genres are not static but very dynamic categories. They are continuously being developed, splitting and changing their content, as well as their interconnections. Paul, the hip hop promoter and DJ, pointed for instance to a growing connection between 'big beat' and 'hip hop' music:

Paul: Well, you know, an interesting thing that has happened recently is... mmm... the popularisation of big beat music... Big beat it's almost a hybrid of house and hip hop, and it's about the same speed as house, so it's dance floor orientated, but a lot of the music they do is hip hop-based. It's got break beats, and a little bit of hip hop

vocals and that. Because that sort of... that's quite popular in the... independent music press kind of... you know... who traditionally support a kind of independent rock music and that sort of thing. It's quite popular with them, but it's also kind of popular with people who are into... you know? And because they got so massively popular, in the sort of so-called alternative clubs, like they sort of... through that, kind of get into playing on hip hop, as long as it's commercially viable... It's a bit confusing, when I talk about this kind of commercial is not the commercial hip hop, I'm talking about dance edge of hip hop, you know? And they want to put on kind of 'credible' underground type hip hop but still keep it kind of dance floor friendly. So that's been another sort of way that the more independent hip hop became more popular.

The 'break beat' was also distinctive of what many called UK garage, whereas US garage, usually played in the small rooms in garage clubs, was defined as more 'housey'. Dean, a garage DJ who identified the break beat as the distinctive feature of UK garage, also acknowledged that there were some tunes that were on the 'borderline', and could thus be played in both UK and US garage arenas. The fact is that even small commercial bars could use the same categories to attract a segment of potential customers. Chris, of another bar in the city centre, which mainly attracted young professionals, defined his music as 'always hip hop, funky, jazz and break-beat style', although his clientele was clearly different from those attending Paul's hip hop nights.

On the guitar-based side of music categories, several interviewees claimed that 'rock' was a declining category, in that even if 'indie' was still popular, 'traditional rock' was not anymore: 'Although [indie music] is rock music for people... If you say "What are you into?", no-one will... say "Oh, I'm into rock music". People would say "Oh, I'm into indie music"'. As we will see when we analyse interviews with young people, even if this impression was not necessarily valid in all sections of youth geographies, the truth is that the categories are continuously changing, and at the time of the fieldwork it was not clear whether the rise of dance music would push guitar music into a marginal position within musical geographies or not. At the turn of the millennium, the indie crowd was not being seen as radically separate from the dance crowd. As explained by Richard, an indie concert promoter, since the late 80s when several indie bands like Stone Roses, Happy Mondays or New Order started to experiment with dance beats, 'the dance and the indie thing kind of got together...'. In the same direction, Matt, of a specialised record shop, explained that during recent years he had seen an increasing interest of the rock crowd in some types of electronic music, a combination that would have been difficult a few years before the interview.

As well as these general categories ('rock', 'indie', 'dance'), small indie record shops used many specialised categories to organise what they sold. Matt explained that besides 'indie', they also used headings like '60s psychedelic', 'beats', 'progressive', 'early 70s', 'metal', 'punk', and so on, although they were changing them a little bit at the time of the interview. He explained that music categories were changing 'all the time', and that 'apart from obvious things' they were often difficult to decide.

There were few interviewees who explicitly remarked that music categories were more related to marketing strategies than to the music itself. Ramon, of a punk-rock magazine, said that he did not believe in 'labels', and Sean, of a bar in Broad street, said that styles are just made up:

Sean: Well, I think that all this styles are just made up. That's shit. It's all dance, and if it's good music, I'll play it. It's like garage. All this thing with Speed Garage. I said, "All right, let's have a look", and then I went to the HMV and I bought a compilation of UK garage, and when I heard it I said: "But this is what I've been playing the last 6 months!" All these labels are crap, are made up by the industry and the press. If it's good music, I'll play it, that's it.

Nevertheless, alternative record shops were constantly trying to adjust to the new music styles. Jason, of one of them, explained that they were always adjusting to what was 'hip at the moment, what people listen to'. When dance music arrived, for instance, they transformed the upstairs department and tried to specialise in underground dance music. He also explained that when he arrived at the shop, three years before the interview, he separated heavy rock music from the 'rock and pop' section, because he considered that it would sell better if it was a separate section. He thought that 'a lot of rock fans that were coming, unless there was actually a section, they couldn't be asked to look through all the rock and pop section'. He said that this had been a good decision, since the section was working quite well at the moment. At the same time, however, what sold most in the shop was always what was popular at the moment, so they always employed young staff who knew what was going on 'out there'. Without their knowledge, he explained, they would never make any profit: 'We have to have staff that know what they're doing... Most people who work here probably go to the clubs, and read all the press... If someone is into a club and listens to a record, then they come back to work and [say:] "I've gotta try and find this".'

Since megastores wanted to attract not a specialised but a fairly mainstream clientele, they followed a different logic in their use of music categories. In the first place, both the headings and the way each record was stocked were decided by their product managers in the head office. In general, they just adhered to it, but sometimes they found that this created problems for their customers and then decided to put an artist in two different places, or to move him/her to another section.

Steve: For example, at the moment there's... It can be an overlap between some types of dance music and jazz, so we'll put them in both places. So if it's possible, we put it in both places. Sometimes we disagree with the tag or the class of music that we've been told it is, so we might... either put it in both places, or put a board in the other place saying that you will find this artist in... (...) Or for instance, Britney Spears, who I see as being very much a pop act, the centre thinks that it's r'n'b, and I will disagree, so we'll put the label in pop. In both if we can, but mostly in pop, because it's where I think customers expect to find it. (...)

When customers expected specific records in a certain section, the staff often realised that their classification was more confusing than helpful, so they modified it. Francisco from a megastore in Barcelona said: 'Es muy difícil. Ya lo digo, es que te encuentras con discos que dices: "Hostias, es que tiene temas que pueden ser de un estilo y luego tiene otros cuatro que son de otro".' Just as Jason had decided to do in the alternative record shop where he worked, Steve, of one of Birmingham's megastores, had tried a few weeks before the interview to put all heavy rock music separate from the 'pop and rock' section to help the customers to find it, but realised that it did not work well. It was easiest if they had the broader classification, because 'sometimes people are not shopping for themselves, and they don't know what sort of music they are looking for, if they've got a Christmas list or something...'. However, sometimes small sections did help customers to find what they wanted. This was the case of the 'garage' category within the 'soul and dance' section, where specialised compilations were stocked:

Roger: Do you have a tag for garage music now?

Steve: Yes, within dance.

Roger: And do you remember when did you put it?

Steve: Mmm... perhaps five years ago.

Roger: Yeah?

Steve: Yeah, started it, yeah. But it's grown as a part of dance music since then. (...) Yes, last year... sort of... up to quite recently that has developed the [Artful]Dodger type... It's been around for a long time, used to be underground garage.

Roger: And you have the tag.

Steve: Yes.

Roger: And do you remember why you decided to put it?

Steve: Because people were asking for that type of music, yes, yeah. So we probably [will] not [take] an individual artist... [and] put [it] into that [category], but a compilation of that type of music, we'll make a separate section for it.

Roger: And you say that it has grown a lot... how much?

Steve: It's difficult to say. Probably doubled the number of titles. (...) It has become more mainstream now... (...)

Steve explained that, on the basis of their customers' questions and some research, they decided to break down the dance category into more specialised ones, but not to divide the 'pop rock' section. Customers' requests were also the main reason why the 'r'n'b' category started to be used a few years before the interview. The customers' behaviour could also influence the distribution of their main sections in the shop. At the time of the interview, Steve was considering shifting the spaces of 'pop rock' and 'soul and dance'. The reason was that dance acts occupied over half of the chart positions and could also become the main sellers in the store. They were not at the moment, but Steve thought that this could be because they did not occupy the store's main space. Other stores of the same chain, particularly in North London, had already moved the soul and dance section to the main space of the store and the rock and pop section to a secondary one (the Birmingham

store finally did it a few months after the interview). The specialised music styles were located ‘further away from the main part of the store’.

The case of the megastore in Barcelona was very similar: the central office told them both the categories to be used and where to place every single record. As happened in Birmingham, the store might meet certain problems in this given classification. Once the initial classification had been implemented, ‘se van haciendo ajustes durante el resto de la vida’, adjusting it to their particular clientele:

Francisco: Sí, sí, sí. La vamos adaptando nosotros a lo que vemos que nos pide el mercado. Es que no es lo mismo lo que se vende en esta tienda por ejemplo que lo que se vende en [las otras en otras partes de la ciudad].

Albert: Ens deixen bastant marge, eh? A Madrid vull dir, en això no hi ha... Més d’un cop nosaltres truquem: “Escolta, això no ho tenim a *indies* i ho posarem a *pop-rock* internacional; o això no estarà a francès sinó que estarà a cantautors perquè creiem que aquí la gent ho busca més aquí”. I a vegades fem canvis d’aquests que són una tonteria però que la gent ho va a buscar...

When Francisco and Albert started working in the shop, the ‘*Música alternativa*’ section was named ‘*Música independent*’. Once they realised that their customers asked for ‘*Música Alternativa*’, they asked Madrid to change it and Madrid not only agreed to do so but extended the change to the other stores in Spain. They also renamed the ‘*melodics*’ section, which, when Albert started, ranged from Eros Ramazzotti to *boleros*, from Frank Sinatra to Enrique Iglesias, all of them organised in alphabetical order. They then realised that this organisation made it difficult and awkward for people to find what they wanted, so they asked headquarters to introduce different headings like ‘*boleros*’, ‘Italian singers’ and ‘crooners’. From their point of view, this has worked very well, making it easier for their customers to find what they like. Like Steve of Birmingham’s record megastore, they took into account the experience of those who looked for records to be given as presents and did not know the music very well:

Albert: Perquè a Boleros ve molta gent, moltes dones grans o la noia jove que ve “Para mi madre”, i t’ho diuen sempre “Es para mi madre”. Llavors aquesta gent té el seu moble de boleros per triar i mirar: Panchos, Machín, Luis Manuel... No ha d’estar mirant tot Melódicos, vull dir... Aquests mobles així més especialitzats ens han anat força i força bé.

They also faced the same contradiction with world music that was explained by Steve in Birmingham, when artists who were classified in geographical terms, for instance Noah, became popular. Her first three records were placed under the ‘Israel’ heading, but when her latest record became popular and introduced a much more pop and commercial sound, they faced the dilemma of whether to put it in the pop section or in the ‘Israel’ one – taking into consideration that they did not want to separate different records from the same artist.

Like in Birmingham, the biggest section was pop-rock, even though in their case it was significantly named ‘pop-rock internacional’, which was separated from

'national' music, and the second one 'dance' music, which included artists like Madonna, who in Birmingham would be placed in pop and rock. They did not use the term r'n'b, and sometimes placed what in Birmingham were called r'n'b records in the dance section and sometimes in the pop section. In contrast with Birmingham, they had a sub-division of the dance section named '*noves tendències*', to which we will refer later. Another major difference that we will also later analyse was that they grouped Spanish pop and rock music under the separate section '*pop-rock nacional*'.

If, as we see, record shops continuously modify the music categories they use on the basis of their customers' preferences, the question is how these music categories are 'made', 'disseminated' and 'popularised' through both the audience and the music industry. Those working in record shops experienced them as just 'being out there'. Matt, of a specialised one, said that new terms 'just arrive', and reckoned that they were probably used by the music press or other specialised media. However, he had no idea where exactly they came from. He just noticed that once in a while everybody suddenly started asking for a new term in the shop, so when this happened he started to stock it until nobody asked for it anymore ('so that's gone now'). One example he mentioned was that of 'post-rock', which at some point started to be used by his customers. He found the term strange, but realised that people seemed 'to understand' it. From his point of view, it was 'just a way of separating very obscure titles from mainstream titles, because [otherwise] the obscure titles would just get lost'. Another example of the way categories were defined was provided by Richard, the indie concert promoter, who, when asked to describe the sort of music he covered, said that it was what was covered by the music magazines NME and Melody Maker: 'What you describe as indie, alternative.... That kind of stuff (...). Basically the kind of thing that the NME would cover, or the Melody Maker, that kind of genre'.

As well as the music press, other interviewees pointed to clubs as the other main source of new music categories. Bob, of a dance radio station, regularly attended clubs to find out about the audience and the music. When asked about how he decided the music categories that would be used on air, he answered as follows: 'Basically because I know. Going clubbing and knowing the people. Everything starts in clubs, and I pick it up. (...) Yes, definitely, [the clubs are where things start]'. Indeed, alternative and underground clubs used very specific categories as a sign of their specialised music. A bar in Barcelona, for instance, defined their different nights with music categories that were hardly understood by many of their customers. The bar manager and the resident DJ wanted them to be very specific and, at the same time, general enough to avoid pigeonholing the music and to respect the DJs personality. Another good example of the use of music categories by clubs was the indie night in Birmingham that in order to differentiate from other alternative nights created a particular category (Stompin' Indie and Funky Shit):

Roger: What do you put in the flyers? The type of music? How do you decide the labels of music you use? The tags?

Mark: This line is “Stompin’ Indie and Funky Shit”. We used that when we started the club three years ago, because we wanted indie with a beat to it, and the “stompin” word gives you that kind of feel, and then “funky shit” gives you so much room for the name, you can call things like Fat Boy Slim or very different things... And hip hop and all this kind of stuff... And since we started using that phrase, we’ve seen it in so many other clubs that try to... either just steal it completely and use that ‘stompin indie funky shit’ or change it slightly, do you know what I mean?

These categories used by small bars or relatively stable indie nights, however, should be understood as marketing strategies rather than an attempt to develop new music categories. The development of new categories was a complex articulation of different agents within musical and youth geographies. Arthur, of the club with first line DJs, believed that new music styles were developed not as a result of clubbing, the music press or record labels alone: ‘It’s a mix really. I think it’s everything together’. According to the interviewees in Birmingham, the main source of innovation was the underground scenes – with their own record labels, underground press, pirate radio stations and bars, clubs, raves, blue parties and sound systems. They ‘pushed the music’ until it became something different, and then sometimes it crossed over into the mainstream. However, big corporations also played an important role when restructuring their activity in different sections. The issue is complex, and the fieldwork in this respect is modest, so we will analyse it through a closer examination of two particular examples: ‘UK garage’, on the one hand, and ‘house, techno and *màkina*’, on the other.

The crossover of UK garage

Several interviewees in Birmingham linked the appearance of many music genres in England to the Afro-Caribbean influence, identifying it as a crucial source of creativity. Noel, the manager of the bar playing underground music, when asked about the way new music started, explained it as follows:

Noel: A lot of them do start as a kind of... A lot of what I’d say is good music starts as black music, and then becomes... sort of watered down and made more acceptable and accessible... And then... softer, and becomes pop music really... It’s still now, the best music... is made by black...

Noel explained that garage music, before it crossed over to the mainstream at the time of the interview, had been played for three, four or five years ‘at radio stations, blues parties... And parties in... a lot of areas of Birmingham... Wolverhampton, Handsworth... You know? More Jamaican areas...’. He also pointed to magazines, record shops and bars, as important factors in these developments. David, of an organisation carrying out community music projects, explained that even if Afro-Caribbean music-makers did not often attend clubs, they developed the music ‘in their houses’ and then spread it locally through

records: 'Yeah. What they do, a lot of people... They make their own CD, give it to the DJ, the DJ says "Yeah, man, people will like it". They make hip-hop. It's mostly... That music grows at people's houses'. He believed that Sound Systems were not as popular as in the past, and DJs had taken over as the main voices of innovation. Paul, promoter of a hip hop night in a bar, also pointed to Afro-Caribbean influence when asked about the link between house music and ethnicity:

Paul: I think it... well, I think [the house scene] it's evolved in the same way as a lot of underground music. It started off as predominantly black probably, and it was a mix of disco and that sort of thing, that again was originally perceived as a very black sort of thing. And that's the popularity, as the numbers go, the population is more white, and then if the crowd increases, the white percentage does as well. (...) And now it's so huge that it's probably popular among all classes and all types of people.

Roger: And what about garage?

Paul: Mmm... Garage is a difficult one, because again the term garage has been attached to certain things, but... I mean, garage is traditionally the more vocal type of house, which... you know? The kind of garage that came out in New York, over the last kind of five years or whatever, a lot has been, you know, real quality music. But then in the... last sort of four, maybe five years, I don't know, the UK garage developed, which is kind of... It's a bit tricky... [*he is finding the right words carefully*] Basically, drum 'n' bass was in its early phase, very much kind of reggae sound system based sort of stuff, crossing over with the sort of breaks in hip hop, but as the sort of techniques for making the music became more sort of complex in my view, that kind of reggae element dropped out of it, and I think that it was almost adopted by British garage kind of thing. It was a massive cross-over from people that had been in the early jungle and got into the kind of the UK garage, or Speed garage or whatever you wanna call it. And a lot of the bass lines and a lot of the kind of noises that had been used in the early jungle were adopted by garage, which was a new... This UK garage thing was a sort of very traditionally black sort of new again really London orientated, really quite black, really quite sort of with that reggae element in that... and I think, it's the same pattern with every type of music. It's gonna get more popular, it's gonna get more white, and the same will happen again. But I think that still garage is fairly heavily considered a black music.

This impression was not fully shared by Mike and Michael, garage MC and DJ respectively, who saw it as an originally white scene that had been attracting a black crowd for two years before the interview: 'It used to be a white scene, real white scene, and then it mixed two and a half years ago'. Paul pointed out that it often happened that whereas new music was developed out of black culture, those who converted it into an entrepreneurial success were whites¹³. In any case, the

¹³ Simon Reynolds describes this in an article that he calls the 'vibe tribe' as follows: '[S]cattered amongst the general population but which communicates via bush telegraph (the 20 plus pirate radio stations operating at any given point 1989-99), and that gathers at various privileged spots (specialist record stores, clubs, raves). Over the years, the population has fluctuated, expanded and contracted both in numbers and geographical reach; at one point, "hardcore" basically equalled the entire UK

point is that as soon as its popularity grew out of the underground scenes, many music genres followed a recognizable pattern in which they crossed over to mainstream musical geographies: 'Record companies do recognise obviously the people who are gonna know what's going on and what music is gonna come from the underground... sort of scene... obviously'. At the time of the interview Radio 1, the BBC popular music radio, was playing an important role in this process, since besides its traditional orientation towards being a national hit radio, was also committed to specialised music:

Noel: Radio 1 is very good now, in England, you know? They cover every aspect of dance music... It's very good...

Roger: And they combine mainstream and underground...

Noel: Yeah, the mainstream in the daytime, and in the evening they cover all aspects... It's very good. It used to be awful, terrible, and it's really good now...

Noel, the manager of the bar programming underground music, believed that this change was the result of the impact that dance music had had on British popular music: 'The source of dance music is so strong... Something that started in warehouses... it's now a multibillion pound industry... So you can't ignore it, you've gotta play it...'. The dance radio station had played garage music since 1995, but 'since it has crossed-over', as Bob explained, they started to 'play it during the day. Previously it was only in the specialist programmes'. Once it crossed over its 'harder' or 'more obscure' elements were softened, which was despised by many of its former hardcore followers like this garage DJ: '[This commercial

national rave scene, 18 months later (in mid-1993) it was strictly a London thing, with tiny colonial outposts in Bristol and the Midlands (ie. the most multiracial, London-like areas of Britain). Different tribes have splintered off from the subcultural continuum (e.g. drum and bass). Throughout it all the 'strange attractor' that has acted as the geographical pivot of the scene has remained, arguably, just a few square miles in East London. Stray too far from what this "strange attractor" "wants", and you spiral off into a different orbit (as happened with drum and bass, caught in techno's gravitational field). (...)

Both the demographical constituency and the aesthetic/drug-tech parameters of the culture are in constant-but-separate flux; yet somehow the culture, the tribe, has managed to maintain an undeniably consistency. Different people come into the tribe (some get old and drop out, some get old and stay involved, new recruits come in; different classes and races and genders are attracted or repelled at different stages of the culture's evolution); similarly, the music is constantly shifting and redefining its contours thanks to the flows of influence from other genres, subculture, technological change, drug use patterns etc. That it all manages to hang together as an entity seems remarkable, but this is only what an organism or an ecosystem does; perpetuate itself, as it responds to and absorbs environmental pressures and opportunities.

The evolution of the tribe-vibe has taken a peculiar trajectory. "Hardcore", born in 1989 with the split between the ravers and the Balearic, back-to-the-clubs types, quickly became a nationwide phenomenon that was simultaneously underground and chartpop. After its 1991-92 heyday, hardcore contracted to darkside and then jungle (underground, London-centered, multiracial but dominated by black sonics/behaviors), then re-expanded to drum & bass (ultimately a national/international, bourgeois-bohemian network, multiracial but dominated by white sonics/behaviors), then mutated into speed garage (back to a London/multiracial/ working class thing, but quickly escalating to a national fad...) prompting 2-step (London-centric, multiracial, with a strong Asian component; plus unexpected intersection with American R&B although this remains a "one-way alliance," unreciprocated, so far) (Reynolds 2000 [1999])

dance radio station...], they play a lot of garage, but it's not... not... like... You know what I mean?... It's not...'. Tom, the drum 'n' bass promoter believed that when any underground music made the charts, it tended to lose 'whatever was good about it when it was small and underground... It tends to get lost when money gets involved... (...) Not always, but generally'. He considered Goldie, a jungle and drum'n'bass producer, 'a good example of someone who can make it to the big time and still stay reasonably in touch with things... But, at the same time, he's done stuff with Oasis, and he's done stuff in films and all that... And he loses a little bit of... credibility ...'. Paul, the hip hop DJ and promoter also pointed to the link between underground creativity and subsequent commercialisation.

Paul: I think because hip hop was many years younger when I first got into it, I think perhaps the commercial side hadn't really developed yet, even... Because that's another thing, they started underground, and as they become more popular, then the sort of commercial side of it kind of emerges.

When underground sounds crossed over, they were seen by many youngsters as just general 'dance' or even 'pop' music. Customers of the big commercial club overtly playing chart music, started to ask the DJ for garage tunes 12 months before my interview with the manager: 'Yes, (...) garage started coming about 12 months ago more strongly than it had done previously, and probably 6 months ago we started to play more of it'. Similarly, Andy, the manager of a bar in the city centre oriented to professionals without any underground leanings, decided to play garage as a background mainstream dance music in his bar:

Andy: It's been popular in Birmingham for quite a while now. For a couple of years it's been so like... Tunes in the bar scene... play dance and garage music. [A]nd people sort of like... They're just comfortable with it (...) Yeah, I mean, especially to our clientele, because we get sort of like early twenties to thirties. Everybody seems to like it. You know?

Alex, of a bar in Broad Street, explained that many of her customers might like the Artful Dodger garage tune that had entered the charts without knowing that it was garage, and that once it had become mainstream, it was going to fade out:

Alex: Now it's becoming much bigger. But that's not how it started out. Garage started out as almost underground. And now it's becoming mainstream, where it stops. It isn't gonna be as popular once it becomes mainstream. You know, the people who sort of started out garage, once everyone jumps on the bandwagon, are gonna get bored and move on to something else. But... the reason, the real reason why we don't do garage it's because a younger crowd... and we try to keep the 21 age limit, and we don't want to start encouraging...

Roger: And do you think that people who come here don't like garage at all? Or...

Alex: No. I would say that the garage that they like is what they hear on the radio. When you think you've got The Artful Dodger's "Rewind"... Everyone loves that song, everyone loves that. But how many of them realise that it's a garage track? A

lot of them probably like some of it... A more... a softer garage. I don't think they like real hardcore garage. We don't get... The people that we attract is not a garage crowd... and we are happy with that.

When she points out that she was happy with not attracting a garage crowd she has in mind the characterisation of it as 'the wrong crowd'. Any music genre needed to get rid of these associations before it could be seen as a good option by commercial bars and clubs. Tom, who was promoting drum 'n' bass nights in Birmingham, knew this from experience. When he started, drum 'n' bass was considered as the music style 'attracting the wrong crowd', so he could not find a venue to promote the night he wanted. Once garage had taken over drum 'n' bass as the genre with a bad reputation, things changed:

Mat: Mmm... yeah, yeah, hopefully [garage takes over as the music attracting the bad crowd,] yeah, so we haven't got problems... But at the moment... I don't know, when I started this night in Birmingham, people would phone me and said "what music is it?", and I said, "Drum 'n' bass". And [they] would say, "no". Whereas now, if you say drum 'n' bass, they would probably say yes. And it was only a year ago. Yeah, garage and that sort of thing...

However, most of the original tunes and sounds of underground scenes, will not cross over when the genre becomes really popular. Mike, of a garage pirate radio station, was clear about that: 'Jungle underground is not accepted. It's not accepted on the radio, only the really commercial tunes...'. At the same time, he also pointed out that 'the commercial tunes are not accepted by the underground people, because basically it's just the people making money and trying to break cross-over'. Once a certain style crossed over, a parallel underground scene usually kept going. He thought that both 'real' jungle, hard dance, Asian ragga or gangsta rap would 'never fully cross over' because they could not be accepted by the mainstream.

What was accepted by the mainstream were the softer versions of garage music that became massive during the months following the fieldwork when many mainstream clubs started advertising garage nights. In Barcelona, however, only a few people knew what garage music was. In contrast to other cities in Europe, black music in general did not tend to be very popular in Barcelona, Catalonia or Spain. Hip hop only recently seems to be finally taking over, whereas drum 'n' bass and jungle have never been really popular (reggae, ska and dub, all of them part of the 'black music tradition' in Birmingham, did have a stronger influence in certain minority sectors of young people). Only a couple of young interviewees in Barcelona claimed to have heard about garage music. One of them heard about it when he spent a few days in London over the summer and then a couple of times in a dance radio station's late night specialised programme. The other one just said that he had heard about it in a very diffuse way: 'Però *bueno*... o sigui... he sentit a parlar que un *pavo* que ha posat una cançó i ha dit: això és *garage*'. When asked about how it sounded he said that he did not remember. Among those working in Barcelona's music industry, again, only a few had heard about it. In a bar in

Barcelona where the music policy tended to prioritise the black, soulful and funky edge of dance music, played it at times, and as a female DJ who did it explained, 'el garage costa, però poc a poc va entrant'. As I was able to appreciate in participant observation in the bar, when the characteristic break beat of UK garage appeared, the dancefloor considerably reduced its activity. The difficulty in dancing to the music until de music is *in-corporated*, as happens with drum'n'bass and jungle music, and even hip hop, is an important barrier for its success. When the break beats appear out of the blue, imported, without meaningful communities of meaning, where the difference, the rupture with other sounds, is valued and understood, the discontinuity clashes with the sensuousness of dancing alongside a DJ set. The category also appeared in a few other businesses, like a new music bar named Risco, which announced in its flyers 'House & Garage' nights, by Javier Navinés, and another one, Fonfone, which had a two-step (garage) night by Howie Roach, an English resident in Barcelona. A US garage fan working in a record shop noted that in Barcelona the category 'garage' was used for what in Birmingham was called 'US garage' and that 'two-step garage' was called 'two step'). On the radio, the dance radio station tried to play its more commercial versions, but this was not very successful:

Pere: Però ara, per exemple, a Anglaterra posen un fenomen durant l'últim any o dos que és el *two-step*, que és el *garage* americà però fet a Anglaterra. Doncs aquí el *two-step* no ha arrelat.

Roger: No ha arrelat.

Pere: És molt pesat. Hem posat coses.

Roger: Però l'Artful Dodger, per exemple, el "Rewind"...

Pere: Això sí, això són coses... Sí, això ho hem posat. (...) Però són coses puntuals que són les puntes de l'iceberg del *two-step*. Una cosa és el... hosti... el "Rewind" del Selecta és la punta de... Hòstia pum! El... el Craig David i tot *lo* que vulguis. Però val, posem això i quatre coses més. Però veus que aquí no passa res amb això. Per què? Perquè aquí hi ha una realitat cultural diferent que fa que això no funcioni. Però *bueno*, allà sí, pues allà els hi agrada molt.

Roger: I això ho heu posat i heu vist que no ha funcionat?

Pere: Sí, el *speed-garage* va funcionar més que el *two-step*, perquè el *speed-garage* era molt més *canyero*, més *makinero* perquè ho entenguis, més tirant a la màkina, llavors aquí va tirar més. Tampoc va ser la bomba, eh?

His radio station played garage, calling it 'UK garage' on air, but in general only the more mainstream artists like Craig David— who, even though he appeared in the reality show *Operación Triunfo*, was not marketed as 'garage' but as general pop music¹⁴. The megastore in Barcelona, for instance, stocked Craig David and Artful Dodger records under the 'soul' category, not '*noves tendències*':

¹⁴ Craig David fronted the number 2 UK hit 'RE-Rewind The Crowd Say Bo Selecta' in December 1999, and then got a solo hit on April 15, 2000, with 'Fill me in'. In his appearance in *Operación Triunfo* the term 'garage' was not mentioned, as happened when it was played on the radio.

Manuel: Sí. Sí. L'he ficat allà al *soul* perquè no crec que ni sigui noves tendències ni música *dance* en general. És una evolució de *lo* que és el *new soul* o el *r'n'b*, no? El *rhythm 'n' blues*, aquest nou, no? I és clar, amb aquests trobes que li *figuen*... o els patrons que segueixen, d'alguna manera, característics del *new soul* que fa el Craig David. [I això] doncs fa que la gent vegi una diferència de *lo* que era el *garage* de fa tres o quatre anys a *lo* que és ara. A Anglaterra li posen *UK garage*, no? Sí.

He explained that garage was a style that had not succeeded in Barcelona, since people did not tend to buy house with lyrics. The quote is interesting because Manuel also uses another music category, 'r'n'b', which was not popular in Barcelona – even though it was not as obscure as garage. In Birmingham, the category had started to be used in the mainstream music industry a few years before the fieldwork. The megastore in Birmingham, for instance, started to use it in response to their customers' requests:

Roger: Do you know when r'n'b started to be used as a tag?

Steve: Well... about... I'd say three or four years ago started to be used again, because r'n'b or rhythm and blues used to be something quite different. We used to call that sort of music [*what is now called r'n'b*] a type of soul music... I'd say three... perhaps four years ago it started to be called r'n'b.

Roger: The central headquarters said it?

Steve: Mmm... yeah... customers I think dictated, they started to ask for r'n'b rather than soul, and we named our sections in this doors and separated that type of music from other dance music, because it used to be all together... So... something very souly would be next to sort of house type of music, which didn't really make sense, because there was two different customers... And we separated it. (...) We were one of the first, because we have a bigger market for it here than perhaps in other stores, but everyone else followed it.

In Barcelona, the category was beginning to be timidly used by some radio stations, but was mainly unknown to most interviewees. One interviewee who did use it said that she had heard about it in Jamboree, a club with a black music policy she had attended. She used it as a synonym of 'funky', a category much more widespread among the interviewees. Pere, of a dance radio station, the dance station which had failed, when it started to specialise in 'urban music', explained that the tag 'r'n'b' was not used because it was very American music that was not popular in Barcelona apart from the more commercial versions like, for instance, Destiny's Child.

The example of garage in both Birmingham and Barcelona is illustrative of the complex way musical and social influences culturally produced musical genres. New genres were not only the result of new sounds, but also of new strategies of the music industry and the acceptance of them by young people. Their very existence nevertheless offered the possibility of marking a difference through the link between genre categories and different positions in musical and youth geogra-

phies. This will be more clearly illustrated through the analysis, in our second example, of the cultural production of 'house', 'techno' and 'màkina' categories.

The cultural production of house, techno and màkina

In Barcelona, there was not the same dynamic relationship between underground and mainstream scenes. Music categories did not change as often as they did in Birmingham, and when they did, it was often because of the influence of British and American popular music. At the same time, we have seen, through the cases of garage and 'r'n'b' music categories, that developments in the US and the UK were not automatically taken up in Barcelona, so not all that was successful in the UK would reach Barcelona. Here the case of dance music offers a particularly interesting illustration of the complex relationship between local and global trends.

Legend has it that house music originated in the Warehouse of Chicago at the hands of Franky Knuckles, who combined the funky, soulful side of disco music with remixes and he ended by running 'completely new rhythms, basslines and drum tracks underneath familiar songs' (Brewster & Broughton 1999: 275). The word 'house' initially referred not to a particular style of music but rather to a certain attitude: 'If a song was 'house' it was music from a cool club, it was underground, it was something you'd never hear on the radio' (ibid.: 272). When the new music was developed, the word started to be used to refer to it. An early house producer, Chip E., claims that the origin of the name has to be found in the way he labelled records at the *Imports Etc.* record store in response to customers' demand for what Franky Knuckles was playing at the Warehouse. He decided to put it under the heading 'Warehouse Music', and once this proved useful, he just shortened the heading to 'House'. By the mid-80s, the first wave of house tracks were being released and they rapidly became a thriving local scene.

It was in Britain where the music was to get a further impulse through 'acid house', originated in Chicago in 1986 as a result of the manipulation of a Roland 303 – a bass unit machine created to synthesise bass sounds. In September 1986, 'Love Can't Turn Around', a house track, reached the 10th position in the UK charts (ibid.: 288). By that time, a few UK clubs, mostly on the gay scene, started to play it (Osborne 1999: 142). When the 'acid' reached the UK, it was combined with 'a youth explosion around ecstasy culture and the Balearic scene' (ibid.: 4). By 1987, Chicago's house and acid house music were selling well in Britain, and then a northern soul DJ from Birmingham, Neil Rushton, started licensing tracks from DJ producers in Detroit. When he convinced the Virgin record label to publish a compilation of the house satellite producers from Detroit, the label decided to call it not 'house' but 'techno', a new sub-genre that rapidly intellectualised its differences from 'house'. In 1988, a techno track entered the UK Top 10 and sold six million copies worldwide (Brewster & Broughton 1999: 303-04).

In the summer of 1988, the combination of ecstasy and clubbing in Ibiza was called 'The First Summer of Love'. As 'ecstasy became widely available and acid house clubs exploded' (Osborne 1999: 278), the First Summer of Love led to a second one in summer 1989. Acid house became to be marketed as a genre,

whereas after an early club scene, illegal parties in warehouse and outdoor mass raves in country fields spread all over the country and the Sun tabloid started a moral panic in reaction to it¹⁵. From then on, the dance scene became massive and house and techno music rapidly led to different sub-genres and a profitable industry, mainly moving to licensed venues, partially in response to the 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act that made rave parties illegal¹⁶. By the late 1990s, there were global brands like 'The Ministry of Sound' that included clubs, magazines and holiday packages, and dance music had become part of the mainstream, although it also had a strong underground network.

Meanwhile, during the 1980s, a thriving club scene had developed in Valencia, south of Catalonia, as is explained by the journalist Joan M. Oleaque in his book *En èxtasi* (2004). Clubs like Barraca, Chocolate or Spook Factory combined mescaline, speed and cocaine with a radical combination of extreme rock and industrial synthetic music that was to be called '*bakalao*'. This thriving club culture was generally known as '*la festa*'. The arrival of ecstasy in the early 90s was also accompanied by some acid house records, but they did not work well and were soon abandoned. The same was true of house music, too funky for a club culture developed for years around the 'white' rock and industrial music. By contrast, in Barcelona acid house was taken up by several clubs in their effort to appear 'modern', while others tried to import the Valencia club culture to the city. One of them, Nando Dixcontrol, says that in order to introduce it to Barcelona, they lowered the level of musical complexity to make sure anyone could take part in it (ibid.: 77). Several DJs in Barcelona started to call '*màkina*' all those tracks that recalled the old industrial sound – the same as was used in Valencia to produce '*bakalao*' – and soon ended by using the label to refer to any dance music that was not house, spaghetti or hip-hop, everything that was fast and hard. It was the way they personalised the Valencian '*bakalao*', even if in València the same general meaning of '*màkina*' was also being used. When international house music split up into different styles, *màkina* combined a version of what in Europe was known as 'hardcore' with simple commercial melodies. This development was tremendously successful in those working-class suburbs with a high proportion of people who had arrived from other parts of Spain during the 1960s. It also attracted ultra skinheads from the football terraces to clubs like Psicódromo, as well as lads that were adopting a pseudo-skin style, originating an articulation of youth styles completely different from what was happening in the UK. A Spanish-Nationalist connotation was linked to the whole *màkina* scene, but particularly in its more radical clubs where the track 'Raya España' became an anthem (ibid.).

¹⁵ Attendance was hundreds and often thousands of youngsters. In 1992, an estimated 40,000 attended the Castemorton rave.

¹⁶ According to Smith and Maughan, 'there were really two party scenes, a commercial but still illegal scene, and a free party scene which had its roots in an older underground culture' (1998: 217), and the latter had already been in decline for several years when the Criminal Justice Act appeared.

In both Valencia and Barcelona, under the different names ('*bakalao*' and '*màkina*') the music evolved to both its 'hard' and 'soft' versions, this latter known as the '*cantadita*' or '*pastel*' (Oleaque 2004: 81). Big clubs attracting two or three thousand people took over the small ones, becoming a big business with its own industry. Barcelona labels like Max Music and Blanco y Negro, which had already created the spaghetti-disco hit compilations a few years before (the 'Max-mix' series being its best known), became part of this growing industrial complex, and started the series of '*Maquina Total*' compilations. Naturally, the scene also attracted drug-dealers. In 1991, Chimo Bayo's hit '*Así me gusta a mí*', which explicitly referred to ecstasy, sold more than 50,000 copies. In 1993, a moral panic around what was called '*La ruta del bakalao*' exploded in the Spanish national media. (Oleaque 2004) At the end of the 1990s, the combination of the *màkina* scene with hardcore music from Europe, which was seen as very similar to what was already being done but with a modern image, allowed *màkina* entrepreneurs to renew their vocabulary with categories like 'techno', 'hardcore', 'progressive' or 'trance', as we have seen in the preceding chapter.

At the same time, during the 90s, the intellectualised version of techno music reached Barcelona through a completely different scene that saw it as elaborate and cosmopolitan cutting edge music. In this scene, which was linked to the *inide* scene of the time, 'techno' was seen as the catch term that included all other categories of electronic music like house or trance, whereas '*màkina*' was considered as commercial music with a complete lack of 'artistic' quality. DJ Fun recalls using the 'techno' category from the beginning, when artists like Sant Etienne, Leftfield or Underworld started to be combined in sets with Stone Roses or Happy Mondays between 1993 and 1995: 'Jo... al *menos* jo faig servir techno com la mare, no? El global. I dins del *techno* hi ha els fills. *Bueno* és com un arbre i les branques, no? Que és infinit'. Clubs like Nitsa, Moog, Dischoteque and many others, alongside with the International Festival Sónar, built up a network that during the second half of the 90s would define itself as opposed to *màkina* music. One promoter put it as follows:

Guillem: Sí. Quan entrem ja... O sigui, en música electrònica, què és música comercial, què és bakalao, màkina o merdes vàries que es fan, tipus aquests anuncis que surten "*Progressive, dance, no sé què*". Això és una merda. *Bueno*, al meu entendre, vull dir és música comercial per a les masses. Llavors hi ha tota un altre ventall de gent que treballen la música electrònica des d'un altre punt de vista. De la música és important com està feta, què diu i què representa i... això... Està clara la diferenciació, no? Seria una mica *lo* del Sónar. Al Sónar no hi ha màkina ni bakalao, és tot música d'avantguarda, diguéssim. (...) Però jo et diria que està bastant clara la frontera entre música comercial i música d'avantguarda o *underground* o alternativa. Amb el *house* potser no tant, perquè hi ha una mena de *house* que sí que està molt clar que és comercial merdós, i hi ha un altre *house underground* molt *guapo* i molt interessant, però la frontera es dilueix una mica.

In this quote he uses ‘electronic music’ as the broader category. When asked about it, he explained that whereas in the past ‘techno’ was the broad category, this had recently changed:

Guillem: Era *techno*, la paraula que ho englobava tot era *techno*. Ara potser és més música electrònica, jo diria. És *lo* que ho engloba tot i llavors a partir d’aquí mira, això és *techno*, això és *house*, això és *techno-house*, això és *trip hop*.

The interesting point is that in Birmingham, ‘techno’ was seen as a narrow sub-genre of ‘house’ music, the generic term that included all other styles of electronic music. The other difference was the centrality in Birmingham and England of the influence between house music and the autochthonous Afro-Caribbean tradition of ska, reggae, dub, ragga and hip hop music. The point is that even if the influence of global trends in Barcelona is more than obvious, the local industry appropriated it in a very particular way, articulating it with local meanings that would be unthinkable, for instance, in Birmingham. The relevance of the Catalan-Spanish typification among young people, as well as the presence of an intellectualised scene strongly disconnected from working class underground, made Barcelona’s musical and youth geographies quite different from those in Birmingham. We will later analyse this. For the moment, I just want to focus on the way these different musical geographies were negotiated by the music industry. In Barcelona, the sharp differentiation between the *màkina* and techno crowds led the studied record megastore to separate dance music under two different headings, general ‘dance’ and ‘*noves tendències*’. Dance was used to stock the most popular dance music, including dance-based pop music like Madonna or Modern Talking. The decision was taken because of the strong belief of one of its employees in the importance of this distinction *and* their awareness of the existence of two crowds who did not feel comfortable together:

Albert: Això ja hem vist des de que vam obrir la botiga fa cinc anys, eh! Francisco, que vam veure que les noves tendències tendien... La gent venia demanant i cada cop s’havia d’especialitzar més i separar el *dance* de les noves tendències. (...) És que jo recordo que hi havia gent que venia i et deia “Busco el *drum ‘n’ bass*, busco *progressive*, busco no sé què” I llavors clar, hi havia un moment que no ho podies tenir tot a *dance* perquè hi havia coses que no enganxaven gens. (...)

Francisco: Las nuevas tendencias se hizo luego. Empezamos sólo con *dance*. Estaba todo mezclado. (...)

Albert: Jo penso que el que va passar una mica va ser [que], per exemple, vam veure que el públic, el públic que ve a comprar música...

Francisco: El [público] del Laurent Garnier no te viene a comprar una Madonna.

Albert:... i que compra un *mix* d’aquests, un Flaix Matí o no sé què, un *mix*, aquest públic no et compra un Saint Germain, un Laurent Garnier o tal...

Roger: El Flaix està amb *dance*?

Albert: Exacte. Llavors vam dir “És que no és el mateix públic”. La gent que escolta Café del Mar, Tricky i tal és un públic que li agrada més la música... No li agrada estar...

Francisco: Está más cerca del Alternativo... A veces tenemos problemas... Que está más cerca de la música alternativa que del *dance*.

Albert: Llavors es va decidir separar-ho perquè és que no és el mateix públic. El públic que compra el *mixos* aquells, un públic més jovenet, més *pastillero*, per dir-ho d'alguna manera, més *makiner*, més tal... I aquest és un altre públic. Venen fins i tot gent gran!

The person responsible for this decision was Manuel, who strongly believed that they were two completely different sounds:

Manuel: A veure, jo quan vaig entrar aquí a la botiga, la secció de *dance* estava una mica barrejada. Hi havia coses molt comercials i coses una mica més... més "exquises", diguem-ne. Hi havia... Dintre de l'estil de música *dance* o música electrònica, té un ventall ample en qüestió d'estils de música. Llavors era una necessitat, era una obligació de separar-ho en dos blocs, no?

Roger: Per què vau fer els dos blocs? Ho veu escollir vosaltres?

Manuel: *Bueno* va ser una alternativa que jo li vaig dir a l'encarregat i al responsable de departament. Els vaig dir que era obligatori tenir les dos coses separades perquè hi havia molta gent que buscava un estil de música en concret, no? Llavors trobar-se coses que no s'identifiquen amb el producte... havia de separar-ho d'alguna manera. Són coses essencials, no? (...) Simplement diferenciar *lo* que és la música *dance* comercial a la que no és, directament. *Vale?* (...) Diferenciar els estils de música, de música *dance* comercial a música una mica més avantguardista es nota molt a nivell de treball, no? De buscar sons no tan fàcils, no? D'alguna manera. Més treballat d'alguna manera.

The line between the two categories was naturally difficult to establish. The Ministry of Sound compilations, for instance, seen as very commercial in Birmingham, were stocked in the 'advanced music' section. Manuel, when asked about it, said that even if Ministry had become a huge business, 'pel prestigi que té i per la trajectòria que ha portat Ministry, el lloc correcte per a mi seria en compilacions de noves tendències'. In spite of these difficulties, the separation proved to be very useful to make it easier for the different crowds to find what they wanted. Manuel did not want to differentiate subgenres like drum 'n' bass, 'trance' or 'techno' music because it would make it more difficult to classify the records and thought that this would tend to confuse his customers.

The '*noves tendències*' section started with two modules and had grown, at the time of the interview, to seven. The number of new releases that arrived in the shop and the sales figures had led them to increase the space devoted to it. During recent years, Manuel had noticed that the word 'techno' had modified its meaning. Previously it was used to refer to what he sold as '*noves tendències*', but it was now also associated with types of *màkina* music.

Manuel: Sí. *Bueno*, jo tinc un gran problema amb això, perquè la gent pregunta "Escolta, que vull un compact de *techno*". Clar, ja els has d'entrar una mica "quin *techno* escoltes?", "A quina discoteca vas?" o "Quina emissora?" o "Quin és el *techno* que més

t'agrada?". Perquè clar, ja comences... Hi ha molta gent que no té aquesta informació per decidir d'alguna manera "Hòstia, a mi m'agrada el *techno-progressive*" o...

Pere, of a dance radio station, believed that the separation between the *màkina* and techno scenes made no sense. When they oriented the radio station to dance music (it initially focused on urban music), they did not want to play *màkina* music 24 hours a day, because they wanted to avoid being identified only with the *màkina* scene. Those in charge of the change were aware about the success of house and other dance music in other countries, and realised that nobody was doing it in Barcelona, so they tried to be the first to play it on the radio:

Pere: Es va decidir fer una programació, *pues* això, amb *dance* comercial de tota la vida, afegint *house* i amb els tocs de *màkina* necessaris. Però no volíem que [l'emissora] fos *makinera*, tot i així ens segueixen adjectivant molts. *Bueno*, cosa que després també s'ha conseguit que les altres emissores apostin pel *dance*. Les emissores eren molt tancades al *dance* i vist el fenomen [nostre], les discogràfiques han tingut accés a posar molt material que abans no tenien. Per què? Perquè si el *dance* funciona, *pues* l'han de posar, no?

DJs in this radio station were introducing categories such as 'house', 'progressive', 'hardcore' and many others that young people were incorporating into the way they made sense of musical and youth geographies, as we have seen in the preceding chapter. When asked about it, Pere said that these categories were not being 'introduced' by them, but 'really existed out there', in England and other countries. The only thing they did was to 'cultivate' their audience:

Pere: Aquestes etiquetes noves no és que nosaltres les introduïm, són coses que realment existien ... Jo crec que el que estem fem una mica, o al menys ho intentem, és culturitzar la gent en el sentit que sàpiguen que quan estan escoltant *house* que és *house* i que quan estan escoltant *màkina* és *màkina* i que el *techno* no és *màkina*. Per defecte molta gent en aquest país ha anomenat a la *màkina* techno, i no *desprecies* quan dius *màkina*. Clar ara molta gent quan parla de [la nostra ràdio], i no és el nostre potencial, diu "L'emissora de *màkina*". Això ... *Bueno* és una etiqueta que demostra un desconeixement total i absolut perquè no és una emissora de *màkina*. És una emissora on és posa *màkina*? Si, es posa *màkina* de 9 a 11 de la nit i alguna cosa puntual a la fórmula. És un so més de *dance*, *eurodance*, és més de tota la vida, en el que en el seu moment s'anomenava *spaghetti*, *lo* que en els noranta va ser etiquetat *eurodance* i que ara no té una etiqueta concreta perquè ara és un moment de què... "*Dance* comercial", se'n diu. És *dance* comercial i *house* on hi entren totes les altres tendències a dosis concretes excepte en els programes específics de *house*, d'electrònica, i de *màkina*, que sí. Dintre de la *màkina*, doncs, el progressiu. Vull dir que s'intenta quan dius *lo* de les etiquetes... Aquestes etiquetes existeixen i són denominacions que es van donant i que les donen sobretot a fora que és on hi ha producte i indústria que crea discos.

He was aware of the confusion of categories within electronic music that we have analysed when dealing with the experience of musical genres and categories

by young people, and pointed out that 'progressive', for instance, was called 'movie-trance' in England, or that there were many variations of 'house', but he claimed that the product they played was clear: 'Diguéssim que el producte que posem nosaltres és molt clar, o és *lo* que et dic, o és *màkina*, o és *progressive* o és *house*'. He clearly differentiated between *màkina* and progressive. Even though many interviewees saw it as the same music, Pere explained that it was very different: 'Home, molt diferent ... El progressiu és un so més elaborat, potser, com amb més ecos, en les notes progressives hi acostuma haver veu, cantadeta, i no és tan accelerada. En principi el que marca un estil musical són els *bpm*, o sigui la velocitat de bombo del disc. Però clar, llavors a la *màkina* en teoria és molt més accelerada, al *progressive* és menys, el *house* encara ho és menys. Però et pots trobar de tot, eh?'. He said that the names changed over time, but the music was basically the same: 'És que el *progressive* no deixa de ser el que en diuen *movie-trance*, en un moment, o *trance*, és que... A mida que passen els anys li canvien el nom però és *lo* mateix, el que passa és que evolucionen els sons, la qualitat, i se sent diferent, no?'. They did not play other styles like drum 'n' bass because they considered it to be more underground and thus limited in public. 'I això, *pues* senzillament per això, perquè nosaltres ens volem dirigir a una audiència massiva i entra molt més el *progressive* que el *drum'n' bass*'.

The fact was that electronic music categories were changing at that time. A commercial dance DJ related them by identifying the continuities that they often hide:

DJ Fiesta: Abans, igual que la *màkina* ara s'anomena *techno*, abans el *dance* seria *lo* que es deia *disco*. Abans era la música *disco*, no? Però és el *dance*. Ara se li diu *dance* perquè queda més *english*, no? (...) O sigui, el *dance* és la música, la *cantadita*, que li dic jo. La música cantada, bàsicament. I abans, doncs això, és deia *disco*.

The fact is that in Barcelona, house music was only recently distinguished from the broad categories '*màkina*' and '*techno*'. Pere, of the dance radio station, believed this was to a great extent due to their radio station. As we have seen, he acknowledged that the station had also been seen as a *màkina* one, and added that the club scene was notably segregated between the *màkina* scene and what he called the 'illuminated' scene, that is, what we have identified as the initial '*techno*' or '*electronic*' scene:

Pere: El *house* és un fenomen que jo crec que sí ens hem d'atorgar nosaltres, perquè sí, si és veritat. Hi havia la *màkina*, que estava de *super* moda a tot arreu i als *baretos* i tal, que en els *baretos* ara posen *house*, comercial, i llavors hi havia si, els Il·luminats, que aquests hi segueixen essent. És la secta aquesta que algú de tant en tant hi entra i quan surt un, n'entra un. Sí és molt curiós *tio*. I amb això sí que hem aconseguit doncs convertir el *house*... Vale que el *house* s'està convertint en *pop*... En la nova cultura el *dance* cada dia és més normal, totes les artistes acaben fent produccions ballables, Madonna o qui vulguis, i el *house* cada vegada és més *pop*, és més *pop*.

Besides the media exposure of the music *and* the category in the dance radio station, its popularity in gay clubs had also been important:

Roger: Diries que el *house* ha entrat més a través dels llocs d'ambient?

DJ Fiesta: Sí. "Més" no, jo diria que totalment.

Roger: I ara ja ha sortit i...

DJ Fiesta: Ara ja s'està expandint, no? Perquè a part dels llocs d'ambient la majoria de *garitos*, sobretot a Barcelona *lo* que és Barcelona, *et fiquen house*, no? Inclús els nois, ara els *crios* de setze anys, (...) depèn quin poble ja comencen a demanar-te *house*. (...) I és un altre... És *algo* molt més tranquil. Porta un públic totalment diferent.

In conclusion, it is clear that the way music categories developed was a complex combination of factors. Music categories were always on the move as a result not only of the evolving musical forms and music-making practices, but also of changes within the music industry and the acceptance of music by young people. If we look at its global or local character, we see that, on the one hand, they followed a strong transnational impulse, since both big corporations and alternative industries in the production centres, the US and the UK, drew up the main lines of the global soundscape. On the other hand, the way music sounds were accepted and developed by local scenes and local business was important enough to create localised and differentiated realities. The way new sounds and artists became popular varied with each locality. Clubs, music magazines, record stores, record labels and radio stations were crucial in the typification practices, and alongside with the creativity of the music makers and the final say of young people using and enjoying the music, these collectively produced the range of music categories used at any particular time. These categories were important because they organised the practices of the industry and, as we will see later when we analyse young people's experience of musical and youth geographies, of young people themselves. The ongoing evolution of music categories leads us to another central aspect of the music industry, which is the way they articulated different patterns of change depending on the genre.

The circuit of change

To understand the role of the political economy of music in the cultural production of musical and youth geographies, we must look at the 'circuit of change'. The inherent dynamism of popular music makes musical geographies an unstable and always provisional reality. Popular music is ephemeral by nature, and strongly linked to fashions and particular generations of young people. The artists' careers and music styles can not be thought of in lineal terms. They are unpredictable, and as generations pass, artists and music styles not only come and go, but also modify their positioning in musical geographies. We have already seen the evolution of garage, house, techno and *màkina* categories in Birmingham and Barcelona. We can talk about the circuit of change in many different ways, from the movement from underground to commercial arenas to the obsolescence of chart music, from

the connections between the 'cosmopolitan' centre and the 'parochial' peripheries to the cycles of 'cool' within the nightlife of a particular city. The truth is that at the same time that big corporations lead a global cycle of change within pop music, different music genres and different localities have their own timings and idiosyncrasies. As Will Straw points out, 'the 'logic' of a particular musical culture is a function of the way in which value is constructed within it relative to the passing of time' (1991: 374). He correctly points not only to the changing way in which cultural commodities pass through different markets and populations, but also to the different logics of change typical of different scenes. The important processes, as Straw remarks, are those 'through which particular social differences (more notably those of gender and race) are articulated within the building of audiences around particular coalitions of musical forms' (ibid.: 384). In order to understand the process of cultural production of musical and youth geographies, as we intend to do, it is important to take into consideration the cycles of change of different scenes and music categories, as well as records and songs.

In the first place, we must notice the frenetic speed of change of popular culture, which can be clearly grasped in the everyday reality of chart and dance music¹⁷. We have already noted how in Birmingham new dance genres or versions of them took over from old ones so rapidly that teenagers might experience during their adolescence more than one such 'take-over'. In Barcelona, by contrast, categories were modified at a much slower pace. If we look not to music categories but to records themselves, within the commercial centre, that is, chart music, we find that those working in record shops explained that new releases were dramatically shortening their selling life. Jason, of one of the independent record shops in Birmingham, explained that 15 years ago a single would get to number one 10 weeks after it entered the charts, whereas at the time of the interview, the first week it entered the charts would represent its highest ranking and from that moment it would just go down. Year 2000 was the year with most number ones in the UK charts: 42. Singles were sold only in their first week, whereas 'in the old times' they would keep selling for a long time. Richard, the indie concert promoter in Birmingham, also believed that the single charts were not seen in the same way as they were 20 years before, when bands were well represented in them. He pointed out that whereas the singles chart had declined in quality¹⁸, the album charts still included several credible bands, 'who have got a long-term career'. The fact is that indie records had a completely different circuit of change from soul or dance re-

¹⁷ Dance music, particularly at its very beginnings, avoided to focus on authorship and performer's identity. This implied that 'Rather than tracing the changing styles and themes in a particular artist's career, the emphasis was on a knowledge of patterns of emerging sub-genres, represented by the names of particular singers, but without regard for these singers as creators of individual statements, as in rock aesthetics' (Hesmondhalgh 1998: 238).

¹⁸ This perception was quite widespread, alongside the quicker turnover of new singles in the charts, mentioned in mainstream newspapers at that time (see for example *The Observer*, October 17, 1999 or *The Independent* on November 1, 1999).

cords – as is also noted by Straw (1991). Jason, of an independent record shop, explained as follows the obsolescence of their dance and soul records:

Jason: In soul music it's only popular what is of the time, it sells what's popular at the time, but then that's it... Like dance music as well... In about two years time it's dated.

Roger: Two years...

Jason: Yeah, I mean, we can sell out about 80 or 90 copies in our first few weeks, and then we'll be lucky to sell 10 in the next two years... Because people will buy it straight away...

Those working in the megastore in Barcelona had exactly the same perception: new releases lasted less than they used to.

Francisco: Mayoritariamente cuando sale la novedad es cuando hay el *boom* y cuando también las discográficas empiezan a anunciarlo. Incluso hay muchas que te empiezan a anunciar el disco un tiempo antes de que salga, una semana, y eso crea mucha expectativa. Luego nos estamos dando más cuenta de que parece ser que cada vez las novedades duran menos.

Albert: Sí. Vendes que perdís al principi les has perdut perquè discos que no t'arribin el mateix dia de sortida, que hi hagi un problema... Perquè cauen molt ràpid les novetats. D'uns anys cap enrere, cauen molt ràpid.

Albert explained that a few years ago, when he worked in another megastore, new releases lasted weeks and months at number one, always selling loads of records, whereas now selling figures fell dramatically after one or two weeks. There were exceptions, like artists that increased their popularity through a slow mouth-to-mouth process, or others that rose in popularity after appearing in a TV ad or for some other reason, but they were not usual.

To get an idea of the importance of the cycle of change for the music industry, we only have to think of record shops and radio stations being constantly fed with new releases by the record industry. Every new record that got 'in' meant that an old one had to be dropped from the shop shelves or the radio formula. Even if megastores had enough space to stock a back catalogue, they had to choose what to drop from their shelves ('Llavors surten moltes més novetats que no pas descataloguen. Arriba un moment que has d'anar sacrificant perquè sinó és que al lineal ni t'hi caben els discos'). A record that only sold one or two copies during a year, would be automatically dropped unless it was regarded as very significant for some reason – that is, unless it was decided that the credibility that stocking it gave to the shop repaid the economic loss of not having another record in its place. In the case of commercial radio stations, they had exactly the same problem. Pere, of a dance radio station, explained that records 'acostumen a tenir un procés de toques'. Those that were prioritised from the beginning, had a minimum lifetime of two and a half or three months. When they became a 'hit', they could last up to five months. When asked about whether in some exceptional cases some of those hits could last up to a couple of years, he answered:

Pere: No, no. [la nostra] és una emissora ultramoderna i renovadora. O sigui vivim l'actualitat a l'instant. O sigui un *disco* ja està cremat als cinc mesos ja seria... Potser algun ha arribat a sonar cinc mesos... El '*hit*' aquest de l'any, no? Allò, el "Lady" de *turno* de Motzo, el Gigi D'Agostino amb no sé què, el "Pont Aeri 4" aquell, *Fly and free*... Vull dir coses molt concretes que s'han allargat per això, perquè... Però som molt de crear l'èxit i llavors que ja el posin les altres emissores. M'entens? Nosaltres el fem. Amb el *dance*, que és *lo* que toquem.

In the dance radio station in Birmingham, with a very similar philosophy, all records were stored in four different categories, three of which had to do with their launch date: 'current', 'new music', 'very new music.' The fourth one was 'only evenings'. Within 'current' music, the oldest record would be never more than 3 years old – although in general they were much more recent than that. Bob explained that they would 'never play more than 2 or 3 new songs in a row. People can't stand this (...). People get fed up'. Even those radio stations oriented towards 'new' and 'modern' music, therefore, found that their audience wanted to 'recognise' the records they played. They had to combine new and old just as club DJs had to play new or obscure records with caution:

DJ Fiesta: Allò de que m'acaben de portar un disc de Londres que no sé, que no sé quants... És molt difícil *ficar-lo* perquè em porten discos, ho intento, i allí se'm queden una mica [parats, sense ballar]... I al cap de quatre mesos sonen aquí i llavors la gent te'l tornen a demanar i tu ja el tens el *baul de los recuerdos*.

In this case, around 80 percent of his commercial set consisted of the tunes that were being broadcast on the radio, around 10 per cent was older music – called 'anthems' in Birmingham and '*himnes*' or '*regalones*' in Barcelona – and around 10 percent was music that had not yet reached the radio. He just noted that a record was not popular anymore because 'ja veus que comencen a baixar (...). Això ho veus, que la gent ja no els balla tant'. Since he had a large number of new records, the old ones just gradually faded out. Sean, from a bar in Broad Street, explained that he had 80 new releases every week, and listened to all of them to choose those that fitted his bar. 'And then I choose what I think is good and what I think is crap. And most of it is crap, believe me. Maybe only 8 out of these 80 are good. The other ones go in the trash'. As happened in record shops and radio stations, he then had to drop the old ones:

Sean: Well, when I put new records on, I drop the old ones. It's always changing, always up to date. If we listened to the music I played 8 years ago, we would find it completely bizarre... outdated. It's always changing.

Roger: But how do you decide to drop one particular record?

Sean: Because the people stop jumping to it, putting their hands in the air and screaming.

Roger: And you see that?

Sean: Yes. People get tired, and then I put a new one on. Always changing, always.

Roger: And how long do you play the same record, usually?

Sean: It depends on the record. It's like the charts. If the people like it, I'll keep it. Some records I have been playing are one year old! It depends.

Roger: And you wouldn't play old records?

Sean: Yes, some of them. I recover old ones. Or I mix everything: for instance, David Bowie and things like that.

He defined his bar as 'commercial', but since he wanted it to be 'trendy' and 'modern', he did not want to play chart music at all, so when any of the records he was playing hit the charts, he would just drop it from the set. Alex, from another bar in Broad Street, also claimed that since they played very new music, records that they had been playing for two or three months 'all of a sudden become big and you hear them on the radio all the time'. As well as new releases sent by big record companies, crucial in the circuit of change within the more commercial scenes, small independent record shops were also important points for the circuit of change, particularly within the underground scenes. In one of the Birmingham's specialised record stores, every Saturday new underground releases arrived at the shop, and many local DJs gathered to check and buy them. This example allows us to see how both the commercial and underground poles of dance music were in constant change. In fact, what is interesting is that the two poles were quite related to each other, in that, on the one hand, commercial dance music was constantly fed by underground scenes, and on the other hand, underground scenes would always be on the move to avoid commercial sounds. This means that once a sound hit the charts and was incorporated into the commercial circuits, underground scenes would complain about its loss of originality and its probable deformation making it easier listening for a broad public. Mike, of a pirate radio station, was well aware of the fact that garage was becoming commercial at that time: 'some tunes now have crossed over and are becoming mainstream, Chocolate Boy went to number one. You've got... Rewind, which is a garage tune, now, which is being put into mainstream, they made videos and stuff for it. And you've got *Enough is Enough* which is another tune that's gone commercial'. Tom credited the crossover of garage music to Kiss FM in London and MTV – through the participation of Trevor, who had previously worked at Kiss FM. The point is that not only the cycle of popularisation of certain styles, but also the atmosphere that was experienced in clubs had a strong influence on the varying fortunes of different dance scenes, which did not simply disappear but 'went back underground'. We have seen how first the jungle scene and later the garage scene attracted what many interviewees called 'the gangsta element', which made many followers move to something else:

Mike: When I got into garage, I got into it because there was no gangsta element in it. [When I was into jungle] I got a bit sick of going to places and wars, basically, and stuff like that. Because people... I wanted to go away, and the garage scene was a lot better. But now... It's been going on now for a while and it's starting going down the road as jungle, and now jungle is starting to pick back up

again, because the gangsta elements left and have gone to garage. And... the jungle's come basically back more to the middle class kind of people, and they've come back... They accept it more... They are not scared to go to the places perhaps any more, because people have gone to the garage. It's only a minority of the people, it's not everyone, it's only the small minority of people who deal with drugs, with all kinds of things: drugs, prostitution, robbery, thefts, all kinds of things, petty crimes... Only a minority, and they've spoiled it for everybody else. They really do spoil it. Because the garage scene is a beautiful scene.

Popular music, and particularly chart and dance popular music, was thus understood as in constant flux, where artists and sounds were increasing or decreasing their popularity. The popularity of dance music rose tremendously during the 90s, first through rave parties, sound systems and blue parties, and later through its more commercial version, which rapidly developed when it moved to nightclubs after the British Government made it more difficult to organise raves. From Barcelona, Pere from a dance radio station saw the constant change of English dance music as the result of its powerful industry:

Pere: Però és que a Anglaterra ho fan així, cada sis mesos *pum*, foten una reciclada, algú s'inventa un so... (...) Però és màrqueting. Vull dir [que] s'ho inventen i a partir d'aquí creen tot el que ve al darrera. Però és clar, ells porten molts anys d'avantatge amb nosaltres. Aquí no hi ha indústria. Sí, hi ha la màkina, i ja està. I la màkina també porta al darrera tota la seva maquinària de màrqueting engegada. Però home, els anglesos i els americans ens porten una avantatge molt bèstia en tots els sentits.

Paradoxically, at the same time as this race against time was speeding up, the introduction of the CD format – not to mention the Internet with the popularisation of fast connections, which was just starting at the time of the fieldwork – had made it easier to make old music available. Matt, of an independent record shop, pointed out that 'all music is available now, virtually everything, with one or two exceptions you can get any music you want on CD, whereas before CD there was a lot of music out of print'. Rock and indie music, in contrast to dance music, gave much more importance to earlier records and the history and genealogy of the genre. Indie clubs and record shops committed to indie music, for instance, combined new releases with many records that were several years old. As Straw already pointed out fifteen years ago, alternative-rock culture was characterised by 'the absence within it of mechanisms through which particular musical practices come to be designated as obsolete' (1991: 375).

The fact is that the circuit of change not only affected the popularity of different genres, artists and songs, but also its imbrication with social geographies. The same genre transformed its meaning over the years in terms of its ethnic, gender or class connotations, not to say its 'cool' or 'anti-commercial' imagery. The imbrication of the circuit of change in popular music and spatial hierarchies was also important. In both Birmingham and Barcelona, change was seen to originate in the USA and the UK. In Birmingham, some interviewees thought that

both countries were equally important, whereas others stressed that the UK was behind America in global influence on popular music. Depending on the music genre, the influence of the two countries could differ considerably. Hip hop music, for instance, was seen as an overwhelmingly US genre. British – or English – hip hop was seen as ‘parochial’ by many interviewees in the music industry, a prejudice that Paul, the hip hop DJ and promoter, expected to soon become less pronounced. The perception of cultural dependency on the United States can be grasped in the following statement by Tom, the drum ‘n’ bass promoter:

Tom: So drum ‘n’ bass is still underground and played on pirate radio stations and obviously, as it has got more popular, it has moved into nightclubs and that sort of thing as well... I don’t know, drum ‘n’ bass is the first real British night music since the 1940s... Like you know, rock’n’roll is American, house is American, all this sort of different things, like techno, sort of... So drum ‘n’ bass is the first... London originally, and I imagine that it obviously spread to other black people in Birmingham...

The truth is that both commercial and underground imported records from America were an important source of innovation within English popular music. In the following quote, Jason, of an independent record shop, points to the importance of imported records (and receiving them at the same time as radio DJs) amongst their new material:

Jason: As far as I know, most of the DJs in Birmingham come to us... We get all the latest tracks, and on Saturday it’s huge... Because we always get all the stuff on a Friday... usually... So the thing that we tend to do... is to get all the new releases before they’re in England, so we get them all imported from America... so we’ve got them in front... before most of the... So we’ll get most of the records at the same time as the DJs... You know? The radio DJs, because sometimes they get them sent free...

Within the UK, London was seen as the capital of popular music, and even if some sounds originated in other cities, it was considered the place where ‘things are going on’ or ‘happen’. This is how, for instance, Mike of the pirate radio station talked about the new garage scene: ‘Down in London it’s much bigger than it is in Birmingham, but we are doing our best to try to get it up’. The feeling that Birmingham was not as cosmopolitan as London and other places was an idea also shared by Mark, DJ and promoter of an indie night:

Mark: Birmingham is one of the worst places as far as pushing underground music... If you look at the house clubs... you haven’t got a lot of sort of deep house clubs... or, you know, experimental house clubs... It’s all mainstream banging trance or quite cheesy funky house... And they do it well. We’ve got... we’ve got some of the most famous clubs in the world based in Birmingham (Sundissential, God’s Kitchen, MissMoneypenny’s...), but, they are... they are not certainly underground house clubs. The Medicine Bar is one of the only places that do it,

really, in Birmingham, whereas if you go to London... you've got... you pick a diverse [offer of] dance venues... Because it's so big... And they can get away with that kind of... And even some of the really big... you might call them superclubs, like Fabric, they really do push underground, and they get 3,000 people in that...

Nevertheless, Barcelona was a completely different experience from Birmingham; in the former those in the culture industry saw themselves as further apart from the centre of popular culture. In Birmingham, 'European' music was seen as more or less peripheral, as is illustrated by these words of Mark: 'You hear about a lot of bands coming from Sweden or Belgium, Holland and things like that, but not further down... Even French, you don't hear that many French bands... apart from the dance side, which seems to do very well... Daft Punk and a whole group of bands like that...'. Non-English-language pop music that was not in the charts was often labelled, in record shops, as 'world music', mixed with traditional and folk music from different parts of the world. In Barcelona, by contrast, the studied megastore had popular music organised in two different sections: 'International' and 'National' (meaning not Catalan but Spanish). When an underground DJ or music promoter wanted to 'know what's going on', a trip to London was the usual ritual. DJ Fun explained, for instance, that when he started to play techno music he used to buy it from a catalogue or ask a friend who went to London to bring him records. A local club promoter, he explained, started his entrepreneurial music career bringing records from London and selling them:

DJ Fun: El *tio* viatjava molt a Londres i diguem que importava discos i els venia a... no sé, a botigues, al Revòlver i tal, i després venia discos al discjòquei, saps? Però les últimes novetats, allò... I el *tio* va començar així, no? I *bueno*, a part es treia una *pastal*! Ja es començava a moure en aquest món i tal.

A good example of the peripheral self-image of musical and youth geographies in Barcelona is the way the club Otto Sutz advertised itself in flyers as playing the same music as clubs like Home in London and a list of other European venues. At the commercial level, 'imports' were also highly valued. The dance radio station constantly tracked the US and UK dance charts, and when they received an import that had been very successful in those or other countries in Europe, they pushed it from the beginning. They would start pushing it even before it was released by record labels:

Pere: I també si ve de fora, doncs [mirem] quin precedent té a les llistes de fora. Perquè de vegades, si et ve una cançó que està número u a tota Europa, perquè aquí arriba més tard... normalment (...) anem una mica avançats i si veiem que una cosa està funcionant ja ho posem per què sí, no?

We can see how they try to be ahead of the circle of change in Barcelona by copying what is successful in other countries. In Barcelona, Pere claimed, things arrive later than in other Western countries, but his radio station tries to be ahead of everybody else by playing a track as soon as they see that it is a hit somewhere

else. This subordinate relationship towards the 'centre' was not only characteristic of chart and dance music, but also indie, punk or rock in general – the place seen as the cosmopolitan centre sometimes being France and not England or the US, for instance in relation to the influence in the techno music scene during the 1990s.

The influence was also through transnational corporations. As well as big record companies, other initiatives like magazines or even club nights were backed with English or French capital. A rock and punk magazine (present in both Barcelona and Birmingham), was an example of it. It was a French initiative, but with different 'national' editions:

Ramon: Ah, sí, evidentemente el primer número pues si nos basamos mucho en la francesa. No necesariamente, o sea tenemos la ventaja que tenemos edición en Francia, Italia, España, Inglaterra... y en Holanda me parece que también tenemos otra, ahora no recuerdo si en Holanda tenemos otra... Pero bueno, tenemos cuatro. Entonces, sí claro, evidentemente si hay una entrevista que nos interesa [pues la cogemos]... O [si] hacemos nosotros una en Madrid y en Francia o en Inglaterra la piden, se la mando para allá, ¿Entiendes? Tenemos la ventaja que al ser un grupo digamos de revistas en toda Europa, o en muchos países de Europa, tenemos mucha más fuerza de cara a hacer fotos en exclusiva. Los Garbage vienen a hacer fotos con nosotros en exclusiva... Tonterías. Bueno tonterías, cosas de estas, podemos mandar pues de repente un tío a Los Ángeles a hacer una cosa en exclusiva para nosotros. Hay ventajas, evidentemente.

The French headquarters set out the limits of what could be done, and the national versions had a relative autonomy. The fact that the capital was not from the English-speaking world, however, did not automatically imply that continental bands had a bigger chance to cross their national boundaries. Each national edition focused on national bands, and only exceptionally a national edition talked about bands that were neither from their country nor the English-speaking *centre*. Ramon saw rock music as Anglo-American just as flamenco music was Spanish.

Ramon: Claro, claro. Esto es como si de repente... Ahora olvídate de esto: estamos haciendo una revista de flamenco y tu me estás hablando del flamenco en Inglaterra, del flamenco en Francia, del flamenco tal y tu estás haciendo una revista en Jerez de la Frontera. ¿Para qué coño vas a contar a Jerez de la Frontera lo que es el flamenco de Inglaterra? O sea, allá ya tienen el suyo.

It is thus clear that he thought about Catalan and Spanish rock and punk music as mere parochial versions of the 'authentic' rock music that was made in the UK and the US. The link between Spanish and international dance music was explained as follows by DJ Fiesta:

DJ Fiesta: Home lo que escoltes a la ràdio... La gran..., *bueno*, en una discogràfica la gran majoria és nacional, però normalment lo que triomfa, lo que més es ven és de fora. Igual que a fora hi ha molt producte espanyol o català que triomfa més fora que dintre del nostre país. Lo que es fa aquí ho porten fora i fora es ven més que aquí.

Perquè aquí hi ha molts productors de música *progressive* d'aquesta, que la fan aquí, aquí no els hi triomfa però portant-la a Alemanya o a Holanda, com que allà és el *rotllo* que es porta, es ven molt més.

An interesting aspect pointed out by those working in the megastore in Barcelona was that international releases were not only losing ground to 'national' (Spanish) ones – Barcelona is known in Spain for selling a much bigger proportion of international popular music than the rest of Spain – but also that they lasted much less: 'Y ahora nos estamos dando cuenta que sale una Rosana y hostia, la Rosana aguanta mucho más tiempo que a lo mejor... que un Cranberries...'.¹⁹

In conclusion, the circuit of change of songs, artists and whole genres was directly linked with the music industries and their logic of profit-making, which varied from genre to genre and must be seen as inextricably intertwined with cultural expectations about music value. What by dance music standards was 'old' and 'out of fashion', for indie music could easily be seen as 'classic' and 'authentic'. The complex articulation of time and change in the inherently dynamic and unstable music geographies must be seen in the light of their fluid institutionalisation, which was not based on rigid structures like the school or the Academy but in the ever-changing market trends and fluctuating popularity of songs, artist and genres. Musical and youth geographies, subterraneously transmitted and transformed from generation to generation of young people, were always in the making, combining very stable meanings with markedly ephemeral ones. Every generation created its own idols, who became associated with a particular generation of young people. As pointed out by Joan, a concert promoter in Barcelona, all pop artists had their own vital cycle consisting of attracting young people when first appearing, and then losing followers as time passed.

Joan: Home, és que tot té el seu cicle vital, no? Exemple: en el rock català, tu tens Sopa de Cabra que puja, puja, puja, puja i puja i ha arribat un moment que han de dir "plego", perquè és que ja no tenen més públic. Per què? Perquè han passat els anys i les nenes que tenien setze anys quan va sortir en Gerard Quintana ara ja en tenen vint-i-cinc. (...)

The subjection of music artefacts to generations, fads and trends implied that change was guaranteed, and only a minority of musical forms became stable as markers of positions in musical geographies. Only those artists who attracted a mature audience would be able to keep their following. Pere, of the dance radio station, was another interviewee who pointed to the importance of the takeover of new generations from the old ones. When talking about the generalised image of his station as a *màkina* radio station, he was confident that it would change as the new generations took over from the old: 'Clar, les noves generacions ja estan mamant això que nosaltres no hem tingut la sort de tenir, no?'

¹⁹ This could lead to interesting questions around the different nature and development of the popularity of imported *versus* local artists, a topic which goes far beyond the possibilities of this thesis.

The reflexive awareness of continuous change was made explicit by several interviewees in Birmingham, who believed that dance music had become the new pop music, taking over from rock as the youth soundscape. Sean, of a bar in Broad Street, was one of them: 'Well, we play dance music. Nowadays, dance music is the rock'n'roll of young people. Dance music is there, everywhere, and it's what it's all about'. The important point is that this instability of music geographies was inherent in the organisation of their political economy. Record companies, music magazines and clubs were based, particularly but not only in the more commercial and mainstream manifestations, on the flow of artists and genres as a source of profit. The organisation needed, and structured, the corresponding musical geographies, valuing change as a positive aspect. We will later see how different young people culturally produced meanings in this direction.

The market power structure

This chapter has so far emphasised the need, among those working in the music industry, to be highly sensitive to what young people liked. We have relativised the idea that big corporations impose fashions and trends on young people and make loads of money by doing so, and analysed the way the logic of the political economy of music influences and structures the cultural production of musical and youth geographies. We have developed these arguments through four different stages. First, we have focused on the complex distinction between mainstream and underground stances within the music industry, which combines discourses and practices in a not always straightforward manner. Second, we have shown the difficulty of strategically anticipating the outcome of new attempts to attract customers, which leads those in the music industry to implement what was best described as a trial-and-error strategy. Third, we have analysed the view of musical and youth geographies held by those working in the political economy of music. And fourth, we have considered how the music industry uses music categories and follows different circuits of change.

Even if in these four stages we have seen that those working in the music industry can hardly be portrayed as imposing their will and manipulating young people's taste, since a given record company, radio station or club can *hardly impose any artist* on young people, it is still true that the political economy of music does structure the field of musical geographies, because, for instance, *an artist without the support of big record, media and nightlife companies will find it difficult to 'make it'*. In other words, it would be naïve to neglect the importance of power in the marketplace as a decisive aspect of the cultural production of musical geographies. We must bear in mind that a band advertised on prime-time TV will generally sell thousands of copies simply thanks to this appearance, and that a band not backed by a powerful distribution and promotional campaign will hardly sell more than a few hundred CDs. Without the current laws concerning copyright, licensing and monopoly, musical geographies would hardly operate as they currently do.

The political economy of music is decisive in shaping musical geographies, and we need thus to make it explicit to avoid a romanticised and ingenuous portrait of

it. In order to make explicit the influence of the market structure on youth geographies we will analyse three different aspects. First, the way public administrations and non-profit organisations draw the limits and often complement the market, influencing thus the cultural production of musical and youth geographies. Second, the individual and collective gate-keeping mechanisms obstructing access to, and channelling change in, musical geographies. And thirdly, the often hidden political aspects of the musical economy, which will make explicit that the orientation to economic profit is never politically neutral. Discussing these three aspects, we will also mention aspects that are currently being discussed in the academic field of popular music, like for instance the validity of the Fordist, post-Fordist or neo-Fordist models as best describing the contemporary music industry (see Smith & Maughan 1998; Hesmondhalgh 1998; Chatterton & Hollands 2003) or the organisation of creativity and the relationship between independent and corporate cultural creativity (see Hesmondhalgh 1998; Negus 2002 [1996]). These issues have not been directly addressed in the fieldwork, since its goal was rather to provide a general view of the range of experiences and perspectives of those working in the political economy of music.

The market's boundaries

The market where music industries try to make a profit is not a neutral arena. It has certain boundaries drawn by public and social organisations through laws and activities that crucially constrict, delimit and complement the market-driven activities. The music industry would not exist as it does, for instance, without copyright laws. This is why the Internet's jeopardising of the *status quo* of legal protection of intellectual property is a serious threat to the current functioning of the music industry and, by extension, of current musical and youth geographies. Any market is always organised upon particular laws that trace the limits within which money can be made. In the case of music, apart from copyright laws, we could mention anti-trust laws limiting corporative concentration, anti-payola laws narrowing the interaction between media and record labels, or public licenses restricting nightlife and radio businesses, just to name a few.

In the case of radio licensing, for instance, the way different stations were given the right to broadcast within a given territory was important. In Barcelona, the very existence of Flaix FM or Radio Tele Taxi, two private radio stations oriented to different mainstream segments of the population were important in understanding musical geographies, since they fuelled the popularity of what was called 'dance' and '*màkina*', in the case of Flaix FM, and 'jaloteo' or 'gitaneo', in the case of Radio Tele Taxi. The licenses for both public and commercial radio were granted by the Catalan government, not without controversy and accusations of arbitrariness. Pirate radios were not popular, and the initial movement through free radio in the 1970s and 1980s was rapidly neutralised, to some extent through local radios in neighbourhoods and municipalities; these have generally been seen as offering a poor imitation of commercial and public radio programmes. In Barcelona, several interviewees claimed that during the 1980s and 1990s Catalonia

had lost the opportunity to regulate them in a way that could give birth to a distinctive media space facilitating the rise of independent scenes:

Joan: El que sí passa que tant a Anglaterra, com Estats Units o fins tot França, hi ha una xarxa alternativa de ràdios, cosa que aquí no existeix. Aquí es va perdre l'oportunitat amb el *Cambio* [a la transició]. Amb el *Cambio* de sistema es va perdre l'oportunitat de reconvertir les ràdios municipals en que fossin... com més independents, per dir-ho així. Però tu escolta qualsevol ràdio municipal i és una reproducció d'una ràdio fórmula. Llavors, què passa? Que tota la qüestió de les ràdios lliures han estat prohibides i perseguides. Què tenim? Ràdio Pica, i alguna altra més.

In Birmingham, the private Radio Galaxy or the various pirate radio stations playing dance music of Afro-Caribbean origin were also crucial in stimulating dance and some of its sub-genres. As Jones (unknown year) remarks, in Britain private or 'independent' radio is the commercial stratum complementing the historically public-service orientation dominated by national and local BBC radio. More than one hundred independent stations broadcast in Britain under the guidance and financial control of the Independent Broadcasting Authority. After deregulatory climate has relaxed its original principles any station had to adhere – that is, commitment to the 'local' on a cross-community basis, broadcasting of programmes for ethnic minorities and public access to the radio through participation in phone-ins –, they have enjoyed growing success and popularity. The station playing dance music in Birmingham had a license 'to play dance and soul music' and, as Bob explained, they could only play music that had a dance rhythm and not, for example, boy bands: 'The license was to provide music for the Afro-Caribbean community' (the example gives an idea of the extent to which 'ethnicity' was reified in the UK). In the case of pirate radio stations, the third stratum of the radio system in Britain, they were a thriving and lively reality. From their off-shore beginnings and through the land-based move in the 1980s, they have in fact helped to develop and maintain a growing alternative music market, particularly of dance and black music (*ibid.*), many of them becoming dedicated to specialist genres: 'Broadcasting non-commercial music to a niche selection of targeted listeners, pirates faced the risk of fines and the confiscation of their equipment, but were consistently able to outrun licensed radion in picking up new musical trends, even when the quality of broadcast was patchy' (Osborne 1999: 227).

As for bar and club licenses, Birmingham and Barcelona were two completely different cities. Whereas Barcelona had more than one hundred clubs and many nightlife areas with innumerable bars, Birmingham had a more restricted nightlife. As several interviewees pointed out, Birmingham was well known for the difficulty of getting a license (at least in the past, since this was perceived to be changing at the time of the fieldwork), some believing that this was because of the influence of the Quaker religious community:

Noel: Still, Birmingham people do little parties in pubs and parties in warehouses... Because... licensing in Birmingham is very difficult, it's very difficult to get a bar... It's very restricted... Venues has always been a problem in Birmingham... We were lucky to get this, really...

Andrew, of the Birmingham Planning Department, explained that the city planners zoned the city and decided the proportion of each activity each zone should have ('A1 is a shop, A2 is an office, A3 is a pub'), but then left the development of them to the market. Most bars and pubs had to close at 11pm, although during the previous years late bar licenses until 12 or 2am had increased considerably. Clubs generally closed at 3am. Hommer was perfectly aware of the different customers attending different night areas, but claimed that 'it's all done by market forces'. As to the image of Birmingham as a difficult city to get a license, his explanation was as follows:

Andrew: Yeah, it's hard to get a license, but this has nothing to do with the council. That's the court... The council is not bothered, really, as long as you comply with the standards. The court used to control... and still does... night clubs. Just because it has to comply with the law...

In Barcelona, as long as the bar was within urban regulations (distance from another bar, safety and hygienic regulations, etc.), it could have a licence. There were only two areas where the high density of night-bars made it difficult for new ones to open. For those that paid the late-opening license, closing time was 2.30am. Clubs were allowed to stay open until 5am in the morning, although they often stretched this to 6am. The difference in philosophy of the two cities (and countries) might have an influence in the development of musical geographies. One interviewee, for instance, linked the fact that in Birmingham everything closed at 3 o'clock in the morning (even clubs), to the vigour of illegal parties: 'Then there's the illegal parties, which is the blues in Handsworth. In houses and warehouses, and illegal drinking and... They are always there, and you only know them if you know them...'

Andrew, of Birmingham's Planning Department, saw the moderate but significant rise in the number of 2am closing bars (an innovation in the country where pubs have always closed at 11) as a result of 'the way they apply the law, yeah, or the way the premises comply'. This change followed the country's move to a more continental notion of nightlife. The fact is that this change modified the status quo. Clubs were well aware that they would have more competition, and bars that got an extension until 2 o'clock, like the one in Broad Street where Alex worked, also had to adjust to the new situation:

Alex: Now we have a longer extension in our license. We are open till 2 o'clock on the weekends. So now we've got to compete against the clubs to try to hold people here till 2 o'clock, and don't let them disappear at the door at one. So that... it increases your competition...

In fact, as we have already noted, house music was mainly developed in England during the late 1980s and early 1990s through countryside raves and illegal parties in warehouses, which caused a moral outcry that led the Conservative government to pass the 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act, making them illegal. Within the dance world, as we have seen, this Act and its associated social control mechanisms (heavy fines, prison sentences and confiscation of sound systems) are seen as responsible for the move from warehouses and country fields to licensed nightclubs:

Tom: The Criminal Justice Bill was the big... turning point, that stopped people going to illegal raves and started to go to nightclubs... Yeah, going to nightclubs sort of became the normal thing that people would do on weekends...

Even if part of the scene was independently already moving to legal clubs at the time (Smith & Maughan 1998: 217), there were clear limits imposed by the authorities on musical and youth geographies. The regulation and policing of operating clubs is also important, as shown for instance in the occasional closure of some of them because of drug-dealing activities or sonic pollution. At the time of the fieldwork, Birmingham's local newspaper, the *Evening Mail*, led a moral campaign against ecstasy because three people had died in nightclub sessions in the city.

Just as music was not developing independently of legal regulations and police control, authorities were also responsible for supporting or running certain musical activities, like for instance community projects involving music-making or dancing, or promoting and building music facilities. In Barcelona, there were two music facilities for young people, as well as many other *Centres Cívics* where musical activities were programmed, which were run by the city council or by subsidiary organisations. These facilities offered some young people a space that did not need to adjust to market forces. La One of them, for instance, was used by punk interviewees of the Catalan School as a space for communication. The manager, Jaume, believed that there was a need for public initiatives that were not dependant upon market forces:

Jaume: Això no funciona sols per lleis del mercat, hi ha un cert mite d'això del que és *rock'n'roll* de "És *mogollón* de *pasta* i de molta gent al darrere i tal". Doncs és veritat en alguns casos, però no és veritat en la majoria dels casos i jo crec que sí que fa falta un diner públic que ajudi a que surtin projectes artístics interessants, que... que ajudin a... a facetes de formació del públic que no, que no cobrirà el mercat, ni [cobrixen] les escoles actualment... Hi ha mancances inclòs a nivell de formació de professionals, de periodistes musicals, de mànagers, de no sé què. De grups que ens vénen aquí que no saben d'on treure un mànager. N'hi ha a patades. L'avors, per això, la nostra opció no és buscar l'artista amb més possibilitats comercials, ni aprofitar-nos del seu [èxit], i llençar-li [el disc i la carrera] i fer diners a partir d'això. Ni buscar la programació de concerts més comercial i tenir una sala i fer molts diners a costa d'explotar això i tal, si no d'intervenir millorant la cultura musical de la ciutat, doncs donant suport a artistes que tinguin projectes artístics que ara sembla que... que també tenen coses a desenvolupar. Coses

interessants. Oferir informació tant a artistes com a professionals. Són relacions que ningú pot pretendre... L'autofinançament [potser sí,] però no de lucre.

This naturally poses the dilemma of which music genres or musical initiatives are worthy of support. Jaume explained that they did not consider *rock català*, for instance, to deserve their support, because it was already being supported by the Catalan government. The fact was that among the young people who used his premises, hardcore (punk) music predominated:

Jaume: Aquí (...) hi ha com una tradició del *hardcore* important, en el seu moment els Green Day, el primer concert que van fer a Barcelona, el van fer aquí (...). I una certa fornadeta de grups, d'aquí, de Barcelona, de *hardcore*, van nèixer aquí fa deu anys, més o menys. I això encara queda. I alguns dels artistes que s'hi apropren vénen per aquesta aura de *hardcore* [que tenim].

Jaume explained that they did not feel competent in electronic music, but were open to host it on their premises – as they did occasionally. *Màkina*, however, was considered beyond what could be supported: 'Un nivell de pretensions artístiques els tenim, i no sé, serà per prejudici que la màkina més descarada no. Doncs no, no la considerem'.

Other initiatives that influenced musical geographies from outside the market were non-governmental community projects and school activities. Several interviewees at the Inner City School in Barcelona and the Dual School in Birmingham explained that music lessons had changed their tastes. At these schools and at the White and Mixed schools in Birmingham, there were regular public concerts run by the pupils. As well as these activities, non-profit organisations, sometimes in co-operation with schools and other institutions, opened spaces where different musical practices were developed, from DJ or composition workshops to concerts. All of them are initiatives that could modify, however slightly, the existing market power structure. They provided spaces where particular styles, irrespective of the profit they generated, could be developed, visibilised or transmitted. Nevertheless, the fact was that their overall impact on musical and youth geographies, in comparison to the commodified carriers, was clearly small.

Gatekeeping and intertwined logics

In our attempt to make explicit the influence of the market structure on youth geographies, we have analysed how public administrations and non-profit organisations delimit the market boundaries. We have left aside one important regulatory aspect, anti-trust legislation, which is closely related to the second aspect we will discuss: the decisive influence of market power through gatekeeping mechanisms and the symbiotic relationships among different economic agents. The starting point is that not all economic initiatives within the music industry play the game with the same cards. There is a lot of money to be made and – as we

have already seen in this chapter – big corporations try to make a profit in ways that are radically different from small independent initiatives. The capacity of small businesses to reach all potential consumers is limited, whereas a few corporate initiatives tend to monopolise – or at least dominate – mainstream media visibility and distribution networks.

In 1995, the music industry in Europe had according to Laing (1996) an estimated turnover of 18.8 billion € (ECU at that time), or 0.34% of the GDP of all European Countries that year), and employed 600,000 people (in sound recording, administration of performing rights, concerts, sales of musical instruments, music education, broadcasting and audio equipment), half of them part-time, and with a high percentage of young people (*ibid.*). Music is thus a big industry. As for the recording industry – which at that time produced half the gross revenues of the European music industry (*ibid.*) – over the last 40 years international markets have been controlled by a few companies. The five big music corporations at the time of the fieldwork were Universal, Sony, BMG, Warner, and Emi (later Sony bought BMG to become the current Sony/BMG corporation) and collectively accounted for around three out of every four records that were sold globally (Smith & Maughan 1998). We are talking about a global market which, after the increase during the 90s, in 1999 had sales of over 35,000 million \$ (in Spain, the industry earned around 400 million € a year²⁰, whereas in the United Kingdom retail sales were around five times this figure²¹). In terms of album sales per capita, in 1995 the United Kingdom rated 3.4 and Spain 1.3²². As well as these four big corporations, in Europe alone there were in 1995 around 3,000 other companies that made music recordings (Laing 1996).

Each year, although over 25,000 different recordings were put on the market (*ibid.*), only a few of them enjoyed a significant sales figures. Rock and pop music (including dance) are by far the more important form of popular music (Smith & Maughan 1998). Steve, of the megastore in Birmingham, pointed out that ‘the chart [Top 40 best-selling records] would make up about a third of all music sales during a particular week’ (at the same time he pointed out that since records in the charts had a lower price, the store needed to sell larger quantities to make the some profit)²³. Albert, of the megastore in Barcelona, also said that their Top 100

²⁰ *El País* (March 12th, 2000), based on Grupo Prisa and Universal sources. According to IFPI (quoted in Laing 1996), in 1995 its sales were 435 million € (ECU at the time).

²¹ According to IFPI (quoted in Laing 1996), sales amounted to 1,981 million € (ECU at that time) in 1996.

²² Figure based on IFPI source (also quoted in Laing 1996).

²³ Richard Peterson explains as follows the appearance of the Top 40 formula: ‘Initially radio programmers played a wide range of records in the belief that the audience would become bored and turn to another station if they did not present a wide range of sounds. Then in 1954, the music director at an independent radio station in Omaha, Nebraska made a significant observation. Eating lunch at a diner with one of his djs, he and his colleague became extremely annoyed with their waitress, who kept putting money into the jukebox to play the same two songs over and over again. But then he reasoned that she was voluntarily spending her own money for this extremely narrow range of music so this

selling records would sum up about 50% of all sales of pop and rock music. This is a good indicator of the difference between those few records that sold huge quantities and the piles of other records that had to make a profit with considerably lower sales numbers, as well as of the importance of the commercial centre in the music business.

There certainly is a section of young people with an anti-commercial stance who would always avoid any music that is popular – or is in the charts – but these figures clearly show that there is a more important section of customers who will buy *what is popular*. Steve, of the megastore in Birmingham, explained that being in the charts was a guarantee of higher sales, in part because it meant that the price was lower. After an album left the charts and was marked at another price, sales just dropped, so they knew that they needed ‘to sell a volume of stock when it’s in the charts’ in order not to be left with a big stock they would not be able to sell afterwards. One of the interviewees working in a record shop explained that in a megastore where he had worked a few years before the interview, he had seen how some of the records of which they had a big stock but were not selling well, were sometimes put in the Number 1 position in the Top 10 of the shop to make sure sales would increase.

The concentration process is not exclusive to the record industry. On the contrary, it is also noticeable in the nightlife economy – particularly in Birmingham and England in general²⁴, but also increasingly in Barcelona – in mainstream media and many other economic activities related to music. This applies not only to overtly mainstream products, but also to segmented specialised ones. The corporate production of difference is not opposed to the capital concentration and the economies of scale. When a few companies own a large portion of the market share, they are able to exploit their market force to benefit their products, not only in terms of economy of scale and influence in the distribution and advertising channels, but also of joint efforts with other businesses that were not in direct competition.

must be what she, and perhaps thousands like her, wanted to hear. Since his station was not doing well in the ratings, he decided to experiment. He began a policy of playing, throughout the entire day, nothing but what the trade magazine charts showed were hit records, changing this mix of records weekly when the new hit charts were released. Instantaneously his station became the most listened-to station in Omaha, and within months this new formatting principle, which had come to be called ‘Top Forty’ because only something like the top forty charted records would be played, had been copied by major radio stations all over North America’ (1990: 112-3). In Spain, the first to adopt something like a Top Forty formula was Rafael Revert at Radio Madrid, who when asked to do a radio show for ‘ye-yes’, chose to make up a list of the forty records most liked, like those in the US but without any commercial convention, since none existed. The formula slowly succeeded and it was soon extended to 12 other radio stations of the Ser network across Spain, including Barcelona (Pedrero Esteban 2000: 46).

²⁴ See Chatterton & Hollands (2003) for a thorough analysis of corporate concentration in the nightlife economy in Britain. In their analysis of three medium-size English cities, they found out that only between 4 and 30 percent of the venues, depending on the city, were independently owned. In their words, ‘What is evident (...) is that older/historic and independent/alternative modes of nightlife are being quickly displaced by a post-industrial mode of corporately driven nightlife production in the consumption-led city. In the shadows exists the ‘residue’ of near-forgotten groups, community spaces and traditional drinking establishments marginalised by new city brandscapes’ (ibid.: 43).

Businesses from different sectors have indeed common interests, in that clubs, record labels, media and record shops are all trying to make money out of music, and what makes music popular in one business can benefit another one. Generally the music business must thus be understood in many aspects as a collective enterprise (even if in economic competition). Within the music industry, it is difficult to specify who takes decisions, who launches new music categories and who starts new trends. The music business is a complex conglomerate of interests in a complex equilibrium, where record labels, media and the nightlife economy will be closely interlinked in their commercial interests. Record shops will negotiate with record labels and also follow nightlife, magazines and other media to decide what to stock. The media will negotiate with record stations but also follow nightlife to do their job. And bars and clubs will draw their material from record labels and record shops and also negotiate with the media. All of them are interlinked in complex ways that we will be only partially able to illustrate. Pere, of a dance radio station, after detailing how record labels provided them with new releases – and often tried to convince them to push certain records – made the following reflections:

Roger: Us arriben primer a vosaltres o les discoteques la música?

Pere: Normalment ara [la nostra ràdio] és el punt de referència, no? I llavors les discoteques acostumen a posar el que nosaltres posem. Però per un motiu molt senzill, perquè posar un *disco* quan ha sonat a la ràdio vol dir que la gent el crida i el balla. Si el poses abans també, però no et reaccionen. Llavors les discoteques el tenen a la vegada que nosaltres segur, però a *lo* millor el tenen a la *cupeta* i el posen *pues mira...* [de tant en tant]. Però quan ja ha *petat* a la ràdio i la gent el demana, doncs ells també el *matxaquen* perquè saben que llavors els *hi* responen.

Roger: A Anglaterra les discoteques testegen les cançons. I les proves aquestes que deies que aquí feieu per les discogràfiques allà també les fan les discoteques...

Pere: No, aquí també fem *testings* [a les discoteques] quan hi ha cançons. Els discjòqueis les proven a les discoteques. I si la gent no reacciona, malament. Si més o menys funciona...

Roger: Però per vosaltres o per les discogràfiques?

Pere: Per tot plegat. Perquè va tot molt junt, va tot molt junt i els discjòqueis mateixos són els que produeixen els discos. Llavors si tu dius “Home he posat aquest disc i la gent el troba de tal manera, home crec que si el posem a la ràdio i el matxaquem la gent també reaccionarà bé”. Tot són suposicions. Per sort a la música, com en tot, dos més dos no són quatre. I és el que et... Potser una cosa que et penses “Hosti, això serà la bomba”, hosti, es queda en un no res. I dius “Per què?” Doncs mira, perquè a la gent no li ha entrat.

The question is the extent to which this conglomerate of interests (‘va tot molt junt’) remains open to peripheral businesses or sounds, or to put it differently, the extent to which this conglomerate is characterised by social – musical – closure to intruders from outside. The way ‘commercial’ and ‘underground’ music economies relate to each other is an important aspect of the political economy of music, and even if we cannot hope to understand it fully in this thesis, we can attempt to

throw some light on it. We are talking about different but not completely isolated networks of prestige, since when you gain capital in the commercial arena you tend to lose it in the underground one. Even if different capitals and expectations operate in these different networks, there are middle positions, movements from one to the other, and symbiotic relationships.

Big record shops, the most popular media and the big record companies known as 'the majors' become gatekeepers of musical geographies. In their effort to maintain and increase their market share, and through their economic power, they decide what will be most obviously available to young people – through both production and distribution control – and through what promotion it will be pushed or made visible. Big record stores, for instance, as well as having more power to negotiate better deals with record labels, also have the power to promote certain records through their own lists, listening points or visible locations in their shops. Record labels negotiate with them to get better deals for their promotion interests, and big record labels will naturally have more negotiating power than small independent ones. Mainstream businesses have much higher sales figures, and are thus better positioned to negotiate better price deals with record labels and sell their records cheaper. In the megastore in Barcelona, apart from excluding the cheap market of what was known as 'gas station music', there was a continuous tension between the goal to make a profit through big releases and their attempt to allow 'good' music to become accepted. Even if those working in the shop tried to push the records they thought deserved it with listening points and inclusions in the section 'our shop recommends', they were also – and increasingly – dependant on their company's centralised deals with big record companies and demands for higher profits:

Francisco: La implantación primera la suele hacer desde la Central, porque ellos ya tienen... Bueno a parte que lo hacen para todas las tiendas y entonces ya pueden negociar los mejores precios, también ellos reciben la información directa de los proveedores que informan más detalladamente, que escuchan el producto, o sea...

Albert: Después les dicen si hay *spots* publicitarios, lo que se van a gastar...

Francisco: Negocian exposiciones también. Buenos ahí ya entra lo que cada discográfica también va a sacar. [Si] una discográfica tiene una salida muy fuerte de un disco, pues se supone que hay que apoyarlo...

Small record labels could not negotiate the same favourable deals for their records. They did not have the same negotiating power, since their lower sales numbers could not ensure the same profits for the record store. Record shops and distribution companies, also subject to the concentration in the hands of big corporations, were in this sense quite interlinked, often being part of the same company and strongly influencing what was delivered to the shops and on what conditions. Distribution networks were also relevant in the circulation of imported records (and catalogues of imported records).

The lower power of small record labels and distribution companies – if they did not use the distribution networks of big corporations – implied that their

records could not be given prominence in the store, and that they could not return any unsold records. And the same was true at mainstream television and radio stations: big corporations had greater scope for negotiating and paying for media exposure – sometimes even belonging to the same industrial conglomerate. Television and radio exposure are crucial promotional assets for any record. Steve, manager of the record megastore in Birmingham, pointed out the important impact of TV adverts: ‘If there's a TV advert for a particular album, usually on a Friday night, and then Saturday sales will take off (...). If an album is advertised on a Friday night in December, then sales the next day will be huge. You could possibly say twice as many... But it depends’. Albert and Francisco, from the megastore in Barcelona, also were well aware of the influence of different media and, most of all, television:

Albert: Aquí al RAC 105 per la ràdio, aquí ve molta més gent...

Francisco: Emisoras que influyen mucho RAC 105 y Radio Club 25. (...) El Grupo Prisa llevan “Los 40 Principales”, Radio Dial... Bueno, controla todos los medios. Luego ya en el Canal Plus, “Los 40 Principales” también del Plus...

Roger: I què diríeu, més premsa, ràdio o tele? O les tres igual.

Francisco: ¿Influencia? La tele es de masas, la tele es de masas.

Albert: Lo de la tele... buah!

Roger: Un anunci a la tele d'un CD és garantia...

Albert: O un anunci que no anunciï un CD, que anunciï un cotxe, la música aquella... En massa, en massa.

Francisco: También. Lo de los anuncios es la hostia.

Albert: (...) La tele està per sobre de tot. Si el disc no és bo però l'anuncien per la tele, és que la gent te'l demana! Es ven. Segur que entra.

Record labels therefore wanted mainstream media exposure, which matched the need of commercial radio stations to sell adverts in order to finance their activity. Nevertheless, whereas big record labels could assume the cost of paying adverts in big mainstream media, small labels could not take the risk and tended to use the much cheaper specialised media. Besides paying for adverts to make records visible, it cannot surprise anyone that since there is a lot of money to be made, the temptation to influence exposure by all means is also present. This was the origin of the so-called ‘payola’ (money secretly paid to radio stations to air given tracks), first made illegal in the United States in the 1960s. Rather than having disappeared since it was made illegal, payola has been transformed²⁵. Sev-

²⁵ Payola ‘is a contraction of the words “pay” and “Victrola” (LP record player) (...). The first court case involving payola was in 1960. On May 9, Alan Freed was indicted for accepting \$2,500 which he claimed was a token of gratitude and did not affect airplay. (...) After the trial, the anti-payola statute was passed under which payola became a misdemeanor, penalised by up to \$10,000 in fines and one year in prison’ (<http://www.history-of-rock.com/payola.htm>, consulted in 15 January 2006). According to the Wikipedia, payola is still used by the record industry through indirect ways. In fact, a very large majority of DJs do not select the music anymore, but are instead told what to play and when (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Payola>, consulted in 15 January 2006).

eral interviewees working in the music economy in Barcelona explained that it was common knowledge among those working in the industry that you needed to pay to get airplay on mainstream commercial radio, at least in the form of adverts and other legal economic exchanges. Without money, getting into radio-formulas was an almost impossible task. No one in Birmingham said anything similar, and one interviewee said that he had been told that payola was commonplace in Spain, but that it would be impossible in the UK. It is clear, however, that the truth of either of these statements can not be proved here, even though the 2005 US sentences against Sony BMG and Warner Music²⁶ for undisclosed payoffs in exchange for airplay lead one to suspect hidden deals anywhere in the globe. In Barcelona, in any case, those working in the alternative or underground music industry had a view of mainstream commercial radio and television as much more inaccessible than those in the same situation in Birmingham. In Birmingham, there was a general perception that small record labels could sometimes get records into the best-selling list, and when the impossibility of some records, tracks or genres crossing over to the mainstream was mentioned, it was in reference to the 'hardness' or lack of 'commerciality' of the sound. Mark, of Ramshackle, provides an illustration of this generalised perception:

Mark: I mean... the Travis album has sold something like 2,000,000 in Britain alone... And it's like... for an indie band... for any band, it's amazing. Even though it's not really indie... it's very... sort of diverse experimental... And it has been number one for nearly a month... and that only took... it took like six months to reach it... It was not a big hype with the album, and it just climbed the charts... and word to mouth spread... And that's great, I think... And the label is not a big label... To actually get number one and stay there for weeks... that's great... That shows good taste on the audience... It's not only things that are on TV and advert, advert, advert...

In Barcelona, by contrast, there was a perception among interviewees that it was impossible for a song or album not on a big record label and without access to mainstream media to cross over to the mainstream. This does not mean that small record labels were not allowed to pay for media exposure, but that they could not take the risk of not recovering their investment through future sales. Big mainstream media promotions were a guarantee of higher sales, but not a guarantee of

²⁶ 'New York State Attorney General Eliot Spitzer has been prosecuting payola-related crimes in his jurisdiction. His office settled out of court with Sony BMG Music Entertainment in July 2005, and Warner Music Group in November 2005. Two other major record companies remain under investigation' (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Payola>, consulted in 15 January 2006). Spitzer said: 'Our investigation shows that, contrary to listener expectations that songs are selected for airplay based on artistic merit and popularity, airtime is often determined by undisclosed payoffs to radio stations and their employees. This agreement is a model for breaking the pervasive influence of bribes in the industry' (quoted in the article 'Spitzer lifts lid on payola at radio stations', written by David Teather in *The Guardian*, 26 July 2005: <http://business.guardian.co.uk/story/0,3604,1535935,00.html>, consulted in 20 January 2006).

recovering the money spent on promotion adverts. Big record labels, because of their economic power and their repertoire of artists, could take the risk of losing money on some of these promotions, whereas small record labels could not. Costs worked as a filter stopping small record labels from investing in mainstream media promotions, and since they had no media exposure, they could not reach higher sales numbers. Naturally, an important exception was those spaces in mainstream media and businesses that bothered to make it possible for specialised or unknown records to *break through* the barrier of mainstream exposure, for instance in specialised programmes on big radio stations, or listening points in big record shops. Radio DJs or employees in record shops – when they could choose, or at least have some margin of decision about, the records they played or sold – were thus privileged gatekeepers with important power, which could in any case only solve the exposure problem for a reduced number of the small records on the market. In general, the economic structure of the record market imposed a segregation of its media exposure, and small record labels had to use the music press, posters and alternative media to promote their records²⁷.

These alternative media also operated as gatekeepers, even though they sometimes did so by doing the opposite of the mainstream media, for instance by prioritising independent material over that issued by major companies. Depending on the size and interests of the magazine, there will be a complex relationship with the rest of the industry. Reviews, exclusive interviews and information, front pages and many other aspects might be valued assets that record labels and magazines could – even if often implicitly – exchange and negotiate. Just as music magazines wanted interviews with stars that would help them sell copies, record labels wanted their artists to appear on the front pages and to have good reviews and articles. This was important in both mainstream and specialised magazines, in both big and small record companies. Ramon, of a music magazine, explained that he discussed with record labels about the way their artists appeared in the magazine, but that he did not receive any pressure:

Ramon: Evidentemente te intentan colar portadas aquello “Oye, ¿Esto no lo pondríais en portada?” Las portadas las decidimos nosotros o en su caso Francia. O sea, si Francia tiene de repente una entrevista con no sé quien y quieren que en el número tal salga en portada, “Oye en el mes de tal, tal grupo”. Pues sale el grupo, sacamos la misma portada o muy parecida a la francesa y ya está. Quiero decirte, sacamos la entrevista. Evidentemente presiones no. Hombre, peticiones o solicitudes, sí, pero sin ninguna... [presión. Presión] es la que te dejes hacer tu, o sea... A veces me dicen “Hombre te doy un tema en el *sampler* [el CD que adjuntamos a cada revista,] si me das una portada”. Pues bueno, no sales en el *sampler* y pongo a otro grupo. A mi me es igual hablar de *A, B, C* o *C, D, E* que de *E*,

²⁷ This could be modified if popular webs like My Space (www.myspace.com) kept their practice of equally displaying major, indie and unsigned artists (the lists of ‘Today’s Top Artists’ are a three column table where ‘unsigned’, ‘indie’ and ‘major’ artists are listed with exactly the same prominence).

F, G. Novedad cada mes hay, muchos grupos y hay mucha gente de la que hablar, quiero decirte...

Ramon claimed to make an effort to ensure that all record labels got the same treatment, but that if someone got a better deal, it was the independent labels. He explained that independent record labels were more supportive in terms of advertising, so it would be foolish to say that big corporations had better deals:

Ramon: No por eso discriminamos a los grupos de las multinacionales. O sea que en absoluto. Pero intentamos ser lo más asépticos posible, o sea... Hombre sí, si de repente durante cinco meses nos damos cuenta que de una discográfica no hemos sacado nada, pues la siguiente vez que nos envían algo procuramos sacarlo. Tampoco podemos sacarlo todo, son 100 páginas, tantos minutos y tampoco podemos meterlo todo. Ahí está nuestro filtro.

Other interviewees also pointed out – as is implicit in Ramon’s words – the subtle and complex negotiation between record labels and music magazines for the distribution of space, front pages and good reviews. As happens with the other participants in the music political economy, the music press need to have good relations with record labels and record labels need to have good relations with the music press, so an implicit – and sometimes explicit – negotiation and exchange of favours naturally arises. Every magazine and record label must negotiate the form and limits of this relationship.

The nightlife economy is another arm of the music industry conglomerate. Record shops and the media tried to ‘be in touch’ with what was going on in bars and nightclubs, and bars and nightclubs were also connected with what appeared in the media and used record shops and record labels to obtain the music they played. Several managers or DJs of the clubs or music-bars in Birmingham explained one practice within the industry that illustrates the close relationship between record labels and the nightlife economy: pre-releases. Many clubs and bars received free records from the music industry before they could be bought in record shops. In exchange for this consideration, DJs were asked to send back reports about the way the crowd had reacted to the records.

James: The record companies want you to play their records, they want to know from the disc jockey what response the record gets. So say they've got a new artist or a new record from another artist, and they want to see... they are not sure if it's good enough, so they'll put it in say 300 discotheques, and then the disc jockeys have to say 'do they respond well?', 'did they like it?', 'will you play it again?', 'is it a record would you play regularly?', that sort of thing. If they get a favourable response, they may well release it. If they get a negative response ('nobody danced to it', 'everybody cleared off', 'let's go to the bar'), then they won't. Then they pressure you inasmuch as if you don't send these returns back, they stop sending you records. So Sony may send you 5 or 6 records a week, and you are expected to fill them out and send them back. Out of half a dozen, there might be one, there might be two records which are good records, records to keep, records to put in

your records box, and to play for the next 6 weeks, 8 weeks. If you didn't get them sent, you have to go HMV or another record shop and be paying 5 to 10 pounds for that record. So OK, it's half an hour's work and writing, but they save themselves 10 or 20 times every time it's done.

This also happened with alternative or underground record companies, who sent what were called 'white labels' to some radios or clubs – even if it is clear that they could hardly have the same capacity of feeding different businesses, since the relative cost of sending out 500 or 1,000 copies was not the same for a small record label as for a major company. However, they had lists of DJs who played certain styles of music and sent free copies to them before the records were released. The fact is that pre-releases served to create a buzz about records before they were released, and in some cases – when DJs were asked to send reports back to the record label – as a way to test records (even if it is true that sometimes DJs did not take these responses seriously: 'Yes, I'll do these reports, but I say that everything is fantastic. Or I won't play it and I'll say that it's crap'). At the same time, for a certain DJ, club, bar or radio station, playing music that was still not released could also help in giving the impression of being 'ahead' of trends. Specialised music stores also tried to provide their customers with *novelty*. As Paul, the hip hop DJ explained, shops were another crucial source of new materials, since they would give him 'kind of lists of things before they are out and you can order them'.

Pre-releases were important not only in dance music but also among indie DJs, sometimes becoming one of the main sources of new material ('A lot of music that I get as a DJ, a lot of the new music I get to hear, is the music that the record companies send me... you know? Because I get a lot of things sent to me before it comes out...'). Reports sent back by DJs also represented for record companies an important source of information about the records.

DJs themselves, as well as club managers, were important gatekeepers in music scenes. In fact, they have become real 'cultural arbitrators', as Smith & Maughan (1998) call them, in the sea of an astonishing number of micro-labels turning out records. This role increased remarkably through the 1990s. Even if the active role of the DJ varied among clubs, and even if – as we have previously seen – there were clear limits to what DJs could do for every dance floor, their influence on music scenes is unquestioned. In the following quote, Mark explains how he experiences it as a DJ:

Roger: And have you found the situation that a tune that you like people don't like and then you insist and people end liking it? Like the DJ as a taste maker...

Mark: Oh yeah... we do see ourselves to... you know. The record is gonna be good in the first place, we just need to get into people's... subconscious sort of thing... I can't think of a tune we thought would work and hasn't worked... I mean, sometimes it might not pack the floor as much as a tune everybody knows and loves, but they usually work fairly well and then... if you play it at the right time, next to something that's kind of similar, it's got a similar feel, then it's more likely to work. But if you keep playing it week after week people quite quickly realise that

this is a good tune, and get it a little bit, specially because we've got a lot of regulars, you know, week in week out.

Roger: And do you have a lot of people asking for 'what's this'?

Mark: Yes, not as many as you would in another club, because here you need to go upstairs to the stage, and then beyond the stage, it's a bit of a trick, but you still get people doing that.

Another gate-keeping mechanism was that of phonographic organisations responsible for collecting and distributing the copyright revenues from media and club use of music, such as the SGAE in Spain or PRS and MCPS in Britain. Since they could not check all the clubs or all the music played on TV and radio stations in the country, they charged their associates a fee and then worked out the percentage to be distributed to different artists. One interviewee who paid the fee in Birmingham claimed it was based on chart position, and a second one on the basis of more complex research. In Spain, one interviewee claimed that unless different businesses provided detailed information of what they played, the distribution was made according to general popularity measures, which was prejudicial to small artists and record companies. He ensured that among all radio stations, only the minority Radio 3 sent a detailed list of all artists that received airplay in order to make sure they received their copyright dues.

All these examples show the importance of different gatekeeping mechanisms, which must be seen as a collective cultural production resulting from what we have called the 'industry conglomerate'. Steve, of the megastore in Birmingham, clearly illustrates this in the following words:

Roger: Then you follow the charts, TV and...

Steve: Yeah, we do have a list of what's going to be advertised... When and so on.

Roger: Do you have club listings as well... Like the charts of music played in clubs?

Steve: Mmm... not officially, but we get the information. A couple of the staff are DJs as well... We are not officially provided with that information, but we make it.

The interest of record labels in strategically using these gatekeeping mechanisms to make a profit is best illustrated with the need for laws banning 'payola', as well as with their limited success. Several mechanisms have highlighted the difficulty of small record labels to promote their records in the same conditions as big corporations. The same economic logic of big and small businesses points to music differences, in that a small record label is organised around the possibility of making profit out of small sales, whereas big corporations can only make a profit if they sell big quantities. For a small record label, failing to recover investments in promotion might mean bankruptcy, whereas for a big corporation this is an acceptable risk. The market has its power structure, although we must not forget that this depends on the legal and informal regulations. If we compare the presence of BBC popular music Radio 1 in Birmingham, where chart music is combined with specialised and credible shows playing minority music, with the more inaccessible

'*Los 40 Principales*' and Flaix FM in Barcelona, where specialised programmes with minority music only appear late at night, we can understand that the political economy of music does not only follow an 'economic' logic, but an implicitly political one. We have seen that the market power structure sometimes allows individuals, even if they work in mainstream-oriented businesses, to give exposure to minority records. And we have also mentioned that when alternative and small music business are strong, and there is a sufficiently large community of young people with an anti-commercial disposition, small record companies can occasionally achieve large sales.

Nevertheless, as we have already pointed out, the distinction between 'commercial' and 'underground', or between 'majors' and 'independents', must be taken with caution, since there are many ways in which the two are in fact connected, if not merged. However, alternative businesses generally have an open anti-commercial stance, and are thus wary of any sound that could be labelled as 'commercial', any media exposure or deal with major record companies that could jeopardise their 'credibility'. Linked to this, 'anti-commercial' recordings are often characterised by their 'hard', 'fast', 'loud' or 'rough' sound and lyrics, all elements that are systematically avoided within the commercial centre because their 'difficulty' threatens their general appeal. What actually happens, therefore, is that the market is structured in different fields where as well as the commercial centre, there are many satellite alternative or underground businesses, generally organised around music scenes, which follow a different economic logic and are directed to a different pool of customers. Even if there are crossovers between them, and many intermediate positions (big majors, for instance, have tended to buy and integrate independent companies within their structure to both increase their credibility and to keep in touch with the path of musical innovation), the two logics and their inherent tension are what largely define the political economy of music.

The impact of digital technologies and the reduced costs of record production have in fact modified the way the record industry is organised. This change has been interpreted as a post-Fordist development (Smith & Maughan 1998), although Chatterton and Hollands (2003) – in their case in relation to the night-life economy – prefer to term it a 'neo-Fordist' economic development, arguing that the 'post-Fordist' interpretation overstates the flexibility argument and mistakenly assumes that standardised mass markets have been replaced by flexible ones (2003: 23).

We can illustrate the differences between mainstream and minority economic initiatives through their distinct economic logics and the difficulty of small businesses in competing with big corporations and the other way around. Their respective economic logics reduce their strategic choices. We have already seen many examples of this, from super-clubs not being able to run very specialised nights to the impossibility of small record labels to take the risk of spending large sums of money to promote their records through mainstream media exposure. Another example is the impossibility of medium-sized clubs to compete with 'superclubs' in attracting big name DJs:

Adam: The problem with the danceworld now is that there's a lot of superclubs, you know? Big clubs, like four-five thousand people. And now the DJs will only play in the clubs with four-five thousand capacity. You know? And our capacity is eight hundred, so it's hard for us.

In the same way, small record shops could not compete anymore with megastores in the attempt to make a profit out of mainstream pop music. Megastores sold large quantities of records, so they could negotiate with record labels good deals that not only allowed them to sell them much cheaper than small record shops, but also the privilege of returning any unsold records - (small record shops could not do this²⁸). Record labels had to offer this condition because they needed to be in megastores ('La quantitat de CDs que es venen a la [nostra botiga] no es pot ni comparar amb qualsevol botiga... Cap botiga petita pot vendre 25 compacts de Moby cada setmana'). Jason, of a small shop, explained it as follows:

Jason: Yeah, like Britney Spears... They'll have a huge deal, so they can sell it at 12.99, whereas we know that we are not going to sell many, so if you buy one, it will cost a fortune... And you won't be able to sell it. So we end up not buying it... It's the same with singles. If we get a deal on an album, and we get 11 albums so we get 10 and 1 free, unless we sell them all, we won't actually be able to make a profit, even if we got 1 free. So we're never gonna sell them all.

Those working in Barcelona's megastore also explained that they were allowed to push certain records that were not initially expected to sell more than one or two copies largely because they could return those records that were not sold: 'El que no vens ho tornes, i això amb una botiga petita no pots fer-ho... (...) Les petites botigues quan compren al major, tot el que compren s'ho mengen, i per això han d'anar amb tacte a l'hora de comprar'. As they saw, whereas megastores focused on those records of 'easy' access, the only option for small record shops was to sell records that could not be found in megastores, like new releases, hard-to-find records, collectors' records, etc. Matt, of another independent record shop in Birmingham, graphically explained his survival strategy at the time of the interview:

Matt: What we are doing at the moment is going backward to where we started... the collector stuff, sixties and seventies collector stuff. So there's a higher profit margin, because you don't sell as much, and there's a higher profit margin. With the new stuff the profit margins are so small, so you have to sell a lot just to take some money, and it's very dangerous, very dangerous business. Then we are changing, we are changing and going back. Changing the direction.

²⁸ In Barcelona, in 2006, record labels were discussing the possibility of changing the distribution policy, allowing any store to send back those records that were not sold, the usual practice in the book industry.

Small record labels followed a different economic logic, not only because they had to make a profit from much lower sales than big corporations, but because they were dependant on their sensitivity to local scenes. Big corporations had annual promotional plans, designed at headquarters, which focused on particular objectives that were seen as their best chances of making big profits. By contrast, small record labels needed to take care of the promotion of small records and were thus more sensitive to their needs. Joan, a concert promoter, explained that he could work better with independent record labels than with big corporations:

Joan: Per què? Perquè la multinacional no deixa de ser una delegació de la casa mare que està a Londres o està a Nova York o està a París, m'entens? Si és a París, vull dir, encara tenen un altre tipus d'estratègia i raonaments. Però normalment aquí te'n vas tu a les grans discogràfiques i l'únic que fan és ser una sucursal de la casa mare que li marca les pautes. Fan reunions a nivell mundial o Europeu, *lo* que sigui, i diuen "En marzo sacaremos a Ricky Martin, en abril a la Madonna y en septiembre tal y para la campaña de navidades sacaremos esto. Punto". I aquí diuen "A sus órdenes" i segueixen les pautes "Este es el póster, esto es esto, sale el día dos [y] tiene que estar en las tiendas..." M'entens? És una cadena de transmissió. Quan tenen grups que se surten d'aquests objectius, passen completament. O sigui, ens estem trobant nosaltres amb grups que són de multinacionals franceses i que la multinacional d'aquí, com que no és un objectiu prioritari a nivell mundial, la multinacional d'aquí *passa*, no en volen *sapiguer* res. I ens les veiem i desitgem a vegades per tenir una mena de col·laboració. (...) Vull dir que per a ells aquí no era cap prioritat llavors si vols fer promoció l'hem de fer nosaltres. I dius "Collons, hòstia. Sí, farem *promo* a la ràdio, farem cartells, farem això, farem *lo* altre, tot això perquè el grup sigui conegut". Fem uns concerts, què vol dir? Que després la gent anirà a la botiga a comprar el *disco* o abans. Els hi és igual. I la gent et va i et comenta "Tio, i el *disco* què? No el trobo". (...) No el troben. És que no. Per vendre tres o quatre mil còpies els *hi sua*, *els hi sua*. Clar perquè *lo* seu es vendre... Que els hi diguin "Ricky Martin, objetivo vender 250.000 copias este año, de este disco". Després quadren i ja està. I de *lo* altre *passen*.

The different logic of big corporations and mainstream music, on the one hand, and small record labels and alternative, underground or minority music, on the other, is clear. What remains to be discovered, in each particular case, is the strength of alternative, minority and underground networks – in terms of both customers and businesses – and the relative permeability of the commercial centre. For instance, intermediate media like music magazines like the one directed by Ramon, which could sell in Spain around 15,000 copies each month, represent important promotion means for those who cannot afford mainstream radio and TV commercials. The greater the number of specialised bars, clubs, radio stations and music press, the larger the peripheral market could be. When asked about the number of people that the drum 'n' bass scene could mobilise in Birmingham, Tom replied as follows:

Mat: Well, Kool FM claims to broadcast to 200,000 people every weekend, and that covers the Midlands, not just Birmingham... So I don't know, I mean, you see the same faces... I went to... you get a 1,000 people on the big nights... I don't know,

there's probably only about 1,000 people who is involved in actually running all that sort of thing... but... I don't know... maybe 10,000 people that goes... It's not a big proportion really... It's really hard to tell, because we really try hard to get students, like when I went to Manchester, students that just come to Birmingham... We try and stop them going to the big commercial nights and try to get them to come to something good, a bit more... a bit more... not just take the money and go to the same nights, the same DJs, Radio1...

A concert promoter in Barcelona explained that in contrast to what happened in England, the US or even France, Barcelona had the 'problem' of not having a network of alternative radios. He was aware that university radios in the US, or local pirate radio stations in the UK, were playing a crucial role in promoting new artists and sounds²⁹. However, he was confident that the independent sector in Barcelona would grow:

Joan: Jo crec que creixerà. (...) Sí. Aquí sí perquè aquí anem més *retrassats* que a altres països per dir-ho així. I si... [La gent] està obrint més orelles, s'està educant més també. Jo ho comparo. Fa anys enrere... Vull dir que la gent no sabia que existien. I és que a més no arribaven els discos aquí. (...) Encara és molt tendre, diguéssim. Vull dir que tot gira molt amb *lo* comercial. Llavors sí que hi ha unes quotes d'*indie*, no? De més alternatiu... Però déu n'hi do *lo* que ha crescut, però tot i així encara estem a anys llum. (...) N'hi ha, *lo* que passa que són circuits petits encara. Però va creixent. Vull dir jo sóc optimista en aquest sentit. O sigui crec que evidentment la quota de vendes seran sempre *lo* comercial, no? Però *lo* que és el magma que està a sota, que està dividit en cinquanta mil grupets cada vegada van recuperant una mica de terreny. Mai arribaran a canviar la truita, mai. Perquè la Madonna és la Madonna i *punto*. M'entens? I ara mirava *El Periódico* mentre estava dinant i torna a sortir el Ringo Starr, m'entens? El Ringo Starr ara farà una gira, no? Que ni vindrà aquí! Que és a Estats Units, però *bueno* la gent diu "Ah, Ringo Starr, Beatles, a veure què diu?" Evidentment no et parlarà d'altres cosetes interessants perquè necessiten titulars, necessiten això. Mengen, viuen d'això, no? Llavors *lo* altre li costa molt anar esgarrapant terreny.

He pointed to the fact that mainstream commercial radio stations were starting specialised programmes because they were realising 'que hi ha una música alternativa que no és la comercial i que també té la seva quota, no?'. In Birmingham, several interviewees pointed out that even though there were many alternative initiatives, 'a lot of things are kind of centralised in London'. Paul, for instance, used to live in London and when he moved to Birmingham he was surprised at the lack of public hip hop events there:

²⁹ This does not imply that they were independent of commercial interests. As Negus points out, pirate radio stations have frequently received money and promotional recordings from record companies, and this 'has led to the accusation that pirates are also being coopted into the commercial system and hence are operating as little more than commercial entrepreneurs: behind the aura of illegality they have been targeting and segmenting markets just as carefully as their legal counterparts' (Negus 2002 [1996]: 85).

Paul: When I moved up here, I kind of expected it to be similar to London, but when I got here, I kind of... I was shocked at the little that was going on in some respects. Just from... I don't think it's totally fair, but just from... first impression, if you know what I mean. I kind of turned up and thought: "Well, let's find out what's going on". And it was really hard to find anything that was really happening. (...) There was a lot going on, but not particularly a lot of what is relevant for the kind of things I like, you know? Because one of the first weeks I was here I kind of went into town and to a few shops to look for flyers and anything that was going on, and I was asking people in record shops, you know, if there's a hip hop night, and everyone would say, 'No, not that we know, no'. (...) What I didn't really realise until quite a few years later is that there's quite a strong hip hop community in Birmingham, but they don't really kind of like... show about it. There're things going on, and people making records, and people doing things, and people making music and stuff, but they don't really have a massive outlet for it. So like it's going on but people don't necessarily really find out about it. And I think... I wouldn't say... I wouldn't say we are kind of responsible for bringing it out, but I think at least we have allowed one kind of little outlet where a lot of the things that are going on have come to the surface a little bit.

This quote shows how underground networks were not necessarily visible. As was also explained by David (quoted above), there were also small record labels, house and blue parties where music was promoted. The truth is that underground networks were stronger in Birmingham. In Barcelona, Joan's perception of the weakness of alternative circuits was shared by all the interviewees ('Hi ha molt poc professional. Vull dir tothom va amb la seva agenda, la seva cartereta de contactes i té quatre clients que són els Ajuntaments i com més els pots collar millor, m'entens? No hi ha gent que s'arrisqui'). This meant that not only mainstream music but also alternative and underground scenes were seen as highly dependent upon the production centres in the United States and the United Kingdom. Both the 'commercial centre' and the 'underground' peripheries were seen as being basically shaped by the English-speaking world, and this dominance was felt as a constricting factor by many local promoters in Barcelona who thought that their dominance was not strictly related to music quality, but to the market power of the music industry in the English-speaking countries. If we look at the 'pan-European hits' of 1995, for instance, whereas 21% were American and 16% British (35% and 27% if we consider albums instead of singles), among the other European countries, only Germany and France, with 7% and 5% respectively, came anywhere close to that figure (Laing 1996).

This dominance had obvious consequences. Joan, a concert promoter, explained that the influence of British and American media on local critics *and* the closure of the English market to foreign bands were obvious barriers not only for local musicians but also for any artist from other parts of the globe:

Joan: Estan seguint aquestes pautes anglosaxones. Hi ha molt poca premsa aquí a Espanya, estic segur eh! [Hi ha molt poca gent] que compri el *Rock and Folk* de

França, o el que sigui de Itàlia o Alemanya, o tal tal. Compren el *Melody Maker* o *Rolings Stones*, o aquests d'aquí. I és clar, ells quan han de fer una crítica o han de parlar d'això, escriuen del que han llegit. Llavors està tan muntat que és molt difícil de trencar-ho, no? I l'exemple és els sindicats de música que tenen a Anglaterra. Vull dir tu tens un grup i els vols promocionar i vols anar a fer girar a Anglaterra i te les veus negres perquè no et deixen. (...) No, no, et *foten* moltíssimes traves. (...) Les agències angleses són així. (...) Molt prepotents. Vull dir... ells saben que llencen un *disco* i *joder*, si ho comparem..., si fem similituds, aquí a Espanya tens un grup que treu un primer *disco*, que és potent, tal, tal, tal, però és queda en el circuit espanyol. *Lo* mateix, el mateix grup però és anglès i treu un bon *disco*. El primer *disco* que treuen és bo, val, molt bé, però ja surt portada d'aquesta revista, portada del... Que aquí igual passa? Però aquí surt portada del *Rock de Luxe* i és clar, quina influència té el *Rock de Luxe* a la resta del món? *Zero patatero*, no? En canvi tu treus una portada d'un grup que acaba de treure un primer *disco*, que tenen disset anys però és portada d'aquestes revistes i automàticament el mes següent o al cap de dos mesos, un mes o dos, les revistes d'aquí en parlen: el *Mondo Sonoro*, el *Rock de Luxe*, el *Vibraciones*, tot el que sigui. M'entens? Hi ha molt poc criteri, per dir-ho així. Hi ha molt poca investigació de dir: "Què cony s'està fent ara mateix a *Alemania*?" I s'estan fotent coses de putíssima mare a *Alemania*, no? *Pues* no. L'únic potser que han perdut el ritme ha *sigut* amb el techno, i encara. (...) No és que hagin perdut el ritme, però és que han sortit creadors nous i corrents noves no controlades pels anglosaxons. M'entens? Però tot *lo* altre que és *pop*, rock... està controlat pels anglosaxons. (...) L'altre estil que potser també se'ls hi escapa una mica de les mans és tot *lo* de la part ètnica, no? I aquí qui més s'emporta el peix a l'aigua és França. França com que ha tingut moltes colònies... Vull dir ara ho està absorbint, ho està reciclant. Com? Hi ha molts artistes que són magrebins o africans que són de Mali, de Burkina Faso, d'aquí, d'allà... Però passen per París. Vull dir la producció de discos és a París, la discogràfica és a París.

To illustrate the weakness of the music industry in Catalonia and Spain, he explained how the Cuban live music boom associated with the film *Buena Vista Social Club* had been marketed through French, Belgian and Dutch agencies rather than Spanish ones, whereas cultural and historical links with Cuba should have made it easier for Spanish initiatives to take advantage of the fad. Juan, in charge of live concerts in the concert venue in Barcelona, also pointed to the fact that the market power of the English-speaking world could lead to a situation where new brit-pop bands found it easier to play in Barcelona than local artists who he felt had better acts:

Juan: La música nacional és molt difícil [de programar]. Un grup de Madrid aquí ho té molt difícil. [Segurament sí] que pot funcionar a Andalusia, a Galícia. [Però] a Barcelona... De Barcelona diuen que és la segona ciutat més *fotuda* d'Espanya, no? Primer és Sevilla i després Barcelona. (...) Perquè [Barcelona] és una ciutat que en els últims anys [el que ven] és el *pop* anglès. [Encara que] vinguin aquí les... Igual és una merda de grup, no? Però *bueno*, va de puta mare. I hi ha aquí [grups] que són bons músics i tal, i no funcionen. No sé, suposo que Barcelona sempre ha mirat més cap a dalt que cap a baix.

Roger: Aquí porteu anglesos també?

Juan: Molts, molts. Afortunadament aquest any no hi ha tants, però hem estat tres, quatre anys que era una invasió, no, de *Brit pop* aquí.

Roger: I alguns eren...

Juan: Horrible, horrible.. a part, eren *tios*... doncs, no sé com es diu en català, *capullos*. Sí, és molt complicat, que van de, treuen un disc i es pensen que són, i allà peguen, igual, però després no passa res... (...)

Roger: I omplien més o menys?

Juan: Sí, tenen un públic, tot *lo* que sigui brit o Brit pop, música independent, que ja no se sap ben bé *lo* que sí i *lo* que no, però tot aquest tipus de música sempre té públic, molt jove, molt, tenim problemes perquè aquí no poden entrar menors de setze anys, llavors, amb segons quin grup hi ha problemes d'això, típic grup que el dia d'abans estan aquí ja cinc o sis noies dormint al carrer per de bon de matí veure la cara d'aquest cantant..

Roger: Ah, sí?

Juan: Molt fans, no, fans d'aquestes. (...) [Per mi personalment] veus que estan venint grups que són tot *lo* mateix, que fan les mateixes cançons, que tenen la mateixa actitud, que tenen el cantant guapo, amb cara de nen jove, no? I no aporten res, no. I vénen aquí sempre com la gran promesa del rock anglès, i veus que de gent, hòstia estan aquí cinc-cents persones, i després hi ha coses molt més interessants i no hi ha ni déu, però també una mica perquè és una qüestió personal, més...

Pere, of a dance radio station, also pointed to the importance of the American and British music industry when he explained that his radio's specialised or underground programmes were based almost exclusively on 'imported' music, 'o sigui, amb els discos acabats d'editar a Anglaterra els tenim aquí'. They got the records through record shops specialising in imports, like 'Don Disco' in Molins de Rei, 'Micro Obert' and 'Plàstic' in Barcelona. They also got imported records from the record label 'Tempo Music', for which they sometimes operated as a 'testing' mechanism to check the reaction of the audience to certain records, helping the record label to decide whether to publish them or not: 'A vegades va així. Veuen una cosa que ningú ha volgut treure, l'hem posat, ha funcionat i llavors l'han tret aquí'. Pere had no doubt of the power of the British music industry in his sector:

Pere: És que a Anglaterra (...) passen d'un estil a un altre en quatre dies. Hi ha el que et dic: molt màrqueting. És com l'*acid* en el seu moment, *tio*. Ara l'*acid*, vinga, *pa-pa-pa-pa* ho cremen i quan un dia... canvien, s'inventen una altra cosa i tothom segueix *pa-pa-pa-pa*, ho cremen però que *lo* que es mou al voltant és *lo* mateix: les festes amagades, les pastilles, i tal... *Bueno* abans ens ho fotíem amb la música *acid* i ara ens ho fotem amb el *two-step* i després ens ho fotrem amb el *speed-garage*. És així *tio*, és molt curiós, molt curiós. (...) Ara estan conquerint una part d'Eivissa *tio*, a Grècia una illa d'aquelles de les que hi ha... i és un recital de tothom de tothom amb *two-step*, *tio*.

In Birmingham and Barcelona, imported and underground records also followed networks that operated as gatekeepers. Shops received different records depending on the agencies that supplied them. The megastore in Barcelona, for

instance, imported through the central office in a foreign country: 'Entonces está adaptado a lo que es el mercado [de allí] y hay cosas que a nosotros no nos interesan'. As for dance music, they did not use this service very much because in Barcelona there were many specialised labels that published imported records.

To sum up, even if the distinctions between commercial and underground, on the one hand, and corporate and independent, on the other, have to be taken with caution, it seems clear that they are important in identifying not only the way those working in the music industry made sense of musical geographies, but also the different – even if interlinked – logics of the political economy of music. The music industries clearly structured the diversity of sounds available, which even if strong in terms of records, were reduced in terms of retailing and media exposure. Big economic interests, therefore, were a powerful force limiting not only the scope of diversity but also the visibility of sounds strongly connoting particular locations in music geographies.

The apparently apolitical

In the previous sections, we have portrayed the music industry as an economic and artistic activity where decisions are taken primarily in economic and artistic terms that have nothing to do with political decisions. Those working in the music industry also tend to see it in these terms. Nevertheless, the truth is that decisions are taken in political contexts and taken-for-granted assumptions that have political implications and consequences. The apparently neutral economic decisions are political, not only because they have political consequences but also because they are the result of implicit views about the world not necessarily related to economic efficiency. Distinguishing between 'black' and 'white' music can be a strategy for adjusting supply to demand, but it is also a political decision since it reinforces the 'existing' distinction between black and white practices. The laws of profit are not the neutral anonymous laws that people often claim, since behind concepts like 'efficiency' and 'efficacy' we often find implicit and explicit views about the audience, about the way musical geographies work, and about the limits of what can be done, or the moral limits within which profit can be made³⁰. We will illustrate it through two examples: the way nightlife premises treat ethnic minorities and the way the industry as a whole deals with Catalan, Spanish and English as languages and identities.

We have seen in a previous section that those working in the nightlife economy shared their fear of attracting 'the wrong crowd' to their premises. In Birmingham, the 'wrong crowd' was often – but not exclusively – identified with young Afro-Caribbeans and Asians, so the music that was known to attract these ethnic minorities was either excluded or diluted among 'white' music. The city centre nightlife area in Birmingham was a clear example of the low presence of

³⁰ See Negus (2002 [1996]; 1999) for a good detailed analysis of the interplay between race, ethnicity and the music recording industry.

Afro-Caribbean and Asian youngsters. It was an almost all-white nightlife leisure area. There was a bar, however, that ran a 'soul night', which attracted an almost exclusively Afro-Caribbean clientele. Alex, one of the managers of the bar, explained the decision to do it as follows:

Alex: Well.. there's two managers. There's myself and Josh, and we discuss most of it. And... it depends... The soul night was something that he wanted to try. I was sceptical...

Roger: Why?

Alex: I don't know, because he doesn't like soul music. He doesn't particularly like the crowd that it brings... (...) The reason why we made the decision to go soul... was that we could see [it] as opening the market. That it was a lot of money to be made. We did realise the risks. We discussed with our security team the risks of soul nights, and we decided to go ahead with it. The overheads are very high, because we do pay a lot of bar staff and security staff, and the DJ gets well paid. But... to have the building full on a Wednesday night it's amazing. So it was the right decision, yeah. (...)

Roger: And even if it's not very underground, you do specialist music. The idea is just to keep the place full?

Alex: It's all money. That's what... not so much money, because we do take a loss sometimes, but it's filling the building, it's drawing in more numbers than the people next door. Yes of course you want to please people and you want to encourage them to come back, but our primary aim is to get them through the door and keep them there.

Roger: And you take losses...

Alex: Well, we take, we take reduced profits. That's what I'm saying. Like I said about the soul night. We don't make much money on that night. The building may be full, but we don't make much money, because we have to pay so much money. So there's a very fine line, but as I say, to get the reputation of having a full building on a Wednesday night then... If you've got 600 people through the door on Wednesday night you are doing well. That's important.

We can see that there could indeed be economic reasons preventing businesses from running nights that would attract ethnic minorities. We have also seen that Asian nights could sometimes present bar and club managers with the same problem. As we have already noted when discussing the way those working in the nightlife economy made sense and typified what they called 'the wrong crowd', however, when bar and club managers found that a white audience brought trouble they did not try to stop white youngsters from coming but looked for ways of excluding those who caused trouble through door and music policy. In the case of ethnic minorities, this was not seen as a possibility. Alex felt that their soul night was economically justified, even though higher costs meant that profits were not high. This perception, however, contrasted with the fact that, as she herself pointed out, 'Nowhere on Broad Street does a Soul night... because they are frightened of it'. The result of the aggregation of all the music policies was that the city centre was an alien place in the eyes of ethnic minorities. A no-go territory. Mike, an Afro-Caribbean garage MC, explained it in the following terms:

Mike: Well, the student people they all go... Because there's like a whole section of Birmingham town centre devoted to them, which is Broad Street...

Roger: To the students?

Mike: Basically yeah. Student bars... you've got... Finnegans, that's a student bar. You've got to have a student ID to get in...

Roger: On the weekends?

Mike: Yes, you need the student ID to get in a lot of clubs in town, in Broad Street. (...) That's why... so they can get into all the house clubs with no problem. I don't know, I don't know, I think... There's a rumour, going around... [according to which] they only have a 2% black minimum in the clubs. They only want 2% of black people in the club.

Roger: They do not want more than that?

Mike: Well, it's like, if a bunch of white lads went to the door in a club in town, then they will [let] them in. You know Ibiza? Loud lads after drinks and stuff... But if [there are] a bunch of black lads, out at the door, in a nightclub, they're gonna say "They're a gang". It's completely different. That's the difference. A bunch of white geezers go to the door, "They're going out and have a good time, a bunch of loud lads". If a bunch of black men go to the door "they're a gang".

He had experienced it and did not understand why clubs were 'so stereotypical'. He felt that the link between 'black people' and 'trouble' was 'completely blown out of proportion'. The Moroccan and Pakistani interviewees who experienced exclusion from bars in Barcelona, also felt left out by door policies, and this gave them the feeling of being segregated. Being refused entry because of your lack of glamour is not the same as being left out because of the colour of your skin. As one doorman explained in a report on Catalan TV3, being a bouncer is one of the most racist, sexist and classist jobs you can take³¹. The result of this is that although some white customers were turned away because of their appearance, not the colour of their skin, blacks and Asians found bigger barriers to participation in mainstream nightlife activities. This was justified by those working in the nightlife economy in terms of economic and safety reasons, which implies that political, ethical or moral concerns about the social consequences were simply ignored. The limits within which money could be made did not exclude the segregation of minority groups from mainstream premises, which was seen as an unintended consequence of economic rationality.

The second illustration of the obviously political aspects of the music industry is that of language and national identities. In Catalonia, media conglomerates and initiatives have always had the feeling that using Catalan as their basic language is synonymous with leaving out of their potential customers an important proportion of the population who does not usually speak Catalan, whereas using Spanish would not leave out of its potential audience those who generally do not speak

³¹ It was entitled "Balls de bastons", and was broadcast in the *30 Minuts* program on the 10th of February 1999.

Spanish. This is why the case of the dance radio stations is particularly illustrative: founded in 1992 by two acknowledged Catalanist media stars, from the beginning it broadcast solely in Catalan, not even accepting adverts or songs in Spanish ('és un país que els temes llatins és *lo* que més funciona, i *carperos*... i és una cosa que no toquem'). Since some time later it decided to become committed to dance and *màkina* music, mainly identified with Spanish-speaking young people and also largely with a certain anti-catalanist stance, the case becomes particularly interesting. When one of the station executives was asked to characterise their audience, he did so as follows:

Pere: Se'm fa difícil perquè ara mateix en el moment en què estem jo crec que tenim de *lo* més radical d'un cantó ... Des del més *pijo* al més *tirat*, eh! El que passa és que cadascú busca la seva franja o el seu context concret, no? Perquè treballem amb dos factors, no només amb el musical. Nosaltres també juguem una mica amb la manera de ser, amb la manera de parlar, amb el *rotllo* que desprenem ... I això sí que contacta molt amb la realitat, per exemple catalana, de la gent d'aquí. Però a la vegada també desprenem un tipus de música que arrela molt amb el típic castellanoparlant o noi de Santa Coloma, digues-li com vulguis, que ens escolta, que potser no ens entén a vegades moltes de les ironies que puguem dir o de missatges que podem llançar o d'aquest llenguatge més català, culturalment parlant, però que s'ha acostumat (i això és un mèrit nostre) a escoltar la ràdio en català sense cap mena de problemes. (...) Nosaltres sempre hem pensat que un producte ben fet és igual l'idioma en què el fas. Per què? Perquè jo tota la vida, per exemple, m'he mirat la MTV sense entendre-la, o el Viva que és amb alemany, perquè el producte està bé, no? Llavors nosaltres quan vam fer [l'emissora] i vam decidir que era en català primer, perquè estem a Catalunya, la llengua nostra és el català, tothom l'entén, ja TV3 estava més que instaurada i escolta, si fem un bon producte la gent ens escoltarà igual. I s'ha demostrat.

In this case, the political intention was reflexive and intentional, but in others it is unnoticed by those working in the music industry. In Catalonia, choosing Spanish or Catalan to communicate is both often politicised *and* done without even noticing it. One dance DJ who verbally interacted with the dance floor all through his set, basically in Spanish, is a good illustration of this – and of the way most people chose their language in everyday interactions:

DJ Fiesta: Perquè estic més còmode. Per animar a la gent en català no em surt. Alguna vegada he dit alguna paraula i tal, no? Alguna frase, però és que no em trobo còmode. I jo sóc català, eh! Però per estar en contacte amb el públic... No sé si serà per això mateix, perquè crec que hi ha una majoria castellana, ho faig en castellà que no pas per una altra cosa.

We are not going to go into a detailed sociolinguistic analysis of the complex reflexive and irreflexive negotiation of young people's choice of language. Joan Pujolar (2001), in his sociolinguistic study of two groups of young people in Barcelona has already looked at the use among his informants of mimicry in

Catalan to characterise non-masculine characters, or the image of Spanish as tougher and cooler than Catalan. These connotations do not tend to be reflexively negotiated by young people. Nevertheless, in the case of the dance radio station, running the radio in Catalan was a reflexive political decision. At the time of the interview, they even gave the impression that they had changed musical geographies since they had undermined, or contributed to undermine, the bad reputation of dance music as synonymous with 'màkina i pum-pum', as Pere put it:

Pere: I la gent, doncs, va conèixer que *hosti*, que hi ha un *house*, que el *house* és una cosa *legal*, molt treballada i cantada i que és una cançó tan ben feta com pot ser qualsevol altra. I la màkina també. Ningú diu que estigui mal feta, el que passa que és un producte molt específic, molt contundent i que s'ha de tenir una edat diria fins i tot, perquè ... Sí que ens adonem que hi ha com un procés pel que passem tots, els que els agrada el *dance*, que és que de més joves quan comencen a ser adolescents la màkina els *hi tira* molt, després ja van més pel *progressive* perquè la màkina ja cansa i acaben desbocant-se o amb el *dance* o amb el *house*. És un procés pel que passa tothom.

In Barcelona in the 80s, rock music was sung in Spanish, until a wave of rock bands and a strong institutional promotion formed what has become known as '*rock català*'. Within the 'indie' and 'modern' scenes, *rock català* was generally regarded as 'uncool', and in fact many of the indie bands sang in English – not only in Barcelona but in other parts of Spain. However, many of them have recently shifted to Catalan, causing some controversy in the Catalan media.

Another example of the politics of language is that many interviewees in Birmingham, both from secondary schools and the music industry, mentioned that language was a reason why non-English music was not popular in Birmingham: 'I think it's because of the language ... even if they sing in English... I know a lot of European bands will sing in English... they still don't... I don't really know why'. Nevertheless, they did not find it odd that English music was popular in non-English-speaking countries.

All these examples of the implicit political grounds and clear political implications of economic decisions, added to what we have seen in the previous sections focusing on the market boundaries drawn by public administrations and non-profit organisations, as well as in the gatekeeping mechanism structuring the musical industry and its distinction between commercial and alternative logics, make it clear that it would be absurd to think that the market power structure did not affect young people's music choices. The music market, as any other market, is highly structured and full of rules, laws, implicit political priorities and gatekeeping mechanisms filtering access to the soundscape and structuring the way musical geographies are organised. This implies that even if as we have seen in the previous sections of this chapter that we must not regard the music industry as easily imposing sounds and artists, we must also avoid seeing the music industry as just responding to young people's needs. There is, obviously, a dialectical relationship between the industry and its customers, and whereas young people's buying decisions clearly influence which music is successful and is thus objectivated in commodities, it is also true

that the marketing strategies of the industry influence young people's perception of, and buying decisions within, music geographies.

Throughout this chapter, we have shown the dynamism of the musical industry resulting from its very sensitive disposition towards young consumers. The need to make a profit, or at least to be sustainable, obliged them to be highly responsive to their customers' decisions. In other words, young people's buying choices were influential on the music that was produced, sold and played. Nevertheless, we have also seen that the logics of profit do not follow one single formula. The diversity of consumers opens many ways to make a profit, including underground and specialised offers. Underground sounds, to be profitable, need 'underground customers' to sustain their activity (even if they can survive with small numbers of customers because their economic structures tend to be smaller and an important part of the labour force is partially or completely amateur). This implied that underground entrepreneurs and artists needed to either *attract* or *produce* 'underground customers'. In fact, both mainstream and underground music industries are not only sensitive to young people's taste in music, but also produce it. One extreme case is that of charismatic artists and businesses being able to modify young people's prejudices. Buying records or going out to a bar or a club is, as many interviewees recalled, an 'experience' – a 'sensuous' experience – and it can sometimes be a revealing vital experience modifying young people's taste in music. Small record shops or clubbing experiences, for instance, are often very influential not only on young people's pathways through musical geographies when growing up, but also in starting, developing or modifying new co-ordinates in musical geographies. The history of dance music is full of charismatic DJs and club managers confounding expectations and convincing their clientele to go along with them. The use of drugs often helped to break with old musical and stylistic conventions. The sensuousness of nightlife and youth cultures in general, involving fun, erotic desire, musical ecstasy, the feeling of coolness and belonging, as well as the pleasure of using extravagance in identity play, is indeed highly powerful in culturally producing or originating new trends. And this needs musical industries ready to mediate these experiences, providing the artefacts and spaces that not only make them possible but also re-elaborate and project them into new artefacts and spaces energising them.

Moreover, the music industries produce young people's taste in music not only through mediating and energising innovations of musical and youth geographies, but also through the very routine of change and innovation. The cycle of fads implies that sounds structurally need to be constantly renewed – in some scenes more rapidly than in others, as we have seen. This implies that the industrial apparatus of change (including the collectively interlinked action of the music press, radio stations, TV programmes, record companies and nightlife premises) jointly produce trends and fashions. Each business looks for profit in a different way, sometimes uniting forces in explicit or implicit 'conglomerates of interest', and sometimes just competing with each other for the same customers. Young people naturally have a decisive agency through identifying or consuming some of them

and not others, but the collective marketing and advertising strategies seriously restrict this agency at any one moment.

Even if acknowledging the power of the music industries in producing young people's taste in music, their sensitive disposition nevertheless makes the dialectics between supply and demand very interesting. The music industry, in its attempt to adjust to what can be profitable, is not only trying to combine the old and the new in a difficult equilibrium, but also attempting to make sense of young people's choices. The music industry is thus continuously typifying and creating knowledge about young people. This knowledge, however, is not oriented towards understanding youth geographies but rather *what is economically profitable*, or to put it differently, *what is sensuous to young people*. The harsh competition between the different initiatives implies that the validity or not of such practical knowledge is implacably validated through the financial results. The 'empirical' game of economic competition is no doubt strongly structured, in that mainstream initiatives have disproportionately strong economic power to make their products not only appeal to, but also 'exist' for, young people.

When I say that their knowledge is not oriented towards understanding youth geographies I mean that it is not necessarily accurate in relation to the complex reality of youth social space. Different businesses will know their customers in more or less detail, but will not know much about either their relative position in youth social space or the way they make sense of their consuming experience. They will know whether their customers are well-behaved or not, whether they have a high disposable income or not, whether they are more male or female, and so on, but they will only partially know how they make sense of, and experience, the articulation of these aspects and their structural location in terms of class, ethnicity or gender. The music industry knows how to provide young people with commodities that make musical and youth geographies possible, but if these commodities are sensuous and meaningful to young people, it is because of young people's cultural attitudes. In the chapters that follow, we will analyse how young people made sense of musical forms in the context of youth geographies.

Before doing that, an important observation must be made: the industry must not be seen as a reified entity separate from musical and youth geographies, but as an inherent part of it, not only because youth geographies as we have defined them would not exist without the music industry, but also because the industry is largely made up of young people. New positions within youth geographies, that is, new stylistic developments, are mostly the result of economic – even if basically amateur – initiatives carried out by young people. As Thornton (1996 [1995]) pointed out, we must abandon the idea of originally authentic subcultures being co-opted by commerce, and assume that the commodity form is an inherent part of youth cultures from the very beginning.

III. Growing up in a soundscape

We have seen, in *Part II*, how musical traditions are ‘carried’ from one generation to the other through both commodified and non-commodified artefacts, spaces and social relations (Chapter 4) and how commodified artefacts, places and events were produced, marketed and distributed, focusing on how those in the music industry decide what to supply to young people (Chapter 5). In both chapters, we have started to see how both young people and those working in the music industry made sense of musical and youth geographies, that is, how they typified and experienced them. Now it is time to systematise the way these geographies were experienced by young people in their process of growing up, that is, how they learnt, negotiated and culturally produced the (often subterranean) traditions of meaning attached to the commodities we have analysed in Chapter 5.

In Birmingham and Barcelona, as in most places in the world, children or young people who start to get interested in popular music do not form their taste in music out of nowhere. They start to like and dislike music within the framework of their everyday cultures and the meanings these provide, both in relation to their families and their peers, that is, in the social networks of personal relations we have analysed in Chapter 4, particularly personal relations organised around home and family, the school, the street and what we have called alternative networks around sports, music practice and other activities. Taste in music is not only about music, but also about the presentation of the self in social geographies: *who you are* and *who you are not*. Music is not a merely private activity, but a collective process of identification and meaning-making and a public presentation that contribute to the impression you make on others. The meaning of each taste in music is present in young people’s negotiation of their musical preferences, since each exteriorisation of their music choices will imply a certain feed-back from their peers and also from adults.

Young people first access music through their families, but in a very limited way, since youth musical geographies are rather perceived as *out there*, objectified, as something *to be discovered*, a sort of hidden tradition – in the sense that it is hidden from adults and public representations in the mainstream media – that they have to get familiar with. However opaque and imprecise, these youth musical geographies are perceived as ‘real’, in the sense that in Birmingham, for instance, garage music *is* distant from rock, and in Barcelona *màkina* *is* distant from house. Young people experience them as something that can be negotiated, challenged and questioned, but not ignored or completely shaped at will. They are experienced as a ‘natural’ reality, in some sense similar to the physical geographies of their cities, but with the idiosyncrasy that their strongly ‘imagined’ character makes them particularly volatile, and musical genres that are at one moment experienced as opposed to each other can become close to each other a few years later.

This means that the objectified character of the geographies I will portray – the collective or inter-subjective map of meaning – does not imply by any means that individuals cannot play, negotiate and resist them. On the contrary, they are

the raw materials that individuals use to make sense of their social existence, and in the very process of negotiation they individually and collectively re-produce them, maintaining some of the features and modifying others. These geographies are contested, plural and on the move, that is, always provisional, so the experience of them varies significantly depending on one's own position within them, as well as the particular geographical location and historical moment. Nevertheless, music and social geographies are to a great extent objectified, in the sense that they are 'imposed' upon individuals in the form of social control mechanisms. Even if these social control mechanisms are plural and complex, since they vary depending on the school, the neighbourhood and the particular group of friends in which every youngster is located, individual choice is restricted by the institutionalised external reality of music and social geographies.

The linguistic typifications and sensuous meanings constituting musical and social geographies are certainly not 'essences' but relational and situational realities. Any meaning related to a music form always depends upon the situational context of interaction, and therefore on the social relations in which it is embedded. A song, a band or a music genre can *mean* very different things depending in the particular situation where it is displayed or on the particular combination of meanings and signs where it is located. Taste is largely held, *against* something. The cartography I will detail in the following chapters, therefore, does not aim to be an accurate and finished reproduction of the 'really existing' musical and social geographies. What I will represent is an abstraction, since musical and social geographies – as well as their imbrication with general geographies – do not exist as a final defined reality, but as an ongoing, opaque, contested and imprecise process of cultural production. My representation, therefore, must not be understood as an attempt to draw a clear-cut map, but to identify some of the relevant co-ordinates organising distances and proximities. I will try to find a sort of least common denominator, the 'shared' meanings that enable young people to establish meaningful communication – even if it is confrontational – from all the typifications made by interviewees in their attempt to explain to me the way they made sense of them. I will attempt to make sense of young people's meaning-making, a 'representation' of young people's typifications of musical geographies *in their respective networks of personal relations*. This means that it is an attempt to identify the more or less shared aspects of young people's representations, to build a representation of the inter-subjective organisation of these geographies by those individuals who took part in the research project, and this does not imply that all the interviewees saw these geographies as I will depict them, as will also be made explicit. As I will show, many of the interviewees' maps of meaning were quite different from the shared maps I will draw. The point is that most of the time they were not different in the sense of 'contradicting' their main co-ordinates, but in the sense of being far less systematic and precise, or of showing slight but relevant variations or differences.

In fact, to depict musical and social geographies, I will not only use young people's linguistic typifications about them. Sometimes, I will complement this information through 'triangulation' with other sources of information. The survey

will be one of them, but also some non-verbal meanings grasped during the fieldwork, ranging from body language during the interviews to social interaction in the classrooms, corridors and other spaces in the school – some of these meanings being closer to the realm of ‘sensuousness’ than to any linguistic typification. This will sometimes enable me to see open contradictions between discourses and practices, like many young people who after declaring an overtly anti-commercial disposition said that they liked Steps or the Backstreet Boys. This choice is naturally risky, since whereas I can see the contradictions between some discourses and practices, I will (mistakenly) assume that many other interviewees’ typifications correspond to their practices. I prefer to accept this danger rather than to ignore the contradictions I detect. In any case, the musical geographies I will depict will be clearly approximate and superficial, without the subtle distinctions and fluid creative variations they always imply.

Finally, it is important to bear in mind that young people’s relation with musical and youth geographies does not consist in ‘learning’ these maps, but in inscribing their pathways through them. It is not a direct and mechanical interiorisation of them, but a process of making sense of and living through them. This therefore implies an unavoidable process of cultural production. There is a clear progression or evolution between children’s and young adults’ cognitive perception of musical and youth geographies. From a raw and opaque mapping out of those geographies during early adolescence, individuals pass on to a more detailed and complex understanding of them. I have attempted to make this *process* visible in the way the following chapters are organised. First, in Chapter 6: *Musical Geographies*, I will dissect the current musical geographies as they were perceived by young interviewees. Second, in Chapter 7: *Imbrication of hierarchies and homologies*, I will analyse how existing musical geographies relate to interpersonal and structural social hierarchies. And third, in Chapter 8: *Negotiating the search for respect*, I will discuss how young people negotiate musical and social geographies in their process of growing up. In these three chapters, we will see how young people make sense of and use the materials provided by the music industry and their networks of personal relations analysed in the previous chapters.

6. MUSICAL GEOGRAPHIES

If we are to analyse the process through which young people face and make sense of youth geographies through music in a way that captures its often opaque, imprecise and always provisional fashion, it will be important to start by considering it in the context of growing up, or to put it in another way, of their gradual incorporation into youth social geographies. It is in this process of notable stress and normative identity crisis that we know as 'adolescence' that individuals tend to increase their involvement in musical and youth geographies. Parallel to the comprehension of wider physical geographies – they start to explore and map out with more detail their surrounding physical space – there is an apprehension of the wider musical and social geographies. The starting point of this process in musical terms is *an interest* – or *stronger interest* – in music as an important focus activity. And most of all, an *interest* in the significance of one's involvement in music in relation to others. Like clothes or going out, music suddenly becomes *more important* in presenting oneself to others, and learning to *manage the impression we make on others* is a crucial aspect of adolescence.

When this *interest* appears, it can be actualised in different ways through what we have called 'carriers' of musical traditions: parents, friends, schoolmates, the street, television, radio, magazines, record shops, clubs, etc. Depending on how young people use these sources of meanings and artefacts, their *incorporation* to music and its social meanings will vary considerably. Taking this diversity into account, we will attempt to identify the main co-ordinates of musical geographies as they were verbalised by young people in Birmingham and Barcelona. These co-ordinates are the axes of the mental maps resulting from the typifications young people use – often irreflexively – to organise all existing music forms in a set of distances and proximities.

Pervasive commercial and hidden musics

As we have seen in the preceding chapters, the distinction between 'commercial' or 'mainstream' and 'alternative', 'underground' or 'specialised' music forms is central to the way the carriers of popular musical traditions and the political economy of popular music are organised and experienced. We will also place this distinction at the start of our analysis of young people's experience of musical and youth geographies. The term 'commercial', as we have already pointed out, is anything but obvious, not only because it carries strong connotations, but because the distinction between commercial and non-commercial music is far from clear. It is not clear when a music form stops being 'non-commercial' and starts being 'commercial'. Is it when it is commodified? Or when the musician earns a living from it? Or when it makes the charts? Or is it rather a matter of its stylistic identification? The notion of 'commerciality' is in fact one of the more ideological concepts of youth social space, as is its relation to terms like 'alternative', 'underground', 'indie', 'going commercial', 'crossing over', and many others.

Therefore, as we have done when analysing its importance in the political economy of music, rather than trying to establish the 'real' meaning of all these terms from a detached and 'objective' point of view, our aim will be to identify the diverse and contested way in which young people typify, make sense of and experience the distinction between 'commercial' and 'non-commercial' music. To begin with, we need to be aware of the importance of commercial music as the most visible soundscape 'out there'. Since it is the most visible music of youth geographies, it becomes the shared reference point of any individual becoming *incorporated* into music geographies: even when young people build their taste in music in opposition to it – what we have termed an 'anti-commercial' disposition – *they know* the most popular music of the time, not only because their taste *is built in relation to it*, but also because it is the music that reaches the ear of any individual unless an effort is made to avoid it – it has a pervasive presence in the media, school, streets, nightlife, and everywhere. We will define this music as the 'commercial centre', since its broad impact on young people, even if it is in 'negative' terms, makes it unavoidable in defining musical geographies.

One of the difficulties of defining 'commercial music' lies in the fact that in certain schools, the music that is perceived to be 'out there' in the school is not only the music that sells most copies in the city or the country as a whole, but also some music forms that although minority in the broader territory (either the city or the nation), are very popular in this school. Sometimes, moreover, the music which is popular in the school is indeed very popular in the whole city or country, but it is nevertheless perceived as 'anti-commercial' because of its underground origin. In conclusion, we do not always find a correspondence between the perception of certain music forms as 'commercial' or 'non-commercial' and their popularity in a certain milieu or even the volume of sales, which points to the ideological aspect of these categories.

Defining the commercial centre

Bearing in mind that sometimes certain sounds which are (perceived as) non-commercial can have a high local popularity, we will pay attention now to the fact that the adjective 'commercial' generally tends to refer more to the presence in the mainstream media than to its popularity in a certain school or location – the two circumstances might be, and indeed usually are, related, but not necessarily. As we have seen in chapters 4 and 5, being in the mainstream media, and particularly in the top selling lists, is what most certainly provides the mark of commerciality. This was the assumption expressed by many interviewees in both cities. A girl in Barcelona, for instance, answered my question about whether commercial music is a different type of music by saying 'No, el típico que sale por la tele de anuncios y todo eso', whereas a boy from the same city, when trying to describe different types of young people, said that there was 'gente que [...] le gusta más música comercial, que es lo único casi que escucha por la tele, por la radio... mucha música comercial'. We can therefore say that, in contrast to what young people tend to believe, 'commerciality' is not a property of the music form, but of its being in the

mainstream media or not (although it is true that certain sounds would find it more difficult to appear in the mainstream media because of their obscurity, hardness, loudness or tough lyrics). In Birmingham, interestingly, this idea is reinforced with the presence of the charts. Let us see how this boy from Birmingham brings it into the discussion:

Dave: Mmm... I think that like... children are influenced heavily by what's on television, what they see other people do. So if it's in the charts, like in England, I'm sure the charts are fixed by the big companies, and they're not like by record sells or anything like that, I'm sure they're fixed, because there's no way that kind of music is ever... ugh! It's not very good! They'll see that sort of thing like "Top of the Pops" or a programme like that, and they will think: "Ah, that must be good because it's there, go and buy the record".

The form that the 'charts' as an institution takes is notably different in Birmingham and Barcelona. The Top Sales List for the previous seven days in the country exists in Barcelona but has low visibility. In the UK, the BBC television and radio programme 'Top of the pops' broadcast it to the whole nation in a show that run for decades¹, becoming the public reference point for music sales. This publicity of music sales based on the *singles'* market, as well as the historical diversity of the UK charts – which include the more commercial acts as well as the more credible bands and artists from the history of pop² – made the very definition of pop music different in Birmingham and Barcelona. In Birmingham, the idea of 'pop' as a contraction of 'popular' music, of which the charts are its

¹ The charts date in UK from 16th November 1952, 'when Percy Dickens of New Musical Express polled various record stores to determine the most popular sales' (http://www.bbc.co.uk/totp/faq/charts_03.shtml, consulted in 19th July 2005). Official Charts are currently compiled by The Official UK Charts Company – a joint venture between the BPI (British Phonographic Industry) and BARD (British Association of Record Dealers). As its webpage says, 'The Official UK Charts Company was established by the music industry to regulate and control the Chart compilation process and to ensure that the Charts represent an accurate assessment of popularity' (<http://www.theofficialcharts.com/>, consulted in 19th July 2005). Under strict rules of eligibility, the Company gathers sales information, through a computer system, from every UK store selling in excess of 100 pieces of audio per week (excluding garages and mail order clubs). 'Over 5,600 retailers (including all the major high street chains, approximately 600 independent stores and a number of internet retailers) are linked to a central computer that reads the barcodes of every item as it is sold. (...) The Official Chart returning stores cover 99% of the singles market, 95% of albums and 80% of the video market. Advanced weighting methodology is used to arrive at the total number of units sold. A number of security checks to detect sales irregularities are in place to ensure the Charts are a true reflection of the UK's most popular records.' (<http://www.theofficialcharts.com/>, consulted in 19th July 2005). Each new Official Chart was revealed on Sundays on BBC Radio 1, and latter broadcast on television (since 1964 to 2006, when the show was cancelled), and it reflects the information collected from Sunday to Saturday.

² Older interviewees working in the music industry, who were young in the 1970s, claimed that the charts at the moment of the fieldwork were considerably 'worse' than in the past. Mark, an *indie* promoter and DJ, for instance, explained that he started to get into music when he was about 7, when his father bought a radio, and got interested in the Sex Pistols 'because they were into the charts!'. He considered that the album charts, as opposed to the singles charts, still included a fair number of credible bands.

main expression, can give rise to discussions about whether the quality of the charts has deteriorated, or about whether the more commercial bands are now more present in the charts than twenty years ago. By contrast, in Barcelona this relationship is more opaque since – as we have seen in Chapter 4 – instead of publicly broadcast ‘charts’, the main indication of popularity is the program *‘Los 40 Principales’*,³ on Cadena Ser radio and Canal+ television, both of them from the private communication conglomerate Prisa. The most striking difference is not the private ownership of Canal+ and Ser radio, but the fact that the Top 40 list of *‘Los 40 Principales’* is not a ‘top-selling’ list, and that it does not rouse the same interest among young people as the charts in the UK. Whereas in Birmingham the chart list was often mentioned by young people in the interviews, this was not the case in Barcelona. In England, moreover, it is not unusual for serious newspapers to publish articles about the changing trends in the charts, something that is difficult to imagine in Catalonia. When it does happen⁴, moreover, the list that is commented on is not *‘Los 40 Principales’* but the AFYVE top selling list, which in general does not tend to receive central media coverage. Among young people, the list of *‘Los 40 Principales’* is the one that counts as the main symbolic marker of ‘commercial music’. The point is that in Barcelona, *‘Los 40 Principales’* has *always been denied any credibility* by the non-commercial scenes since any youngster who wanted to be seen as anti-commercial *could just not* listen to *‘Los 40 Principales’*. In Barcelona, the commercial and non-commercial spheres of popular music are thought of as ‘disconnected entities’, not as a continuum where one can ‘sell out’ and ‘go commercial’ but also sell a lot of records without losing credibility. In other words, whereas in Birmingham a ‘good’ band making the charts can sometimes but not often be seen by many youngsters with a non-commercial taste as being credible, in Barcelona if a ‘good’ band appears in *‘Los 40 Principales’*, this will be seen as synonymous with this band ‘selling out’ or ‘going commercial’.

However, in both Birmingham and Barcelona, within ‘commercial’ or ‘chart’ music not all music forms are perceived equally. The music forms which are perceived as ‘more commercial’ in both cities are what in English are known as ‘boy and girl bands’. It is interesting, again, that there is not an institutionalised concept to refer to such bands in Catalan or Spanish – the synonym could perhaps be *‘grups per adolescents’*, ‘groups for teenagers’. These bands are by definition in the top-selling lists; otherwise they are damned to disappear, since the promotional costs are high, and there is no underground or alternative ‘boy and girl bands’ market. They always appear in the discourses and typifications of the

³ There are other radio stations that have their own Top 40 or Top 20 list, but none of them has the same popularity as *‘Los 40 Principales’*. The program has been running since July 1966 (<http://aula.el-mundo.es/aula/noticia.php/2002/01/18/aula1011369609.html>, consulted in 19th July 2005), but it is not related to any top selling list (like the official one produced by AFYVE, the Asociación Fonográfica y Videográfica de España).

⁴ As was the case when the artists of the first edition of the television programme *Operación Triunfo* of 2001 filled the top positions of the AFYVE list for many months.

interviewees as occupying the extreme of the commercial pole. These boys from Birmingham provide a good illustration:

Roger: How do you like chart music? Do you like, do you avoid it?

Richard: Mmmm, some of it

Jason: Some of it is all right...

Richard: Some of it is OK, some of it bothers me, because like... too many bands coming out, too many boy bands, too many girl bands, too many people who want to be the Spice Girls, too many people that want to be...

Jason: Boyzone

Richard: ... Boyzone, or whatever. It's getting, I think now it's getting a bit tedious or boring seeing the same people, the same new bands coming out.

Jason: It's the same format.

Richard: It's the same format, like a five boy band, five girl band, do you know what I mean? That's all what it is, and they keep coming out, keep coming out.

The point is that commercial music, because of its pervasiveness, is perceived as the music that is 'out there', the taken-for-granted reality. Since it is the best selling music, it is by definition that which is liked by the majority of young people. In the survey, in Barcelona those who watched *'Los 40 principales'* on television either 'very often' or 'sometimes' ranged, depending on the school, from 40 to 53% (51 and 72% in the case of the radio station) whereas in Birmingham between 54 and 58% of the respondents did the same with Top of the Pops on television (and between 58 and 80% listened to the pop-hit radio station BRMB). As to general types of music, in Barcelona between 66 and 79% of the respondents answered that they considered music from *'Los 40 principales'* either 'all right' or 'liked very much', and in Birmingham between 63 and 85% said the same about 'Chart music'.

Many interviewees started their interest in music through the most commercial or popular music, which was perceived as the music liked by the majority and thus the 'normal' music to enjoy. One boy in Barcelona, for instance, said that he preferred commercial music because 'si lo escuchan dos o tres, pues los otros tampoco van a... En cambio, como es comercial y todo eso, todos les gustan, y los amigos lo cantan juntos y to...'. The 'normalcy' of liking commercial music was even sometimes explicitly stated by young people, like these two boys at the Mixed School:

Roger: What about here in the school? Which musical taste have people here?

Azhar: In the school? Mostly... the normal music here...

Roger: What? The normal?

Tahar: Yeah, the normal music... the charts music.

Roger: But you don't.

Tahar: We don't. Yeah, well, a bit, we like it a bit.

Since young people with a 'commercial' taste, and many with an anti-commercial one, tend to perceive commercial music as the 'normal' music to like,

we consider it as the ‘commercial centre’. Therefore, what makes it central is not only its quantitative importance, but also its relevance in defining what is generally perceived as ‘normality’. The music at the periphery of a commercial taste was perceived as ‘strange’, ‘radical’, ‘deviant’, ‘extreme’, ‘weird’ and often ‘hidden’, and the music from the (commercial) centre as ‘normal’.

The cultural production of ‘normalcy’, as we have noted in Chapter 2, is one of the key aspects of the social construction of reality. Several interviewees referred to other youngsters as ‘weird’ or ‘*raro*’ because of their taste in music. It is not strange, therefore, that when young people were asked to describe the main groups of people in the school, they often distinguished between those who liked commercial, or pop, or chart music and those who liked specific genres. This was particularly the case with those interviewees who located themselves far away from a commercial taste, whereas those who liked commercial music tended to establish distinctions between different tastes *within commercial or chart music*. This means that ‘commercial’ music was not a homogeneous and undifferentiated reality, but incorporated many internal differences and offered young people many ways of being different from each other, although they all shared their ‘normalcy’ in relation to those who had an anti-commercial disposition. As we have seen in relation to the political economy of music, the mainstream market is considerably segmented, and must thus be seen as a diverse space where young people can play with artefacts and identifications to create social distances and differences, as we will see later.

As well as young people with what we loosely call a ‘commercial taste’, those with an anti-commercial disposition also relied upon commercial music to define musical geographies, which is another way of saying that ‘commercial’ music was central in defining musical geographies not only because it affected those who liked it, but also those who did not like it. Indeed, young people with an anti-commercial disposition need the existence of commercial music to sustain their identity – and therefore need to be more or less aware of the current commercial music. The boys quoted below would hardly be who they are if they could not identify themselves in opposition to ‘commercial music’:

Roger: I comercial?

Toni: I comercial, doncs, no sé, és jo ho trobo patètic. [*they laugh*]

Roger: Tendeix a ser un tipus de gent o no?

Toni: Sí, és,...

Jaume: Home, la gent que va a discoteques que posen música comercial o són, o són nois de catorze anys, o són, buff...

Toni: O són la *jerna*.

Roger: *Jerna*, no ho havia sentit això.

Toni: Vol dir que...

Roger: La *purga*...

Toni: Sí.

Jaume: És que per escoltar música comercial quedat a casa posa't la radio i...

This pervasiveness of commercial music is not only imagined or experienced at a local but also at a global level. In contemporary society, one can travel around Western and to a great extent non-Western countries and hear similar music everywhere, receiving the impression that there is a common and shared popular musical soundscape – complemented, naturally, with local idiosyncrasies. One boy from Birmingham, for instance, after being in Madrid on a youth club exchange, said that ‘in the clubs over in Madrid [the music] was quite commercial because we had heard some of the songs before, because they were like the world-wide-hits that everybody’s heard, you know?’. The global orientation of big record corporations provides the basis upon which young people culturally produce meanings that transcend their locality, and seem to create a global common culture. We will later analyse this aspect in more detail.

Anti-commercial disposition

The definition of ‘commercial music’ as a particular set of music forms, which are broadcast by mainstream media and the charts and among which ‘boy’ and ‘girl bands’ are the most typical representatives, points to one of the more important co-ordinates of musical geographies among young people. We must be aware, however, that the meaning of commercial is always contested. Just as we have underlined, in the preceding chapter, the possibility of underground artists crossing over to the mainstream and remaining still ‘credible’, young people identify what is commercial depending on their location in youth social space, and what for some is ‘commercial’ will be clearly ‘non-commercial’ to others. We have seen in Chapter 4 the way diverse social networks and commodified mediascapes can influence young people’s ‘commercial’ or ‘anti-commercial’ dispositions. Young people are always negotiating the exact meaning of ‘commerciality’, to the extent that many youngsters will argue bitterly about the commerciality or non-commerciality of particular bands, artists or even genres. This is the case of many interviewees with an anti-commercial taste who distinguished a gradation of ‘commerciality’ even among those bands that would hardly ever make the charts, and also of other young people with a very commercial disposition, who distinguished between different boy bands. One girl from Birmingham, for instance, judged the very commercial boy band Westlife ‘all right, actually’ and dismissed Steps or Spice Girls because of them being ‘more commercial’. She explained this judgement on the following basis: ‘I like people who get themselves to do what they are doing, instead of being manufactured (...). I like people who are friends and they get together. That’s like Westlife, they were friends’.

The fact that she has a quite ‘commercial’ taste but at the same time considers commerciality a reason to dismiss Steps provides us with the clue to approach this complex matter: the relational character of the term. This is why we will deal with it through the analysis of young people’s ‘anti-commercial dispositions’. The label ‘commercial’, when applied to a music which is *by definition* commodified, becomes a difficult one to define, so we will direct our attention to the way young people make sense of it, that is, to young people’s typifications, dispositions and claims

about it rather than the music itself or its commercial success. The expression ‘anti-commercial stance’ or ‘disposition’, when applied to young people’s discourses – and not to those working in the music industry – focuses on the ideological construction of an opposition to (what is perceived as) ‘commercial’ music, rather than on its autonomy from commerce and popularity. Whereas at one extreme of the attribution of commerciality we will find ‘boy and girl bands’, and at the other all the minority, extreme, noisy, obscure and underground sounds, in-between we will get a large spectrum of gradations and positions that will be seen as commercial or non-commercial depending on the point of view of the interviewee. Some young people will claim that they do not like commercial music but will be ready to dance to it when they go out, or will say that they would not ‘buy’ it but will not ‘switch off’ the radio when it comes on either. The same music genres, moreover, will have their ‘commercial’ and their ‘non-commercial’ manifestations, as we see when several interviewees differentiated, within a certain genre, between the music they liked and ‘the one that was on the charts’. Other young people said that they do not like the charts but, at the same time, recognised that ‘some of it is all right’, whereas others with a strong anti-commercial disposition only accepted as ‘non-commercial’ really obscure bands that were only known within a small community of connoisseurs. This boy from Barcelona, who is a punk music fan, is a good example:

Alfred: No, aquests més comercials són els que menys m’agraden. Els que més m’agraden són els que s’ho curren de veritat, que són els que comencen de zero, i [?] ni guió més que res, ara m’estic fixant més amb grups espanyols, perquè si m’hi fixo els grups de, d’Estats Units, Califòrnia, Califòrnia sobretot és la meca del *hardcore*, doncs els grups que naixen allà i fan música d’aquesta doncs ho tenen molt fàcil, i clar, fan quatre cançonetes bones i ja ho tenen tot arreglat, però aquí els grups d’aquí s’ho han de *currar* molt més, i molts grups són millors que els d’allà.

All these examples show the importance of the notion of ‘commerciality’ in understanding the organisation of musical geographies. We will now turn to yet another aspect of the centrality of ‘commerciality’, which is related to the process of incorporation of young people into musical geographies.

Maturing, specialisation and diversification

The pathways along which many young people are initiated into music are diverse. When analysing the carriers of music traditions we have seen how relatives, friends, acquaintances, the media and record stores, among others, can all play an important role. Although quite a few youngsters first get involved in musical geographies through a strong anti-commercial disposition as a consequence of the influence of friends or relatives, or even alternative media – in some cases, their whole environment is tainted by an anti-commercial disposition – as we have already noted, many of the interviewees’ first contact with musical geographies is commercial or chart music. This is not strange, since this is the

music that we have defined as 'being-out-there', that is, the more visible and easily available in the mainstream media.

Noorjha: And it's about advertising.

Pam: Yeah, just happens. You end up buying every Spice Girls' single, but it's impossible to like every single one, really.

Noorjha: Spice Girls advertise so much that even in your face, so you have no choice to listen to that music, and you go around and you listen to the song so many times... actually some *Spice Girls* songs are all right, but I didn't go and buy, but it's all right. It was in your face so much, all the time every shop, buses, magazines, everywhere.

The interest in music of many young people in their early adolescence leads them to the most popular music through the most accessible channels ('Top of the Pops' in Birmingham, *Los 40 Principales* in Barcelona). It is not only that this is the most visible music, but that its popularity makes it the guarantee of young people's connection to their time, since many of their peers, as we have seen, expect other youngsters to like this kind of music – the 'normal' music. The comments of interviewees saying that they changed their taste when they were 10 or 11 years old, because they 'started to get into more modern stuff', or explaining that they started listening to "Los 40 principales", porque es música... de ahora', point in this direction. This is the same experience of another boy who, when trying to remember the artists he began liking when first listening to music, said: 'I can't remember. All sorts of stuff. A mixture. Whatever was on the radio. Whatever was in the charts'.

After this initiation through chart music, there is a tendency to either specialise or diversify one's taste in music. From a certain age, liking the more commercial music tends to be seen in most of the schools as a reason for stigmatisation. Three girls in Birmingham, for instance, explained that if you liked the Spice Girls, 'You've got automatically a label'. In the process of growing up within a youth social space, there is a moment when liking the more 'commercial music', that is, boy and girl bands and other commercial artists, is not to be recommended. In Barcelona we also find quotes showing the same reality:

Roger: Pero aquí habéis dicho que a la mitad les gusta màquina. ¿Cuanta gente habrá aquí, por ejemplo, que les guste [el pop], más o menos?

Patricia: Las niñas pequeñas.

Roland: Más que todo las chicas.

Patricia: Las niñas, sí, porque los chicos no les suele... (...)

Patricia: Sí, yo diría, las de primero y segundo y tercero.

Roger: Pero las de cuarto ya no. ¿Menos?

Roland and Patricia: Algunas.

Patricia: Algunas hay que le gustan.

We are talking about an objectified social norm. Another example of the existence of this norm is the complaint that some interviewees made about it. A

sixteen-year-old girl in Barcelona, who liked the Backstreet Boys, said: 'No, m'empenya molt que diuen els Backstreet Boys només tenen *quinceañeras* i *niñatas*. Jo tinc una amiga que té vint-i-dos anys i és fan i igual s'estira els cabells que jo.' Young people are aware of, and negotiate, the varying suitability of musical forms for different ages. This knowledge can be quite complex, and can include fine gradations of sounds. These boys, for instance, expressed their liking for Britney Spears and Christina Aguilera, but that the Spice Girls would be going *too far*:

Roger: (...) I us agrada Britney Spears...

Pere: Sí, sí.

Ramón: Sí, algunes cançons sí.

Roger: Spice Girls.

Pere: Home això ja.. Però sí, la Britney Spears, Christina Aguilera, sí.

Roger: T'agrada?

Pere: Està bé.

Roger: Però Spice Girls ja no.

Pere: No.

Roger: És el límit.

Pere: Sí.

Roger: Per què?

Pere: No sé, mira, abans de petit sí que m'agradaven més les Spice Girls, però ara ja no. Ara m'agrada més la Britney Spears, algunes cançons.

The evolution can imply an underground or anti-commercial specialisation, which can keep a strong commitment to one specific set of sounds, or can simply lead to a diversification of taste in music within a mainstream set of sounds, or even a combination of mainstream and underground sounds. As one girl in Birmingham generalised, 'At the end of the day (...) more people... when they are little they like more that kind of [boy and girl] bands... but when you get old, you explore... and see more things...'. Many distinguished between their early adolescence, characterised by strong belligerent commitments to a narrow set of sounds – that is, by strong dislikes – and the progressive relaxation, broadening and diversification of their taste in music. They linked this evolution to a growing 'maturity' and 'open-mindedness'⁵. This can be seen in the words of this group of boys describing their school-mates:

James: (...) Normal people listen to chart music.

Tony: The younger years.

Roger: The younger?

James: Yeah, year 10.

Roger: And they change?

⁵ Several music teachers in the schools where research was carried out declared that one of the main goals of their teaching was to fight and break their pupils' narrow disposition to a limited set of music sounds.

Tony: Yeah, when it gets about year 10-11 they start listening to house and garage, because they realise that it doesn't matter what other people see in it. It's got to be whether you like the tunes or not.

The truth is that there was a wide range of dispositions from strong distastes ('I hate jungle, yeah, it's just boring'; 'I don't like dance or pop music... I don't think it's real music'; 'I don't like rap... I detest rap, rap is horrible!') to broad and inclusive tastes ('Everything and anything'; 'We just like anything. Whatever we can sing along to really'; 'I like all sorts of music really. (...) Everything, I like music altogether, really'; 'Lots of music... all kinds of music... Like Asian music, African music, reggae music, classic... Anything that is evoking my emotions...'). These statements, however, did not always correspond to their real taste since many claiming an inclusive taste actually had strong dislikes, particularly of some non-commercial sounds. It is not easy to generalise whether young people tended to become more broadly oriented to music genres in their process of growing up or just moved from one type of music to another. What we can do is illustrate the two main general pathways through which those youngsters who started their participation in musical geographies through mainstream chart music moved to more specialised sounds. On the one hand, the path of strong anti-commercial specialisation was explained by several interviewees in both cities:

Roger: Em podeu dir quan vau començar a escoltar música? No sé, el primer grup que vau escoltar, què se sentia de petits a casa, com ha anat canviant amb els anys...

Dani: Jo sí, jo me'n recordo, que les primeres vegades quan vaig escoltar música va ser 5è, 6è d'EGB que era el que li agradava a tothom. El que li agradava a tothom a mi m'agradava...

Roger: Com per exemple?

Dani: *Lo pop*, així molt *pop*, molt comercial, *lo que em dongués*sin.

Roger: Te'n recordes d'algun?

Dani: Sí, les Spice Girls... [*we all laugh, and particularly Jose, although with complicity*]. Sí, sí, t'ho juro, [*laughing*] *lo que em dongués*sin. Llavors a 1er d'ESO i a 2on, va *vindre* un amic meu, i aleshores em va dir: "Ei mira, que això està molt bé, el *punk* està molt bé". I llavors vaig començar a escoltar una, dos, tres, i ja va ser quan més o menys vaig començar a que m'agradés això del *punk* i a agradar-me el pop però més distanciat...

Roger: I creus doncs que la gent abans escoltava el que tothom escoltava una mica?

Jose: Si, si.

Dani: Si, si. No però coses així, tots d'un cop, fos *lo que fos*...

The last sentence, when Dani explains that the whole class started to listen all together to new artists, is illustrative of the importance during early adolescence of commercial music as a collective ('normal') taste. The same pathway experienced by Dani and Jose was repeated by other interviewees through statements like '*Bueno*, (...) abans m'agradava, *bueno*, típica música comercial, "*Todo Éxitos*", tot això, però ara ja no (...). Abans m'agradava la música pop comercial, *lo*

més comercial que hi ha. I ara, doncs, m'agrada més la música electrònica' or 'When I first came into the school I used to listen to chart music, yeah? But then I was getting older, and my brother listened to garage, so I listen a little bit now. And that's it'.

On the other hand, the option of 'diversification' within commercial music, was also repeatedly mentioned. An example is provided by this boy in Birmingham:

Mike: Well, eh... I'm like... broadening out a bit... I don't wanna just do... confine it to like... one type of music, "That's what I listen to and nothing else", so I like to listen to... whatever really.

We can appreciate, therefore, that the interplay between the centrality of commercial music and the relative invisibility of peripheral music forms is not static, since it changes during the process of growing up. Behind the apparent homogeneity of the commercial centre there is a notable diversity of experiences. It is not only that young people's taste in music is always changing and diversifying, but also that within the territory of mainstream music there is scope for differentiation, as we will see later. Moreover, the complexity is further increased by the fact that commercial sounds are always combined with locally popular sounds, for instance in the school or the neighbourhood, which can be (perceived as) non-commercial, like garage or *màkina* music. These sounds are also 'out there', popular and visible, and thus 'normal', in the street and the school, but not necessarily – at least their 'hardest' versions – in the mainstream media and the charts (softer versions of garage or *màkina* were present, at the time of the interview, in the mainstream media, but still kept a considerable anti-commercial connotation, so they could be seen depending on the context as part of either the commercial centre or the peripheral underground). Moreover, the less visible territories of musical geographies can have a strong symbolic importance through spectacular typifications, since even if they are perceived as partially hidden – only well-known to a minority of young people – they can be symbolically relevant in configuring musical geographies, that is, they can emerge as 'symbolic markers' of important co-ordinates within musical and youth geographies.

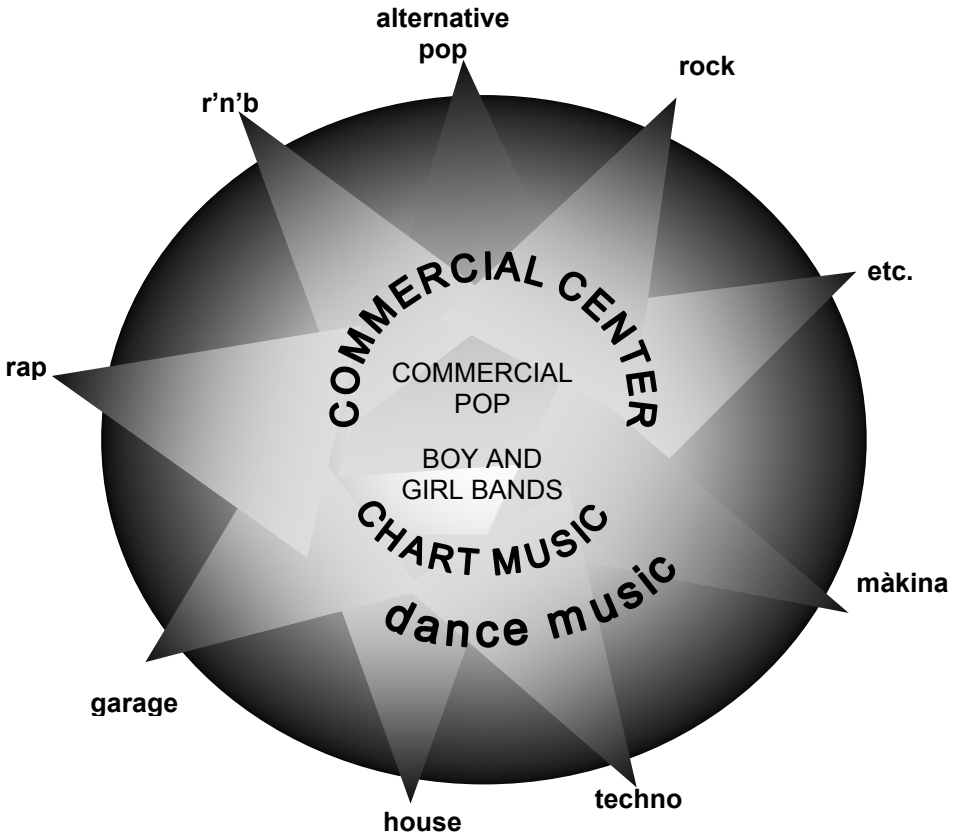
The important thing is that in the process of growing up, young people trace their pathways through musical geographies and are expected to abandon the more obviously commercial centre. Every individual is a particular case but most interviewees state that the process of growing up runs parallel to a broadening or diversification of their taste, although there are also cases in which departing from a strong commitment to chart music implies a strong attachment to just one underground or specialised genre. Since these are naturally broad generalisations, which in real life are often combined, what we need to bear in mind is that young people get initiated into these territories by something or someone – if it is not their significant others like relatives and friends, either at home, in the school or the street, it must be specialised media or the clubbing experience.

Main genre geographies

Up to now, we have analysed the distinction between ‘commercial’ or ‘mainstream’ positions in musical geographies *as if* commercial music could be sometimes considered as a clear reality. The ideological organisation of youth geographies between a pervasive ‘commercial’ centre and hidden (although sometimes ‘locally popular’ and therefore also highly visible) ‘anti-commercial’ peripheries often in fact implied an implicit idea of a relatively clear and even ‘homogeneous’ centre. This would match the impression that since ‘commercial’ music is marketed to reach the maximum number of people, it tends to confine its sounds to a certain ‘standardised’ range of possibilities. This stance, which matches Horkheimer and Adorno’s classical approach to cultural industries (1992 [1947]), would imply that ‘non-commercial’ music forms, because of their freedom from the need to please a large proportion of young people, can be more diverse and experimental. Even though there is a great deal of truth in this picture, as we have seen in our analysis of the political economy of music, and already noted in the previous sections, it is important to avoid the misleading conception of the commercial centre as a homogeneous reality, since it agglutinates musical forms and tastes in music perceived as significantly different by many young people. The same economic practice of market segmentation points to this internal differentiation of commercial territories. Indeed, behind the apparent homogeneity of ‘commercial’ or ‘chart’ music expressed by many interviewees, we find that there are different musical genres and forms that ‘make up the charts’, so they can also provide useful materials for internal differentiation. As one girl in Birmingham put it, ‘No, everyone likes chart music, because chart music is a mixed music... It can be rock, can be punk, can be soul, can be reggae, can be jungle or whatever, you know, it’s mixed’.

We can therefore graphically represent musical geographies (Figure 6.1) in two dimensions: on the one hand, their proximity to the commercial centre, both in terms of music sales and imagined representation, and on the other hand, the distinction between different musical genres or styles, *both in the commercial centre and in the less commercial peripheries*. Thus, each genre (Figure 6.1 only shows some of the genre categories used by young people to make sense of musical geographies; see Figure 4.1 in Chapter 4 for the complete list of categories used by the interviewees) could have internal – and usually contested – differentiations between its more and less commercial manifestations. Even ‘pop’, which is often identified with the commercial centre (for many young people pop is understood as chart music) was also used to name the ‘indie pop’ and ‘Brit pop’ scenes, with an anti-commercial stance but with very popular bands like Oasis. As we have seen in Chapter 4 and 5, ‘genre categories’ do not offer a clear-cut typification but an always controversial and imprecise one, so it is important to recall that reality is much more complex than this graphical representation, and that this and the following figures only attempt to make it easier for the reader to follow the argument of this chapter.

Figure 6.1 *Graphic representation of the combination of commercial and stylistic differentiation in musical geographies*



The question then is what are these genre distinctions – typifications – through which young people make sense of their surrounding musical geographies? In both cities, boy and girl bands, as well as the more commercial solo singers, are the reference point of what we have called the commercial centre. They are perceived as the more ‘commercial pop’, even though in Birmingham some of them can mix or even be directly identified with ‘r’n’b’, and in Barcelona with some local artists like Estopa, a pop-rock band with a ‘rumba’ edge that was at the time of the fieldwork an authentic musical and social phenomenon, as we will see later. Boy and girl bands like the Backstreet Boys, Westlife, Steps, the Spice Girls, S Club 7, N’Syinc, Five or Boyzone, were quoted in both cities as the main symbolic markers of the commercial centre. They shared the image of ‘manufactured’, as produced by the industry with the basic goal of making a profit. Very close to this commercial centre, with an undifferentiated pop genre, but with slightly less commercial connotations because of their artistic or personal

credibility, we could identify artists like Christina Aguilera or Britney Spears in both cities, or Alejandro Sanz in Barcelona. In both cities all these bands and artists were among the most broadcast.

Surrounding them, or mixed with them, there were those artists and bands who, while highly visible in the mainstream media, were perceived not as isolated or stylistically undifferentiated products within pop music but as being part of specific music genres. They could be as visible as the ones mentioned above, but they were perceived as the commercial pole of specific genres, like Tupac or Eminem in relation to rap, Alice DJ or Fatboy Slim in relation to dance, Craig David or the Artful Dodger in relation to garage, Pastis & Buenri in relation to *màkina*, Gabrielle or Destiny's Child in relation to r'n'b, Oasis in relation to Brit bop, or Limp Bizkit in relation to rock or even nu-metal. It is in this sense that we become fully aware of the fact that the commercial centre is not homogeneous, but stylistically diversified.

We can see all this by analysing the survey question where the youngsters were asked to write down three of the bands or musicians they most liked and three of the bands or musicians they most disliked (see Tables 6.1 and 6.2 for those answers that appeared at least 10 times). This type of question does not offer information about the extent to which one or another musician is liked or disliked, but about its significance in marking out the boundaries of taste in music in both positive and negative ways.

Although the question was completely open, a few musicians appeared time and again in many of the responses. The band and artist mentioned most often in each of the cities appeared among the responses of 2 out of every 5 respondents. Up to 15 musicians in Birmingham, and 23 in Barcelona, accounted for half of the total number of responses. In Birmingham, the four bands and musicians with most appearances were all boy and girl bands (Steps, Boyzone, Westlife and the Spice Girls), accounting for more than one fifth of the total of responses (5,5% of the responses to the 'most liked' question and more than 38% of the responses to the 'most disliked' question). After them, Britney Spears, Oasis, the Backstreet Boys and two garage cross-overs, the Artful Dodger and Craig David, as well as Puff Dady, Sisqo and Eminem. Interestingly, in contrast to the rest of the artists with many mentions, the Artful Dodger, Craig David, Sisqo and Eminem hardly appeared in the negative responses. In Barcelona, boy and girl bands like the Backstreet Boys and the Spice Girls shared the prominent positions with others. Even if more than one of every four respondents wrote down the Backstreet Boys (36 as the most disliked and 14 as the most liked), Estopa and Camela had more responses than any boy and girl band, and Tamara, la Oreja de Van Gogh, Los Chichos, Britney Spears and Els Pets appeared more times than the Spice Girls. Among them, Estopa and La Oreja de Van Gogh, in contrast to the rest, had many more positive than negative responses. We clearly see, therefore, that among the markers of the main tastes and dislikes, boy and girl bands share their positions with a different range of artists, many of whom are the most popular side of specialised genres that also have their more

underground versions (as well as the already mentioned examples of Eminem or the Artful Dodger, there are other responses in the list like Tupac, Dr Dre, Blur or Wu Tang in Birmingham, or Offspring, Pastis and Buerni, Chasis or Pont Aeri in Barcelona).

Table 6.1 Answers to the survey open question asking for the three most liked and the three more disliked musicians in Barcelona

	Mentioned artists in Barcelona			Liked artists in Barcelona			Disliked artists in Barcelona		
	Count	% resp	% cases	Count	% resp	% cases	Count	% resp	% cases
Estopa	75	7	38,3	64	11,3	32,7	11	2,1	6,1
Camela	54	5	27,6	6	1,1	3,1	48	9,4	26,7
Backstreet Boys	50	4,6	25,5	14	2,5	7,1	36	7	20
Tamara	40	3,7	20,4	2	0,4	1	38	7,4	21,1
La oreja de Van G.	35	3,2	17,9	31	5,5	15,8	4	0,8	2,2
Los Chichos	32	3	16,3	8	1,4	4,1	24	4,7	13,3
Britney Spears	27	2,5	13,8	6	1,1	3,1	21	4,1	11,7
Els Pets	26	2,4	13,3	6	1,1	3,1	20	3,9	11,1
Spice Girls	25	2,3	12,8	0	0	0	25	4,9	13,9
Papa Levante	21	1,9	10,7	2	0,4	1	19	3,7	10,6
Enrique Iglesias	16	1,5	8,2	1	0,2	0,5	15	2,9	8,3
Pastis and Buenri	15	1,4	7,7	10	1,8	5,1	5	1	2,8
Alejandro Sanz	14	1,3	7,1	9	1,6	4,6	5	1	2,8
Christina Aguilera	13	1,2	6,6	6	1,1	3,1	7	1,4	3,9
Chasis	12	1,1	6,1	9	1,6	4,6	3	0,6	1,7
Eminem	12	1,1	6,1	11	1,9	5,6	1	0,2	0,6
N'Sync	12	1,1	6,1	9	1,6	4,6	3	0,6	1,7
Pont Aeri	12	1,1	6,1	9	1,6	4,6	3	0,6	1,7
The Corrs	12	1,1	6,1	12	2,1	6,1	0	0	0
Offspring	11	1	5,6	7	1,2	3,6	4	0,8	2,2
Raúl	11	1	5,6	1	0,2	0,5	10	2	5,6
Ricky Martin	10	0,9	5,1	2	0,4	1	8	1,6	4,4

Note: 'Percentage of responses' refers to the total number of responses, taking into account that young people could give up to three names of artists they specially liked and three names of musicians they especially disliked. 'Percentage of cases', by contrast, refers to the total number of individuals who responded to this question.

Table 6.2 Answers to the survey open question asking for the three most liked and the three more disliked musicians in Birmingham

	Mentioned artists in Birmingham			Liked artists in Birmingham			Disliked artists in Birmingham		
	Count	% resp	% cases	Count	% resp	% cases	Count	% resp	% cases
Steps	73	6,9	39	9	1,7	5	64	12,1	34,8
Boyzone	64	6,1	34,2	6	1,1	3,3	58	11	31,5
Westlife	48	4,6	25,7	14	2,7	7,7	34	6,4	18,5
Spice Girls	47	4,5	25,1	0	0	0	47	8,9	25,5
Britney Spears	38	3,6	20,3	23	4,4	12,7	15	2,8	8,2
Oasis	37	3,5	19,8	10	1,9	5,5	27	5,1	14,7
Backstreet Boys	36	3,4	19,3	8	1,5	4,4	28	5,3	15,2
Artful Dodger	27	2,6	14,4	24	4,6	13,3	3	0,6	1,6
Craig David	26	2,5	13,9	26	5	14,4	0	0	0
Puff Daddy	26	2,5	13,9	14	2,7	7,7	12	2,3	6,5
Sisqo	25	2,4	13,4	23	4,4	12,7	2	0,4	1,1
Eminem	22	2,1	11,8	21	4	11,6	1	0,2	0,5
Five	22	2,1	11,8	7	1,3	3,9	15	2,8	8,2
S Club 7	22	2,1	11,8	4	0,8	2,2	18	3,4	9,8
Tupac	20	1,9	10,7	18	3,4	9,9	2	0,4	1,1
Dr Dre	18	1,7	9,6	18	3,4	9,9	0	0	0
Blur	15	1,4	8	7	1,3	3,9	8	1,5	4,3
Beatles	14	1,3	7,5	4	0,8	2,2	10	1,9	5,4
Christina Aguilera	13	1,2	7	11	2,1	6,1	2	0,4	1,1
Destiny's Child	12	1,1	6,4	10	1,9	5,5	2	0,4	1,1
Jennifer Lopez	11	1	5,9	8	1,5	4,4	3	0,6	1,6
Dafanee and Celentte	10	0,9	5,3	3	0,6	1,7	7	1,3	3,8
Robbie Williams	10	0,9	5,3	5	1	2,8	5	0,9	2,7
Wu Tang	10	0,9	5,3	10	1,9	5,5	0	0	0

Note: 'Percentage of responses' refers to the total number of responses, taking into account that young people could give up to three names of artists they specially liked and three names of musicians they especially disliked. 'Percentage of cases', by contrast, refers to the total number of individuals who responded to this question.

Around these bands and artists, we find a gradation of commercial invisibility or non-commerciality in each genre, which as with the other cases is not merely

related to media or chart visibility but also to the perception and ideological construction of young people. Among fans of a certain music genre, this inner differentiation between its more and less commercial manifestations can be even more important than its external differentiation from what we have called the 'symbolic markers' of commercial music. Young people who like 'non-commercial' rap, dance or heavy metal, for instance, can be very keen to distance themselves from the more commercial acts of the same genre.

There is one final specification that must be made: as we have noted, in every school the most 'popular' music, either in terms of quantity or social visibility as the 'trendy' music to be into, might not be the music that is in the charts but certain genres that combine a notable local following or popularity with an anti-commercial image and thus implicit stance. This is the case of garage, *màkina*, 'flamenqueo' or raï in some of the schools where the fieldwork was carried out. These were all genres that were mainly perceived as 'non-' and often 'anti-commercial' – that is, people who liked them identified the sounds with an anti-commercial disposition – but paradoxically they could be the most popular in a certain milieu. As can be seen in the Appendix, garage was *liked very much* by a range that went from 52 to 73% of young people surveyed in Birmingham's schools (by far the most liked genre in these schools), *màkina* by 30 and 31% of young people surveyed in two of the Barcelona schools, and raï by 23% of young people that answered the questionnaire in one of the Barcelona schools. What was called 'chart music' ('Música de *Los 40 Principales*' in the Barcelona questionnaire) was *liked very much* by a range of young people answering the survey that ranged between 14 and 34%, and 'pop' music by a range from 22 to 42%. It is obvious, then, that in a certain milieu, what is perceived as 'commercial' music is not necessarily the most popular music. The distinction, however, remains highly relevant since it points to the ideological construction of these genres, that is, to the meanings young people attach to them, and their media visibility.

In this respect, we can clearly understand the impact of the social visibility or otherwise of the 'charts' in Birmingham and Barcelona. In Birmingham young people have an 'objectivated' and readily available list of the best-selling artists, so they can easily discuss, judge and refer to what is most popular at the time. By contrast, young people in Barcelona, when discussing the 'commerciality' of different bands rely on more subjective appreciations of what is more visible in the media. In Birmingham, garage music made the charts for the first time during the months when the fieldwork was carried out, but had been around in the interviewees' schools for at least a couple of years. The music was very popular in those schools, but its popularity was largely based on its anti-commercial connotation. The fact that its media exposure, before making the charts, was basically limited to local pirate radio stations, was certainly crucial in this respect: it simultaneously enabled a wide dissemination through the radio while keeping intact its anti-commercial edge. *Màkina* music is a similar case in Barcelona, since it is a genre which was extremely popular in the interviewees' schools (particularly in two of them), but it was disseminated not through '*Los 40 Principales*' but through Flaix FM,

which – although clearly commercial – was able to keep some alternative connotation and credibility in comparison to *Los 40 Principales*. At the time the fieldwork was carried out, *Los 40 Principales* hired two of the more popular *màkina* DJs of Flaix FM to make an afternoon prime-time programme. The experiment did not last very long, and Flaix FM remained as the reference dance and *màkina* radio station, which – like pirate radio stations in Birmingham, but with a clearly more commercial image – allowed important sections of young people to share a very popular music genre while experiencing this popularity as a collective somewhat anti-commercial disposition.

When talking about ‘popularity’, then, we will need to distinguish between best-selling music present in mainstream media and popularity in terms of relative importance in certain localised contexts. This difference will naturally require our close attention during the following chapters. It will be enough to note here that in some schools what we have called the ‘commercial centre’ could be better described, in terms of young people’s experience within the school, as a ‘commercial periphery’, since even though it was known to occupy the ‘centre’ of the top selling lists in the country, and even widely liked in the school, it was perceived as being locally peripheral and even downplayed in the school.

Songs, albums, artists, genres and ‘traditions’

Before going into the main stylistic distinctions between musical geographies in Birmingham and Barcelona it is important to note that not all young people distinguish between music genres. Young people may map out the music they like and dislike in terms of songs, albums, artists⁶ or, indeed, genres and even what we could call ‘traditions’ – young people tended to refer to them as ‘cultures’. Naturally, in most cases it was a complex combination of all of them. Some young people declared that they liked ‘songs’ instead of ‘artists’ or ‘music genres’:

Roger: OK. Tell me artists or bands that you like a lot.

Mia: I don't like bands as such. If I hear a song, like I don't like all of Five's music.

Tania: Oh, they're bad! (...) Some songs we like and some songs we don't like.

Mel: We like some Oasis music.

Roger: You like it? But it's rock, isn't it?

Mel: Eh? No, in between really.

Tania: It's a... What's it called? It's got a special... I can't remember.

Mia: I like Travis!

Mel: I like Travis. Some of Blur's music is good.

Mia: It's like we like some of Oasis songs, but not all of them.

Mel: It's like... Pulp... there's a couple of good songs, but the others are really horrible, and I don't particularly say I like Pulp.

⁶ At the time of the fieldwork, some articles appeared in the British media discussing the end of life-long pop careers, pointing to the fact that young people were not loyal to their favourite artists anymore.

Mia: But if I hear a tune and I like... A particular band I really like is Queen.

Tania: Queen! Bohemian Rhapsody.

Mia: Freddy Mercury did a song with David Bowie and that was excellent. I can't remember...

In general, nevertheless, their musical geographies include, explicitly or implicitly, albums, artists, genres and traditions. The fact that they do not verbally identify with certain genres and positions does not mean that their taste cannot be identified with some of them. Tania, Mel and Mia, the girls in the preceding quote, for instance, were clearly located in the commercial centre and far from underground sounds. This was clear when instead of listing the music they liked they referred to the music *they did not like*. The same happened with Jesús, a boy in Barcelona:

Roger: ¿Y qué más te gusta? ¿Hay algo más?

Jesús: Pues de to un poco, de todo un poco me gusta.

Roger: Por ejemplo... dime...

Jesús: No sé, buff... Me gusta todo.

Roger: Bueno, vamos a decirlo diferente: ¿qué no te gusta?

Jesús: La música clásica, no me gusta.

Roger: Nada.

Jesús: Nada.

Roger: ¿Qué más?

Jesús: Luego el rapper y esto... la música *rap*, tampoco me gusta. Y lo demás pues puede gustarme.

Roger: Y tipo Estopa, ¿te gusta?

Jesús: Tampoco.

Roger: Ya vamos sacando [*we laugh*] ¡No te gusta todo!

Jesús: No.

Roger: ¿Camela?

Jesús: No. Ese tipo de música no.

Roger: Mónica Naranjo tampoco...

Jesús: No.

Roger: Y los Chichos, Chunguitos tampoco...

Jesús: No. Nada. De eso no.

Roger: Y rumba, Los Manolos, Peret, cosas así...

Jesús: No. Música así no...

Roger: Y tipo Britney Spears o Spice Girls, así más pop...

Jesús: Mmm... no. A parte de Offspring por ejemplo me gusta Greenday. Me gusta la música *asín* digamos cómica...

Roger: ¿Así con guitarras y rock?

Jesús: Mmm... sí.

Roger: ¿Y heavy?

Jesús: Heavy... también me gusta [*not very convinced*].

I will consider songs, albums and artists as the basic units through which young people map out or organise a set of genres and 'traditions', although I will particularly focus on 'genres' – alongside the commercial/underground distinction

– as the main reference points of musical geographies. Indeed, (historically and culturally produced) terms like ‘pop’, ‘rap’, ‘garage’, ‘*gitaneó*’, ‘black’, ‘*màkina*’, ‘*rock català*’, ‘rock’, ‘indie’, ‘r’n’b’, ‘rai’, bhangra, ‘techno’, ‘electronica’, ‘ragga’, ‘drum’n’bass’, ‘Asian’ or ‘*flamenco*’ music are categories used to organise contemporary music forms in a set of distances and proximities. These terms are also used to map out the genealogies of different music traditions (for instance, garage music is a development or specific variation within the reggae-ragga-drum’n’bass-jungle-r’n’b-rap tradition, or ‘indie’ music being a development within the rock tradition). Such genealogies are often experienced by young people as an ‘authentic history’ to be discovered, but we will understand them better if we consider them as historical cultural productions, and as such analyse them from the perspective of contemporary musical and social geographies. In Birmingham, for instance, ‘r’n’b’, ‘rap’, ‘reggae’, ‘ragga’, ‘garage’, ‘jungle’ and ‘drum’n’bass’ are placed close to each other as part of a common tradition, and common genealogical origins are highlighted as part of what interviewees called ‘black culture’. Many young people were located exclusively within this tradition, and saw therefore the ‘commercial centre’ as a cultural periphery (even if they liked the commercial pole of the music genres they liked). These three young men in Birmingham provide a good illustration:

Roger: OK. How is here in the school? Can explain me how it is?

Neil: In the school? They are all into garage in the school.

George and Tom: Yeah.

Colin: Garage and rap.

Roger: Rap, also?

Neil: Yeah.

Colin: Jungle and stuff.

Among the more commercial acts, only those of their tradition were perceived as relevant. The rest was perceived as ‘other’. By contrast, in Barcelona rap and r’n’b were seen as close to each other, while reggae was perceived as radically different from them, at the same time that drum’n’bass was connected to techno and linked to the tradition of electronic music in general, and garage was simply unknown in general terms. In other words, since in Barcelona they had been accepted as part of different ‘traditions’ – this acceptance being due to different local traditions of taste in music – their genealogies were perceived as different. This link between the mapping out of music forms and their genealogical anchorage relates therefore to the history of the embedding of music sounds in particular youth geographies. An ‘objective’ genealogy of youth styles and music genres is always a reconstruction – and as such, somewhat misleading – since every local acceptance culturally produces links and genealogical connections that transcend its context of production. We see therefore that even if the ‘commercial’ centre provides young people with the perception of a globally shared musical geography, there are important variations in the way the peripheral sounds are organised.

Main musical topographies

Up to this moment, as I warned at the beginning of the empirical analysis in Chapter 4, no systematic map of the main musical topographies has been provided. This has implied that many readers have been completely baffled by all the references to genres and categories used to identify different tastes in music. Now I will set out the main co-ordinates organising the amalgam of sounds, genres and categories in more or less ordered musical geographies. So what are the main stylistic geographies organising young people's music space? We have said above that although many young people enter this music space through commercial or chart music, many do not, and even those who do, tend to diversify and even change their taste during the process of growing up. What is then the diversity of genres from which they pick up the 'different' musical forms they like? Or more precisely, what are the main topographies through which the different music genres are organised by young people when entering and growing up through musical geographies? In order to answer this questions, we will definitely need to distinguish between young people in Barcelona and Birmingham.

The way these representations of musical geographies have been made has already been specified in the introduction to this *Part III*, but it is worth reiterating that the apparently 'objectified' character of the representation that follows is an analytical fiction, and clearly open to discussion. Musical geographies are a contested, plural, on-going and diffuse objectivation of meanings, and *my representation of them* is therefore an analytical construction that systematises what is experienced as imprecise and practical knowledge. Social reality is always perceived from a particular network of social relations, and young pupils often do not know exactly – or sometimes do not know at all – what other pupils in the same school listen to. Nevertheless, I would argue that – *as long as we bear in mind* that it is just a representation, partial like all representations, of musical geographies at a certain moment in time – it is a useful analytical exercise since it will enable us to grasp the social logics of taste in music.

Birmingham

In the English city, a few genres were seen as the main co-ordinates within the commercial centre. The very core was occupied by 'pop' music understood as the sum of boy and girl bands and those pop artists more clearly located in the sphere of what was also called 'soft', 'love' and 'romantic' music. Then, close to them, but with a specialist and less commercial edge, there was 'dance', 'r'n'b', 'rap' and sometimes 'rock' (or 'guitar') music that was in the charts. These were the genres mentioned most repeatedly by the interviewees when cutting the cake of chart music – even though they generally talked about them through particular bands and artists, and only when required grouped them into genres.

We can agree that 'commercial' music symbolically delimits the 'centre' of musical geographies as the music which is out there, and that this centre can also include some commercial versions of peripheral (non-commercial) genres. This

more obviously commercial music and the commercial versions of peripheral genres are seen as relatively close to each other and are the most 'visible' (they are in the charts) music forms. All of them are generally despised by the hardcore followers of the underground versions of specific genres. The peripheral genres can be very popular in the school, but when they make the charts, they naturally gain a further degree of visibility. The following interviewee, for instance, had not heard of garage, a very popular music in the school, until it appeared in the charts:

Roger: Do you know for instance if people like garage?

Dave: Yeah, that's a thing that's in... it's garage music...

Roger: In the school?

Dave: Well, in the country. It's in the charts.

Roger: When you first heard about it? Was in the charts, on the radio or whatever? Or somebody talked about it?

Dave: No, in the radio really.

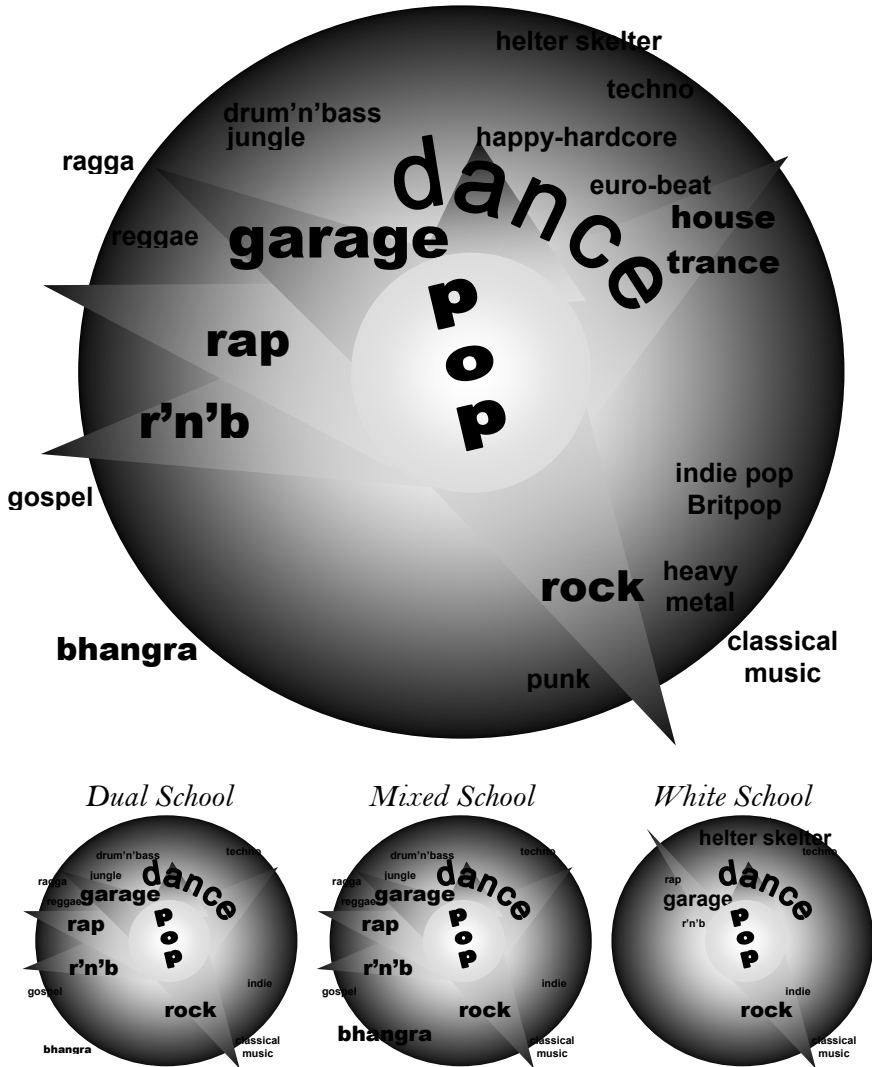
The distances between different 'commercial' sounds, therefore, would establish the more visible co-ordinates. What happened, though, was that in two of the three schools, garage music, which made the charts for the first time during the fieldwork, was the most 'popular' music in the school, so it had equal local visibility and higher symbolic significance than commercial pop music and the chart versions of peripheral genres. Indeed, the interviewees of two of the three schools constantly referred to garage music as the music of the school, or at least as one of the main genres in the school. In fact, they drew a clear line between pop music and a tradition that currently included 'garage', 'rap' and 'r'n'b', as well as genealogical influences like 'ragga', 'reggae', 'jungle' and 'drum'n'bass'.

If in a certain school garage is by far the most popular genre but it is not (yet) in the charts, this means that instead of being a symbolic marker of 'otherness' as opposed to 'normalcy', as is usually the case with peripheral genres, it will become a symbolic marker of (an alternative) 'normalcy' as opposed to the 'otherness' of both commercial and other non-commercial genres like rock or bhangra. This is important because any peripheral genre defines for its followers an alternative normalcy, but this alternative normalcy is only 'valid' among the small minority of followers. Garage, as a result of being very popular in the school, defines a broad and even *dominant anti-commercial normalcy*, and as we will see in the next chapters this will have consequences for the cultural production of youth social geographies. The more commercial music remains as the 'symbolic marker' of the centre of musical geographies 'out-there', but its normalcy is seen as a 'deviation' in the school. The idea is indeed complex, and we will come back to it later.

Youth geographies are completed by the 'minority' non-commercial periphery, where alongside the less commercial variations of genres which are present in the charts, like r'n'b or rock, appeared other genres that either had nothing to do with the ones mentioned (like bhangra, 'church', gospel and classical music) or were closely related to them (like heavy metal, punk and indie to rock; underground house, trance and techno to dance; or drum'n'bass, jungle, ragga and reggae to

rap, r'n'b and garage). Whereas 'church', gospel and classical music were all minority sounds and usually 'disconnected' from youth musical topographies – at most they were seen as antagonists of a youth taste – the other genres, together with the 'underground' versions of 'r'n'b', 'rap', 'dance' and 'rock', were grouped in a set of distances or proximities organising them. Figure 6.2 makes a clumsy attempt to graphically represent these distances and proximities.

Figure 6.2 Graphic representation of main musical topographies in Birmingham



These main geographies varied slightly from school to school. In the Mixed School, with its strong representation of pupils of Asian origin, bhangra or – as it was often called – ‘Indian’ music occupied a prominent role in describing musical geographies, as can be seen in this example:

Roger: And how would you define musical taste here in the school?

Susan: ...It's a mixture, really...

July: It's a mixture, but some of them like more garage, fast, reggae and garage...
[with an expression of dislike]

Roger: You don't like it...

July: I don't like it that much, no... I don't like it too loud. But if I was in the mood... in a party... a garage track will be all right. (...)

Roger: OK, this is one taste. What else?

July: Mmmm... Boyzone...

Roger: Which people like it?

July: O Karin... like Boyzone... I really like one track...

Susan: [She laughs] That's all! (...)

Roger: What else? Something else?

Susan: Indian music...

July: Yeah, Indian music...

Kiran: Some Indian music. (...)

In the other schools, its importance was less relevant. Similarly, in the White School, which only had a token presence of Afro-Caribbean and Asian pupils, garage, rap and r'n'b were less relevant, and rock more so, in the interviewees depiction of musical geographies – although interviewees were not by any means representative of the school, and many of them were in fact labelled by other pupils and themselves as ‘the rockers’. Indeed the survey, which gathered information from a wider sample, showed a much higher presence of rock⁷ than in the other schools, although garage was not underrepresented⁸.

Barcelona

The clear shared manner in which young people in Birmingham identified their main musical geographies was not equally present in Barcelona. The mentioned imprecision of the term ‘commercial’, which we have linked to the absence of publicly broadcast and discussed charts, might be the reason why in Barcelona ‘commercial’ music is basically and more exclusively linked to the more obviously

⁷ More than 26% of the youngsters who answered the questionnaire in White School said they liked ‘rock’ music ‘very much’. In Mixed and Dual schools the percentages were 12 and 7 % (exactly the same figures that liked ‘very much’ Brit pop in the three schools).

⁸ Almost 52% of the White School respondents said they liked garage music ‘very much’, only a little bit less than in the Mixed School (57%) and significantly less than in the Dual School (73%). It could be, however, that this was due to its chart success, since the taste for rap music was considerable lower in White School (20%) than in Mixed and Dual schools (55 and 58% respectively), and the same happened with r'n'b (17% in White School, and 32 and 51% in the Mixed and Dual schools).

commercial acts like the Spice Girls, the Backstreet Boys, Boyzone, Christina Aguilera or Britney Spears, which, as in Birmingham, the interviewees often called 'romantic' music. By contrast, the distinction between the more and less commercial manifestations of particular genres was not as clear as in Birmingham. Some punk and *màkina* fans referred to it, but many did not. The other difference indicating a less clear-cut distinction between music genres is that young people often referred to their taste in music with terms like '*jaloteo*', '*gitaneo*', '*flamenqueo*', which informally point to a combination of 'rumba', 'flamenco' and their pop-rock versions like Camela or even Estopa. These terms have more to do with what we have called musical 'traditions' than with specific genres. There was also greater imprecision with regard to specific genres. Within dance music, for instance, only some youngsters clearly distinguished between terms like 'house', 'progressive', 'techno', 'dance' and 'trance' music. Even if quite a lot of them mentioned them, they did so without knowing the musical difference or being able to distinguish between them in practice – naturally, this also happened in Birmingham, but in Barcelona it was particularly obvious because these different genre categories, as we have seen in Chapter 4 and 5, had only recently been popularised, whereas during most of the 1990s the main terms for dance music cartographies were just '*màkina*' and 'techno'. The distinction between pop and rock, which often included what we have called '*flamenqueo*', was also less precise.

The main shared distinction within the more or less commercial centre was established between 'commercial pop', '*màkina*' and what we will call '*flamenqueo*' music, which was also called '*gitaneo*', '*jaloteo*' and other terms. *Màkina* and *flamenqueo* were sometimes perceived as clearly commercial and sometimes non-commercial, depending on the interviewee and also on the particular musical form within the genre. These were the main tastes with which the interviewees identified. They were perceived as different but not necessarily contradictory, and many interviewees combined them in one way or another. In general, *màkina* and *flamenqueo* tended to be seen as close to each other and more or less opposed to commercial pop. The intermingling of *màkina* and *jaloteo* is present in many quotes like the one of one girl who said that taste in music in her school was 'Muy parecido, o al menos con las que voy yo, muy parecido, *gitaneo*, Chasis, Área⁹, pero sobre todo *gitaneo*. Estopa a mí me encanta, los Chichos...'. The opposition between *màkina* and commercial pop can be illustrated in quotes like the one from a boy who said that the main tastes in his school were 'la música comercial (...), Backstreet Boys y todo esto; después los demás (...) que nos gusta mucho la *màkina*'. The fact was, however, that many interviewees who liked commercial pop also liked the more commercial versions of *màkina*. Despite the discourse of many youngsters, therefore, it seemed as if the boundary between commercial pop and the commercial versions of (what was called) '*màkina*' and 'dance' music was somewhat blurred. These girls depict it perfectly:

⁹ Chasis and Area are two clubs which were perceived as *màkina* clubs. They regularly published very popular compilations of *màkina* music.

Maria: Perquè la màkina al ser, no sé, més *ratllant*, més...

Susana: T'ha d'agradar molt per seguir-la...

Roger: La màkina?

Susana: Sí.

Roger: És més complicat...

Maria: No més complicada, si no [que] és més... És que no sé...

Susana: La teva personalitat, la teva personalitat ha d'anar molt més lligada, no pot ser que t'agradi a mitges, perquè si t'agrada a mitges ja no t'agrada.

Roger: Sí. A Chasis que és així més suau, tampoc..

Susana: Home, sempre hi ha les típiques cançons *logotip*, saps?, de cada discoteca i aquesta és... jo crec que agrada a tothom, no? Encara que escoltis balades i tot això, la Laura Pausini, si et posen l'última del Chasis també li agrada, també se la sap, i la ballarà.

The same blurred boundary characterised the distinction between commercial pop and the more commercial pop-rock acts like La Oreja de Van Gogh, or pop groups perceived as close to *jaloteo* like Camela and Estopa. These blurred boundaries were in fact equally present in Birmingham, but 'commercial pop' was there more clearly delimited and stigmatised through notions like 'chart music' or 'boy and girl bands'. Nevertheless, commercial music was also perceived in Barcelona as the symbolic marker of 'normalcy', as we can see in this boy's quote: 'Si va vestido de *rapper* o de *punko* escucha música de ese tipo, si va vestido, no sé, normal, escuchará, más o menos, comercial, es lo... lo que más se diferencia, no sé'.

Besides these main shared geographies, significant differences could be found between the three schools. Two quotes from the Periphery School and the Catalan School will clearly illustrate these differences:

Ramón: Hi ha de màkina seixanta o setanta...

Roger: Seixanta, setanta per cent.

Ramón: I més. Després el pop...

Pere: Sí, un vint...

Ramón: Un vint, i.. un deu per cent com a molt això... el *rap* i... ja...

Montse: Hay varios grupos, hay varios que son así un poco históricas como yo, en el sentido Backstreet Boys (...), hay otros que son ya del palo *hardcore* y todo eso que les gusta...

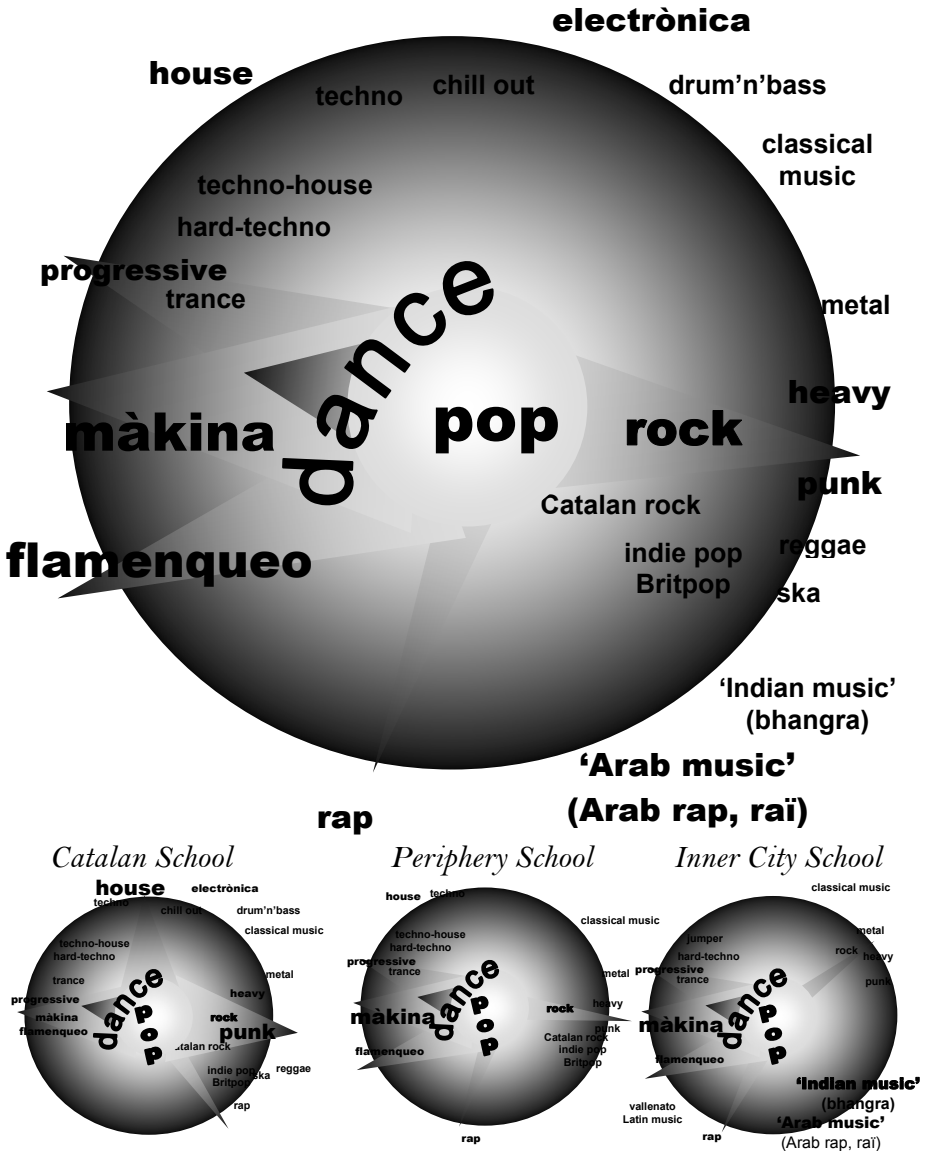
Sofia: AC/DC, Metallica... (...)

Montse: Hay otros que son de màkina, otros que son más *del palo*... que tienen el *palo punky*, [otros] en *plan house*, hay un poco de todo.

Guitar music was quite important in the Catalan School, where punk was one of the main tastes of musical geographies. In the other two, only a few isolated individuals, who were clearly invisible to many of the interviewees, liked some rock, heavy or punk music. The same thing happened, but with more intensity, with bhangra and what the interviewees called 'Indian' music, as well as *raï* and

what the interviewees called ‘Arab’ or ‘Moroccan’ music: whereas it was one of the main tastes and symbolic markers of musical geographies in the Inner City School, it was simply not present in the other two schools. Differences were also detected in relation to rap and house music. Rap ranged from relatively important in the Inner City School to weakly visible in the Periphery School and practically invisible in the Catalan School, whereas house ranged from a quite important symbolic presence in the Catalan School to a marginal one in the Periphery School and virtual absence from the Inner City School.

Figure 6.3 Graphic representation of main musical topographies in Barcelona



Experienced geographies

Up to now, we have attempted to depict a representation of musical geographies in both Birmingham and Barcelona. These are my representations of the 'objectivated' maps the interviewees verbalised in the interviews. As we have already warned, however, it would be a mistake to assume that these representations matched that of all the interviewees. Many would not even recognise them at all. Our representations are an interpretation of what we consider to be shared by them all, explicitly or implicitly. All the quotes used in the preceding sections show young people's more or less systematic knowledge about musical geographies, which is not always present in the interviews. To avoid the danger of mystifying our account of young people's musical geographies, therefore, it is worth making explicit how these coordinates are really experienced by young people.

Our experience of social reality, like that of the *Lugbara*, is never precise. Society is our experience with others, and our experience with others consists of diverse meanings, often implicit and never fully verbalised in systematic ways, which we just take for granted. In fact, most of the more important meanings are taken for granted, since we are not even aware of how we typify them in our everyday discourse. Musical and social geographies largely function on this 'taken-for-grantedness': it is not necessary to be aware of them to know them. We will first show how musical geographies are opaque to young people, and then discuss the importance of linguistic and sensuous maps of meaning in relation to their efficiency.

Opaque and blurred experience

Musical geographies resulting from our analytical exercise, as mentioned above, would probably not be recognised by many young people. I believe that this does not invalidate them because I do not consider interviewees' reflexive or conscious meaning-making the only relevant aspect to be taken into account, and also because I have made an effort to systematise the different typifications and meanings shared by them all, sometimes reflexively and sometimes not. Many young people talk about music only with a few friends, relatives and acquaintances, and they are not exposed to media other than the mainstream. This means that their (personal) knowledge about others' taste in music is limited, as they often acknowledge in the interviews. This is the case of a girl who likes *màkina* music and, as she says, '*gitaneo*':

Loles: O sea, con los que me llevo bien y eso, pues sí sé lo que les gusta; pero hay otras que no hablo con ellas, o sea que no sé.

Roger: ¿Y no tienes ni idea de lo que les gusta ni nada?

Loles: Yo, ni idea (...).

Roger: ¿Y hay gente que le guste el rock o los Beatles o...?

Loles: Ni idea.

Roger: ¿Gente que le guste más Spice Girls y cosas así?

Loles: Tampoco lo sé. [*slightly ashamed*] (...) Habrá de todo...

Indeed, young people's maps of meaning are often very imprecise, not only, as here, because of not 'knowing' what other young people like, but also because of not knowing precisely what music genres exist. The process of growing up and mapping out musical and youth geographies – or, in the case of immigrants, of suddenly becoming acquainted with a new youth social space – is a process of gradually knowing the more or less precise differences between music genres, as well as their imbrication with meanings and a map of distances and proximities. A Moroccan boy who had already been some years in Barcelona, for instance, had not even heard of Estopa, by far the best-selling Spanish band at that time, and very popular in the school, and he also had a very hazy knowledge of tastes in music at his school: 'Hay gente que le gusta música de su país; hay gente que le gusta música inglesa; gente que le gusta música de India, en[tre los] marroquíes también hay gente que le gusta música de India'. A similar case was that of a girl in Birmingham who had a very vague idea of musical geographies in her school and had never heard of 'house':

Roger: Do you like garage music?

Rebecca: It's all right...

Roger: You don't like it especially... OK, how is the taste of other people in your class and in the school? People like the same thing or are there clear groups that like different things?

Rebecca: Most people like garage... I suppose...

Roger: But you don't especially like it...

Rebecca: Nah... it's just there, I listen to it...

Roger: You don't dislike it, then...

Rebecca: No, I don't dislike it... [*resigned, not enthusiastic at all*]

Roger: Do your close friends like it more than you do?

Rebecca: Yeah... I reckon...

Roger: Most people in garage... any other thing?

Rebecca: Soul... most people like that...

Roger: Is there a group who like more pop or rock music?

Rebecca: I don't know... I haven't really investigated... [*like saying 'how do you want me to know it?'*] But I know that more people like... garage... soul... Probably reggae... I don't know... (...)

Roger: Do you like house music?

Rebecca: Who?

Roger: House music...

Rebecca: What's that?

Roger: Like electronic music...

Rebecca: Never heard about that...

Alongside interviewees who could map out musical geographies with amazing detail, we find others who have an extremely imprecise or even 'wrong' idea of them. Nevertheless, even those who had more systematised knowledge could not perfectly map out every single genre. In this connection, we must remember the socially and historically constructed character of genre categories and the

difficulties found by record shops in using them. The following example of a boy in Barcelona with quite a lot of specialised knowledge, in comparison to his classmates, is very illustrative:

Joan: Però tot i això és que... la música, no sé, m'agrada *diferenta* d'ara, no de discoteca i tot això. Potser el que més m'agrada per anar de *disco* és el *hard techno* i tot això. Saps? Més...

Roger: On ho posen?

Joan: Jo he anat a alguns llocs que... On posen *bastanta tralla* és al Piu.

Roger: Al Piu?

Joan: Sí, a Sabadell. Està bastant bé. Però només el divendres.

Roger: Només el divendres, per què els altres dies què?

Joan: *House* *aixins*, que no *mola* molt.

Roger: *House* com...

Joan: *Techno-house* i així.

Roger: Què és? El *techno-house* com és? Amb veus o no?

Joan: Sí... A veure. És que el *techno-house* també, jo ho he escoltat molt per el Flaix FM que... *bueno*, és bàsicament *lo* que posen.

Roger: Durant el dia?

Joan: Sí. Alguna cosa de *maquineta* també. Però és que no m'agrada molt. Per la nit també es *curren* alguna *session*. Vaig sentir una molt *guapa*. Quina era? Ara no em sortirà. Una marca *aixins* anglesa...

Roger: Marca?

Joan: No, *bueno*, si, una gent que punxa que té tot així...

Roger: El Ministry of sound?

Joan: Això mateix, si. Vaig escoltar alguna *session* que... està bé.

Roger: I això és el *techno-house*?

Joan: No, això no.

Roger: Això què és?

Joan: *Techno* així bastant... *Bueno* és que al Ministry jo també li he sentit *house* amb veus, *aixins*... És que a veure... per a mi el *house* és, música punxada però amb més instruments, no? Més melòdica com si diguéssim.

Roger: Sí, més *pop* o què?

Joan: Sí. I en canvi el *techno*, no sé, sembla molt més... La melodia, és jo que sé... un so així bastant... *Bueno* són sons més que res, més que melodia.

Roger: [A veure si ho entenc,] l'altra és més música... més diguem-ne *pop* tradicional més semblant, i el *techno* és més electrònic, una mica allò...

Joan: És que hi ha tants estils que jo em faig bastants *lio*.

Joan is not trying to map out musical geographies in his school, but general musical geographies in his locality. The school, alongside home, the neighbourhood and going out, are the main arenas where our *personal experience with others* takes place, thus being privileged sources of typifications, as well as practical and sensuous experiences, through which young people make sense of musical geographies. The media and record shops, however, are also important sources of typifications. When I asked young people to map out the musical geographies not from their school, but from a distant social reality like their city, their imprecision

was much greater. When young people are asked about taste in music in neighbourhoods different from their own, or in other countries, they are usually puzzled and can only 'guess' on the basis of their basic stock of typical knowledge.

Nevertheless, the opaque knowledge many youngsters had of musical geographies does not imply that those geographies were blurred and loose. This was made clear when I asked those interviewees with an imprecise map of genre differences not about the music they liked but the music they disliked. It was then that their location within youth geographies was made visible. 'Distastes', rather than 'tastes', are the best road to find out about young people's location in music geographies. Even if young people often combined diffuse and fluid taste within the portrayed music geographies, for instance combining non-commercial and commercial tastes, or linking different musical genres at the same time, through their dislikes and aversion it was possible to locate them closer to, or further away from, certain positions. Moreover, there is another aspect we must bear in mind: the knowledge of musical geographies was often more practical and sensuous than systematic and linguistic.

Sensuousness, value, grounded aesthetics and authenticity

Analysing musical geographies in terms of the linguistic knowledge of young people, that is, on the basis of the interviewees' 'verbalised' typifications, is somewhat reductionist. Following the conceptualisation we have made in Chapter 2, we must be aware of the relevance of 'sensuous' and 'practical' meanings in the experience of musical geographies. Young people can often not recognise a music 'genre' because they do not know its linguistic typification, or even because they do not know its distinctive musical features, but they can experience pleasure or aversion to it anyway, so in practice they place it, however imprecisely, on a map of distances and proximities. Musical geographies are often apprehended in this way, as we can see in the following illustrative example of a girl who, in a school where almost every interviewee told me that 'everyone' liked garage, and where garage had been around for two years, did not know the name, but knew she did not like it:

Roger: And which other tastes in the school are? Which music...?

Margareth: They listen to this music! This is crap, this is not music! They are yelling. I think it's not music, it does not make any sense [*she points out to two classmates MCing on top of a garage tune*].

Roger: Which music it is?

Margareth: I don't know what you call it, but I'm not interested in knowing it. This is not music, it does not make any sense.

Roger: You don't like the music they like then...

Margareth: No, I don't like it at all...

Roger: And how would you call this music?

Margareth: I don't know... No...

Roger: And the people who like it? How would you define them?

Margareth: ... Mmm... To tell the truth...I don't know

Roger: No name... at all...

Margareth: Not at all...

Roger: Do you like garage music?

Margareth: Garage? No...

Roger: You don't know what's it...

Margareth: Give me an example, maybe I know...

Roger: I don't know, I think that a lot of black people, and some of the white people like it here... Like Joe in your class...

Margareth: Oh! [*laughing*] No! I don't like it! No, no. It's fast music, I can't stand it, I don't like it, no.

Roger: Have you listened to it?

Margareth: Yes, I did, but just like... annoying me... Buah! I don't like it...

Roger: But you were not told it was garage?

Margareth: No, I didn't know...

Roger: Maybe is not...

Margareth: I don't know, it's the first time... If I don't like the music, I'm not interested in knowing more about it...

She did not know the term 'garage', but her sensuous and practical knowledge did locate it as distant from her taste in terms of 'speed' and the sounds. We can assume that she identified it with certain positions within youth geographies, and that she did not need a genre category to make sense of the sounds. The combination of linguistic typifications and sensuous and practical meanings is crucial in the cultural production of musical and youth geographies. Distances are not only linguistically traced, but also sensuously felt through the bodies' experience of music. As we will see later, alongside 'fastness', other deviations from normalcy like 'loudness', 'swearing' and others become obvious sensuous markers of 'difference' and 'transgression' of the expectations of the commercial centre.

In other words, musical geographies are largely built through practical and sensuous meanings, and typified linguistic meanings are only part of the story. Linguistic meanings do of course prepare, influence, shape and later rationalise the musical experience, but sensuous and practical meaningfulness cannot be reduced to mere language. The example above shows that musical geographies do not always refer to linguistic meanings, since even when young people do not *clearly know (typify)* certain genres or bands, through their sensuous reaction to the sounds and their practical location of them they can identify them as close or distant to their taste in music. Margareth felt an aversion to the sounds independently of their precise linguistic typification. Signifying practices were no doubt important in identifying the sounds with some classmates but not others, and her linguistic typification of them, as well as of the 'speed' of the music, also seemed to give form to the meaning it had for her, but as we can appreciate in her words, the felt aversion put all this together in her experienced distance from it.

We are dealing here with the issue of 'value' and the personal experience of 'good' and 'bad' music, that is, the personal aesthetic criteria to judge music. Underlining the role of personally felt sensuousness in mapping out musical geographies is not to say that it is a merely individual experience, autonomous from social relations. Although it would be absurd to deny individual idiosyncrasy

in the pleasure experienced through music, sensuousness, too, is culturally shaped: we learn to experience pleasure from certain sounds and not others – and to a great extent we learn this through linguistic typifications and other signifying practices. With popular music, however, there is no clear hierarchy of aesthetic value that we can try to adjust to. In popular music, value is inherently contested and plural. Every single group of young people, and every location within musical geographies, will claim or imply their own criteria to identify value in music forms. These different ‘grounded aesthetics’ – this is what we have called this plurality of criteria in Chapter 1 – challenge the universal nature implicit in classical aesthetics but at the same time keep a certain ‘desire for timelessness and universality’, as Willis puts it (1996: 23). This range of different grounded aesthetics, alongside individual indiosyncrasies, is what produces different sensuous pleasures, which means that they are an important aspect in the cultural production of musical geographies, alongside linguistic typifications concerning genres, artists and songs. As I have said repeatedly, grounded aesthetics are largely incorporated with the help of linguistic typifications and signifying practices, since they are often translated into, and negotiated through, words and other signifying practices, but they are also physically experienced in the form of pleasure and aversion, not to mention the feeling of ‘authenticity’ that underlies the desire of timelessness and universality.

When a young female interviewee says that rap ‘is like just a really fast tape going on’, she is clumsily describing her grounded aesthetics, which at the beginning of the interview she started to describe as follows: ‘I’m into music I like to listen to... slow kind of music. I don’t like sad music’. This is of course a diffuse definition of her grounded aesthetics, since she, like most of us, just does not have the analytical tools to systematise it, but it is a common sort of verbalisation among young people that certainly plays a role in the common cultural production of their taste in music. When they listen to and talk about music, young people are continuously adjusting their taste in relation to others, and one of the crucial ways of doing so is learning and negotiating how to value music. This can often be done by simply saying ‘that’s great’, but they often try to go a bit further and, however timidly, make an effort to explain what it is that they like and what it is that they dislike.

Neither sensuousness nor the experience of authenticity or the grounded aesthetics as a source of value judgement are central objects of attention of this thesis. They would require a deeper ethnographic fieldwork, so, as we have already said, our main focus will be young people’s linguistic typifications. Nevertheless, it is appropriate to briefly analyse some of the main aspects of young people’s verbalised grounded aesthetics, since this will help us to understand some of the aspects that we will discuss in subsequent chapters. Common adjectives to evaluate music in one way or another were ‘fast’, ‘slow’, ‘soft’, ‘nice’, ‘sweet’, ‘normal’, ‘relaxing’, ‘hard’, ‘noisy’, ‘heavy’, ‘potent’, ‘loud’, ‘diabolical’, ‘radical’, ‘weird’, ‘*tralla*’, ‘*raya*’, ‘repetitive’, ‘pum-pum-pum’, ‘*con cambios de ritmo*’, ‘catchy’, ‘tacky’, ‘poppy’, ‘cheesy’, ‘political’, ‘original’, ‘copy’, ‘of quality’, ‘not elaborated’ or ‘with sentiment

in it'. When asked about what they valued most about the music they liked, most interviewees loosely talked about the 'vibe', 'rhythm', 'beats', 'bass-line', 'high-low' or the 'melody'. Another of the aspects young people brought up in the discussion of music value was the lyrics, which were understood in quite different ways. For some, it was important that the tunes had lyrics while others were indifferent or preferred tunes without them. For those who liked lyrics, some wanted them to be provocative or funny; others valued the fact that the lyrics had 'sentiment', 'truth' or 'real life'; for some, 'fastness' or 'loudness' was positively or negatively evaluated. As always, these different criteria were not mutually exclusive, and the same individual might combine several of them, as was the case of the following boy: 'No, es más la música [que la letra]. Bueno, y la letra también porque es divertida. Las que son divertidas sí porque te ríes, pero las que son normales no, es la música'.

In order to evaluate the music, interviewees often also referred to aspects that were not directly related to the music but to their place in time and social relations, like 'modern', 'popular', 'old', 'classic', 'new', 'current', 'out of fashion', 'lasting' or 'ephemeral'. Other value criteria related to its function, evaluating different musical forms in terms of their usefulness for certain spaces, activities or moments: 'only for a while', 'don't have it at home', 'wouldn't switch off the radio', 'para desfasar', 'to dance to it' or 'to listen to it'. Many interviewees also referred to some feature of the artists behind the music with appreciations about their 'talent', 'personality', 'physical attraction', 'ironic attitude', or the fact that they were 'hypocrites'.

Many of these criteria referred explicitly or implicitly to an assumed notion of 'authenticity' of either the music or the artists behind it. Like 'spontaneity', 'sincerity' and other similar concepts, 'authenticity' has become one of these everyday taken-for-granted concepts that we use without being aware of their real meaning. 'Authenticity' is not something that is either 'out there' or 'inside us', but something that we 'make'. To be aware of the constructed nature of the notion of authenticity we only need to note the contradictory views of it in the interviewees' music evaluations. There is an illustrative disparity between the implicit notion of it defended by those with an anti-commercial disposition and that of those with a commercial one. Those with an anti-commercial disposition shared the view that chart music was not authentic music, because behind it there was not an artistic but a profit-making motivation. These three boys are a clear illustration of this stance:

Roger: And which music you don't like?

James: Pop.

Tony: Chart.

Roman: Chart music.

James: It's all done to make money.

Roman: It's all done to make money, and it's all about the looks, as well...

Tony: And they don't write their own songs...

Roman: ... and they don't write their own songs.

James: They have no talent whatsoever.

Roman: Yeah, they have no talent.

As distinct from this idea of authenticity, which is related to the modern notion of the 'artist', many interviewees with a commercial disposition offered a quite different approach, which does not mean that they did not consider 'authenticity' and 'talent' important aspects of the music they liked. This is the case with the following girl in Barcelona:

Montse: A ver yo creo que al principio [Backstreet Boys] sí que eran comerciales, pero yo les veo como algo más que eso. Vale, sé que en parte, vale, es comercial, pero es que canta bien. O sea, no. Creo que en gran parte es por su talento, porque se lo han ganado, ¿vale? Y es porque a ver, empezaron... No empezaron de la nada, empezaron con gente detrás que paga dinero y se hicieron famosos, pero no podrían estar siempre arriba si no tuvieran un mínimo de talento.

Besides the contested distinction between 'art' and 'commerce', there were other (contested) grounded aesthetics criteria to distinguish degrees of 'authenticity' of the musical forms. For a few youngsters, for instance, whether the music had 'real' instruments in it – meaning that computers or synthesisers were not 'real' instruments – was an important criterion:

Roger: And do you like pop? Chart music? Or you stopped...

Mike: Yeah, I do... pop it's just... I listened to that... but I don't like it at all... Well... the way I see it is that they are not really musicians who are making their music... it's just computers really... and someone who sings over it... You don't see the talent involved in it...

This view was held by several interviewees whose taste was located in the 'rock' tradition and saw it as opposed to any 'dance' or 'electronic' musical form. Another interviewee explained that even if he did not like many of the rock and Brit pop bands, he respected them: 'Because they're playing their instruments, and that's... it's the sort of thing... I respect the bands that play their instruments and not just switch the computer on and press a few buttons and just leave it playing, and stop it and sell it...'. The combination of technology and the grounded aesthetics of popular music has always been an interesting and contested issue. The use of microphones, the appreciation of records in contrast with live performances, the role of the electric guitar, and the later use of sampling and computer technologies, have all been controversial developments provoking heated arguments about what was to be valued and 'authentic' music¹⁰.

This coexistence of different notions of authenticity is what makes the plurality of positions within musical and youth geographies possible. Each location has its own grounded aesthetics implying a different notion of authenticity. This is why the more commercial pop music remains meaningful to many young people in spite of its clearly commercial orientation, or why very popular artists or genres

¹⁰ See Thornton (1996 [1995]) for an illustrative historical analysis of some of these developments in her discussion of club cultures.

are seen as anti-commercial by many interviewees. Estopa, for instance, is a good example of this: although in the year of the fieldwork they sold more records than any other Spanish band, and were strongly promoted by their major company, many interviewees kept a non-commercial image of them. The many articles and reports that appeared in the most mainstream media, including serious newspapers and teeny-bop magazines, underlined to the point of boredom that the artists previously had car factory jobs and were from a working class neighbourhood in Cornellà. All this probably helped, as did the bootleg version of their record with (supposedly) uncensored lyrics – which were seen by young people as the ‘original’ songs:

Roger: ¿A ti te gusta Estopa?

Eli: ¡Sssss! ¡Vamos! ¡Cómo no me va a gustar!

Rosa: Me gusta más la maqueta, por eso, que el otro. Porque en la maqueta si tiene que decir un taco lo dicen.

Eli: Si, está más chula...

This could be a well-designed marketing strategy of their major company, as was the case of Macy Gray promotion in the UK, which intelligently started in alternative and ‘cool’ territories of youth geographies and only some months afterwards was massively advertised in the mainstream media. In Chapter 5, we have also referred to the deals between ‘independent’ and ‘major’ record labels as a way for the latter to ‘buy credibility’. These different examples are illustrative of the complex interplay of authenticity and credibility, and the fact that the music industry was not only well aware of it, but tried to manage it for their own ends.

‘Authenticity’ is a complex word that can be used to describe musical forms and individuals. In Chapter 1, we have pointed out the importance of the way in which authenticity and credibility are locally attributed to both ‘folk’ and ‘contemporary’ popular music. Following Connel and Gibson (2004 [2003]), we have underlined how the process of ‘fabricating it’ is a combination of relatively fixed notions of ‘traditional’ music cultures and an increasingly accelerated diffusion of novelty through global media artefacts. Those sections of musical geographies that value artistic autonomy, as opposed to commerce, have an idea of authenticity similar to that of contemporary art, whereas those with a commercial stance embrace a different idea of authenticity that does not dismiss the craftsman’s willingness to take into account the preferences of the audience. The plurality of conceptions of musical authenticity is in fact what lies behind the very notion of grounded aesthetics and also the notion of cultural production as we have defined them in Chapter 1, that is – and following Willis – as a means to ‘finding individual and collective feelings of potency, subject senses of dignity and personhood, subjective feelings of authenticity’ (Willis 2000: 37). This is naturally linked to a certain desire for timelessness and universality implied in every grounded aesthetics, and sets us at the difficult crossroads of the contemporary search for authenticity which, as Trilling (1997) points out, must be related to ‘our anxiety over the credibility of existence and of individual existences’ (1997: 93).

Here we are coming to the attribution of authenticity to individuals, like Holt & Griffin's (2003) analysis of the experience 'of being yourself' felt by both young gay and straight adults in the lesbian and gay scene. The paradox of 'authenticity' is that it is, as Trilling underlines, aggressive towards received and popular opinion (1997: 94), but at the same time it is the product of a socially fabricated experience. This is the same paradox pointed out by Sennet (1977) and Cardús (2003) in relation to the adoration of 'spontaneity' and 'sincerity' as the direct and non-formalised expression of the inner being, a common belief in contemporary society that does not recognise the need for institutionalised (external) culture to make this inner being what it is. The Holt study on the experience 'of being yourself' in the lesbian and gay scene (Holt & Griffin 2003) is a good example of this paradox, since it makes clear that the production of a space where individuals could 'feel themselves' was based on a clear enforcement of 'unspoken rules', codes and expectations that excluded many potential customers, like for instance the regulation of appearance and implicit class, ethnic and age lines. This is the crucial point of our system of taste, or to put it differently, of our cultural relations in contemporary consumer culture: we believe we are 'authentic' true beings in our relations to commodified artefacts, which implies that we ignore the powerful rules and social norms affecting us. The irony, empirically illustrated by Miles (2000) and already mentioned in this thesis, is that young people (we) believe that everybody but themselves (ourselves) is influenced by external (inauthentic) factors. The following quote illustrates this widespread belief:

Mark: But when I was in the [other school] I listened to heavy metal, but now I'm older, I don't get influenced by other people, because my friends used to listen to that so I listened to that, but now I'm older, I'm not influenced. A lot of my friends still listen to that, but I don't listen to it anymore, because I like this kind of music better, and I like the club scene, so...

What we have called the 'post-subculturalist' approach to youth cultures argues, from a post-modern standpoint, that today's youngsters do not believe in the fixed authenticity of certain subcultures and that today's youth cultures must be understood more as a combination of consumer goods in a more fluid, ironic and non-essential manner. I do in fact believe that, as young people become more literate in the cycle of commodification and marketing strategies of the cultural industries, they are developing an increasingly ironic disposition towards consumer goods and the pretence of authenticity. Nevertheless, behind a more omnivore and ironic disposition towards cultural consumption, in our case of popular music, I argue that the search for authenticity is not vanishing but becoming more subtle, nuanced and certainly relativised. Within the arena of cultural commodified codes, the historicity and ephemerality of musical and youth styles is well known to an increasingly important proportion of young people. Moreover, dispositions like those in the above quotes show the still important presence of beliefs that are committed to quite strong notions of authenticity. As Hodkinson (2004) correctly points out, we need to distinguish between fluid

ascriptions and more fixed and substantive ones, and we should also accept that the search for true or authentic cultural forms and taste in music continue to be an important goal for most young people. These distinctions must be traced not only between 'subcultures' and other looser youth cultural affiliations, but also within both subcultural and mainstream scenes. A good example of it is the following quote, in which Jose and Dani underline their loose affiliation with the punk scene by comparing their commitment to its implicit 'ideology' (a word young people regularly used to refer to strong subcultural values and expectations) to that of a schoolmate. They nevertheless claim that they do subscribe, however loosely, to some of these 'ideological' expectations:

Roger: I amb *lo del punk* és important la ideologia del *punk*? O és la música només? O com... les idees de les cançons?

Jose: Home, sí, les cançons i la música que fan sí, el que parlen és això, doncs... Al fons hi ha una ideologia *punk*, bàsicament [*Dani nods and makes affirmation noises*]. Per exemple, a mi m'agrada la música i sincerament, la ideologia *punk*, no. No d'això, l'Alfred, el que ens va *ficar el d'això*, sí [*que li agrada*]. Aquest és anarquista, i aquest sí que... Sí que ho segueix.

Roger: Però vosaltres bàsicament la música i el ritme i... Sí?

Jose and Dani: Sí.

Roger: I a part algunes de les idees us semblen divertides...

Jose: Algunes de les idees sí, o de crítica, crec que dius, que sí...

Dani: No, sí. Hi ha moltes coses que hi estem d'acord.

Roger: Com ara?

Dani: En sí la idea global del món que està tot molt mal repartit [*Jose makes several affirmation sounds*]. És... és...

Jose: És que... se'n van rient de tot.

As we have seen, most interviewees claimed that whereas during early adolescence the commitments to a narrow set of sounds was commonplace, once they grew up and were sixteen years old and more, they started to broaden their taste and open up their mind. In general – although not always – growing up, particularly when the transition to adulthood is complete, implies a clear detachment from strong youth cultural affiliations, and therefore a relativisation of youthful notions of authenticity.

To make clear the presence of the expectations of authenticity and 'true' commitments to musical forms and tastes, as well as the several empirical references already made, we can refer to the claims of different interviewees in relation to false pretensions of affiliations. Alfred, the punk fan to whom Jose and Dani referred as being strongly committed to punk music and punk 'ideology', explained that the concerts of the more commercial punk bands were full of people who, rather than being interested in the punk music, wanted to show off:

Alfred: No sé, depèn del *rotllo*, depèn del grup, depèn... els tipus de música. Per exemple, jo que sé, vaig anar al concert de NOFX, clar, que són més coneguts, són més comercials. Mellon Collin igual, més melòdics, més coneguts, més comercials,

que hi havia gent més *pijeta*, més. Però ara els d'aquí dalt, perquè els *skaters* en realitat no anaven mai a veure'ls, els importava un *pito* tot, però estan els d'aquí dalt que volen anar de *guais* i, el *pijito*, els típics *pijitos* i diuen *pues*: “Hostia ahora voy de *skater* y ya verás que moderno”, que són aquells que ja et dic s'apunten al carro de la moda i després quan veuen, jo que sé... Qualsevol altra cosa que està més de moda, doncs se'n van. Doncs aquests... també hi ha d'aquests en un concert de NOFX i això, però que si te'n vas a un concert de grups que no són comercials, que són bastant durs, ja veus a *skins*, no, *red skins* que es diuen aquests i *punks* i coses així, i veus és totalment...

These same claims of ‘true commitment’ to the music were made by Francisco and Álvaro, two *màkina* fans:

Francisco: La màkina lo que más suele gustar

Roger: Les gusta más hardcore, màkina,... ¿qué es lo que gusta más?

Francisco: Normalmente se oye más el *hardcore*.

Álvaro: Más o menos en la màkina... Es que ahí depende de qué màkina y depende de qué *hardcore* que puedes escuchar. Hay veces que la màkina hace un montón de ruido y otras que el *hardcore* no es tan fuerte.

Roger: Y ¿cómo es la diferencia? ¿Cómo lo ves?

Francisco: ¿Cómo lo ves? O sea, que en màkina tienes algunas canciones con voces de algunas *pavas*, alguna canción, no sé qué, y el *hardcore* no. Es todo sin voces.

Álvaro: Es todo como, como si fuese una... Un estilo de percusión fuerte.

Roger: Y ¿hay por ejemplo gente que le gusta más lo que sea el *dance* y que no le gusta nada el *hardcore* y esto, o no?

Francisco: Sí, el Pocho.

Álvaro: A ese le gusta lo que le pongas, tío.

Francisco: Sí, algún chavalín... no sé. Pero hay gente que [dice:] “Ah, a mí me gusta la màkina”, pues mira porque algún hermano o primo les gusta, porque no pueden decir que les gusta una música cuando aun no han ido ni a escucharla a una discoteca.

Roger: O sea que la màkina hay que ir a escucharla a una discoteca, claro.

Francisco: Sí, discotecas...

Álvaro: Porque si a ti te gusta yo no tengo que ser menos, eso es lo que pasa muchas veces... O sea, yo lo tengo que escuchar, si a mi me dejan una cinta me tiene que gustar porque a esos les gusta...

Roger: ¿Tú eso lo ves?

Álvaro: Sí.

Roger: ¿sí?

Álvaro: Hasta que no vas a una discoteca y... Hay gente, [por ejemplo, que dicen:] “Ah, a mi me gusta la màkina” y luego [cuando van a la discoteca no va a la sala de màkina sino que] se va a lo que es la salsa.

Roger: Entonces ya no le gusta.

Álvaro: O sea, les gusta, pero hay gente que “a mi me gusta la màkina” pero diez minutos, y se quedan en la màkina y después se van *pa* [la] salsa.

The same negotiations about the ‘true’ and ‘authentic’ meanings of musical commitments can be found in many other aspects of musical social space, as we

will see later. The distinction between 'being' something and 'doing' it (in Catalan between '*ser*' and '*anar de*'), is still relevant even if it does not fit directly in particular musical or subcultural styles. As Widdicombe & Wooffitt (1990) concluded in their analysis of the discourses about 'authenticity' and 'genuineness' among goth and punk subcultural members in the UK in 1987 (where they identified aspects found in the preceding quotes like 'superficial interest', 'fast turn-over of members', 'fashion going through'), discourses about authenticity 'need to be viewed as culturally available discourses through which people reason and articulate their views and opinions' (1990: 273). From this point of view, depending on their location in musical and youth geographies, young people will use different discourses, from the use of 'real instruments' to the 'speed' of the music, from the 'niceness' of the performer to the 'political edge' of the lyrics.

The relevance of the notion of authenticity is that it articulates the experiences of 'true self' to the commitment to (what are perceived as) 'authentic' positions within musical and youth geographies. Although the 'true self' is experienced as an individual autonomy from (shallow) external constraints, the fact is that it is articulated in objectified meanings that are related not only to musical but also to social geographies, that is, to social structural hierarchies. We have foreseen in Chapter 4, for instance, the importance of the 'street' as a source of authenticity, as can also happen with the symbolic play between different class, gender, sexual, age, ethnic, linguistic, national, local or global affiliations, where 'newcomers', 'converts' or people 'playing too hard' can often be dismissed. As two white interviewees commented about a white schoolmate who embraced black culture, 'Well, no, [he does not go more with black people,] but he likes to pretend that he does... He plays basketball and that...'. We will see more examples of these perceptions later when we analyse in the following chapter what we will call the 'imbrication' of different hierarchies in youth social space.

In this chapter, we have seen, however superficially, the main territories of musical geographies as they were typified by interviewees in Birmingham and Barcelona. Our attempt to map out musical distances and proximities is an analytical abstraction which, in spite of its empirical clumsiness and reductionism, will prove very useful in understanding the articulation between musical geographies and broader social structures in the context of what we have called youth social space. We will now turn to the analysis of how musical geographies are not neutral in structural terms, in that they are inherently connected to social hierarchies, both interpersonal hierarchies of popularity among young people *and* social hierarchies of class, gender, sexuality, age and ethnic, linguistic and national identifications.

7. IMBRICATED HIERARCHIES AND HOMOLOGIES

In the previous chapter we have referred to the distances and proximities between different musical forms as they were typified – and to some extent sensuously experienced – by young people. Previously, in Chapter 4, we have analysed the ‘carriers’ of the meanings forming not only these musical geographies but also youth geographies, that is, the meanings organising distances and proximities among young people themselves. As to these ‘carriers’ mediating the access to, and cultural production of, musical and youth geographies, we have distinguished between the different networks of personal relations, on the one hand, and the commodified artefacts upon which young people carry out their symbolic work, on the other. In Chapter 5 we have outlined the way the industry around music decides how they produce these commodified artefacts, and the way they try to reach young people and make sense of their customers in stylistic, gender, class and ethnic terms; now we will turn to the way young people make sense of youth geographies through their networks of personal relations. We will thus go one step further in the understanding of what in the first pages I have defined as my object of study: *the process of cultural production, through musical commodities, of a certain way of experiencing both social distances and inequalities and our own pathways through them.* To do so, I will focus on how the musical geographies we have just analysed relate to hierarchical social distances and proximities, which does not imply looking at how musical geographies *directly* articulate social structural meanings but focusing instead on the way both musical geographies and structural differentiations are articulated in what we have called youth social space.

The theoretical discussion in Chapter 1 and 2 has provided an approach to musical forms as mediators of the cultural production of social geographies, and set up the theoretical framework to analyse the relationship between social differentiation, social hierarchies and the social distribution of respect, dignity and recognition. Musical forms mediate this relationship because when appropriated in everyday life through their diverse grounded aesthetics, they signify – among many other symbolic forms – social differences and hierarchies.¹ We have noticed in several quotes how young people ‘dismiss’ other individuals or groups *because of their taste in music.* They do so because taste in music signifies something else, because it says something about the person and the groups that have it. One girl

¹ This relationship between aesthetic discrimination and the formation of social groups is also highlighted by Simon Frith: ‘My position is that it is not only the bourgeoisie who use aesthetic criteria for functional ends. If social relations are constituted in cultural practice, then our sense of identity and difference is established *in the processes of discrimination.* And this is as important for popular as for bourgeois cultural activity, important at both the most intimate levels of sociability (an aspect of the way in which friendships are formed and courtship organised), and at the most anonymous levels of market choice (in the way in which the fashion and advertising industries seek to place us socially by translating individual judgments of what we like and dislike into sales patterns). These relationships between aesthetic judgments and the formation of social groups are obviously crucial to popular cultural practice, to genres and cults and subcultures’ (Frith 1996: 18).

in Barcelona, after saying that music was not that important, added that ‘Por una parte sí porque, sólo... O sea, la música siempre suele... O sea, suele decir cómo es esa persona, más o menos. (...) Sí, suele... Yo que sé, suele... identificar...’. Taste in music, therefore, ‘signifies’ something about the individual holding it. Young people’s location in musical and youth geographies is largely related with their search for respect, dignity and recognition – that is, identity – in a period of life of highlighted self-awareness, fragile self-confidence, and need of social acceptance. Since music is an important aspect of young people’s presentation in front of others, learning musical distances and proximities in youth geographies does not only mean learning how to (neutrally) map out different music sounds, but to *value* them in ‘homological’ relation with other social meanings. A young person *getting interested* in musical geographies will need to learn that *màkina*, hard-techno and rap music are ‘tough’, that jungle is not commercial, that ‘this year’s dance style’ is ‘what’s going on’, that house music in Barcelona can be ‘*pijo*’, that helter-skelter music in Birmingham is ‘*kev*’, and that, depending on the individual, all of them can be absolutely ‘cool’ or terribly ‘uncool’, authentic or phoney, in interpersonal hierarchies of respect in the school, the street and any other site of personal relations. All these meanings are part of young people’s cultural environment, which means that they are a set of meanings that young people face when growing up. As seen in the previous chapter, just as young people learn that *màkina* in Barcelona or garage in Birmingham are the *opposite* of rock in musical geographies, they will learn that *màkina* and garage have certain social connotations and not others.

They are, naturally, not ‘essential’ but ‘situated’ and ‘relational’ ones, often only identifiable as conditional on the rest of signifiers accompanying them, since the social meaning of liking rock or dance music will only be identified in relation to the type of commitment, the sounds within rock or dance music which are liked, and the local context where this taste is being displayed. Just as we have seen how young people experience musical geographies from the perspective that their respective schools, streets, and groups of friends give them, we will analyse how this perspective influences their perception of youth and general social geographies. Indeed, the starting point is that young people’s music listening is socially located, since their experience of music, when known to others, signifies something to those others and thus *makes an impression on them*. And part of this ‘signifying’ of taste in music and musical practices has to do with more or less relevant social meanings, which young people inescapably take into account in their musical experience. We understand ‘social meanings’ in a broad sense, ranging from class, ethnic and gender differences to hierarchies of popularity in the school. The point is that taste in music is part of young people’s negotiation of their social identity, or to put it in other words, it gives considerable information about them and their location in youth social geographies. From this point of view, musical geographies are not only about music, but also about social and cultural struggles. And these struggles are not free from the influence of the struggles for social domination in interpersonal and broader social geographies. As developed in Chapter 2, in fact, social geographies are to a great extent hierarchical, and imply, therefore, rela-

tions of domination. Since musical geographies are embedded in social geographies, they are also articulated with – and articulate – power relations. In every social group, there is an ongoing negotiation of the music that will be perceived as ‘legitimate’ (good, authentic, cool), as well as of the social meanings or connotations of different music forms (posh, black, Catalan, tough, effeminate), so it is relevant to pose the question of how this negotiation is being carried out, and how it articulates and imbricates social hierarchies of domination. Downplaying the taste of others in music and musical practices, or resisting such judgements, has to do not only with music, but also with (social and cultural) distribution of dignity and respect. To analyse how musical forms mediate the experience of social hierarchies, we will look at how the search for respect, dignity and recognition articulate musical and broader social distinctions in youth social space.

The notion of ‘imbrication’

‘Youth social geographies’, in spite of being closely related to general social geographies, bear their own logic, since they are organised through meanings that are partially their own, that is, not fully shared by the ‘outer’ social space. In this sense they could in a way be considered ‘subcultural’, as we have discussed it in Chapter 1. Nevertheless, at the same time that young people participate in ‘musical geographies’ and ‘youth social geographies’, they also take part in ‘general social geographies’, so these spaces can hardly be thought of as disconnected from each other. In our everyday life, we receive the complex influence of different social hierarchies of domination not in clearly segregated moments and spaces, since every individual is simultaneously located in different hierarchies of structured inequality – not only hierarchies in terms of generalised advantage, gender, sexuality, ethnicity or territory, but also interpersonal hierarchies within informal social networks. A man might thus have a low social capital in the neighbourhood but a high one among workmates; another man can be at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder but be highly respected in the sports gym; a woman might be intimidated by a neighbour who continuously intimidates her and at the same time be the queen of the pub she visits every evening. All these hierarchies simultaneously affect our everyday personal relations and the way we make sense of our social world and our search for respect, dignity and recognition. This means that ethnicity or generalised advantage are relevant in the way young people negotiate their positions in the hierarchies of popularity at school. This is not to say that they will determine it, but that they will necessarily be relevant to the extent that youngsters make sense and need to negotiate them in one way or another.

This way of thinking of structural influences as fundamental but as not straightforwardly determining contradicts classical simplistic causal structural explanations *and* the most radical postmodern critiques of them. My goal is to take into consideration the way taste in music mediates the ‘articulation’ of the different set of hierarchies in the context of youth social space, and I will conceptualise this articulation as the ‘imbrication of hierarchies’ in youth social space. The notion of ‘imbrication’ – like that of ‘articulation’ – aims to move from a

base/superstructure paradigm into a more discursive one in which, as Hall comments in relation to the notion of articulation, different elements, under certain conditions, can be connected but not in necessary, determined, absolute or essential terms (1986: 141). The concept of 'imbrication' will allow me to discuss the articulation of social structures in everyday culture from the sociology of knowledge perspective we have developed in Chapter 2 in a manner that analytically distinguishes the different hierarchical dimensions or 'layers' of young people's search for respect, and the way they are articulated in the way they make sense of their social experience. In contrast with the 'theory of articulation', by using the notion of 'imbrication' I do not want to focus as much on ideology and the discursive functioning of practices² but on the link between different hierarchical social relations, from interpersonal to broad structural ones, in the process of meaning-making in everyday situated personal relations. Whereas the notion of articulation prioritises 'representation' and the discursive aspect of social practices, I want to focus on a more empirically concrete attention to experienced hierarchies in actual interpersonal relations, that is, on the search for respect, dignity and recognition in everyday life, and the specific social control mechanisms enforcing these hierarchies. The difference is of emphasis rather than substance, but I believe that the use of the notion of 'imbrication' helps to put at the centre of the analysis the way young people make sense of, and experience, the different layers of social hierarchies connecting personal and typified social knowledge while analytically distinguishing them, and thus allows us to focus on the dialectical tension of change and reproduction 'from above' and 'from below'. To put it clearly, it allows us to analyse broad structural hierarchies in the context of everyday experience in a way that makes it necessary to take into consideration the actual concrete articulations and overlappings between general and interpersonal hierarchies, between typified and personal knowledge, in the experience of dignity, respect and recognition in young people's search for identity.

The notion of 'imbrication' aims thus to bring attention to the complex articulation of the different layers of hierarchies. My starting point is that our experience of our location in these different hierarchies is experienced at once³.

² The notion of 'articulation' has had many different uses since it became explicitly theorised in the 1970s as one of the solutions to avoid the problems of reductionism and essentialism in Marxism, that is, to rethink the problem of determination (Daryl 1986). Stuart Hall, with Ernesto Laclau one of its principal architects, stated that 'a theory of articulation is both a way of understanding how ideological elements come, under certain conditions, to cohere together within a discourse, and a way of asking how they do or do not become articulated, at specific conjunctures, to certain political subjects' (1986: 141-2). The truth is that since it was first theorised, the term has been broadly used in cultural studies, and often in rather imprecise ways, as a general concept to refer to an open-ended and non-deterministic structural influence on cultural forms. An influential and praised use of the term in the study of popular music is Will Straw's 'Systems of Articulation, Logics of Change: Communities and Scenes in Popular Music' (1991).

³ This was highlighted in Bottero's analysis of gender in relation to class (1998), and argued as follows by Paul Willis in *Learning to Labour*: 'It is often overlooked that where two sets of divisions are lived out in the same concrete space they cannot remain separate (1981 [1977]: 148).

Different hierarchies are more salient at one moment than at another, so that, for instance, when a young woman is sexually harassed, she will experience her gender inequality as more relevant than when she is trying to pay her bills or when she is being teased by her girlfriends, but my point is that *all these experiences* are relevant in her general social location and, therefore, her identity. Just as feminist critiques of class analysis have highlighted the need to jointly understand class and gender inequalities, or that sociological approaches to ethnic inequalities are well aware that ethnic discrimination must not be disconnected from class inequalities, every single social hierarchy must be understood in the light of its articulation with all other axes, including very localised hierarchies in personal relations. Even the cultural struggles regarding the value of different tastes in music must be understood in the light of their articulation with other social and cultural hierarchies. By doing so we can throw light on the production and reproduction of the way we make sense of social structures in everyday life in a way that makes the often dramatic experience of interpersonal hierarchies visible: if young people experience their search for respect in interpersonal relations as crucial in their transitions to adulthood, we need to incorporate them at the centre of our theoretical approach to youth cultures and youth studies, and the concept of imbrication attempts to do this.

The different hierarchies in social geographies are 'imbricated' in the sense that although the different axes of domination are inextricably related to each other, and experienced at once, we make sense of them as being partially autonomous, like the tiles of a roof. When we are struggling to be respected in a classroom, 'social class' or 'gender' are only part of the problem, just as when we want our class background to be respected, our popularity among our peers is only part of the problem, or that when we want our musical taste to be valued, our gender is only part of the problem. The different hierarchies are inextricably intermingled, but we experience each one as more or less relevant – salient – at different moments. However, social hierarchies can influence certain situations even when they are not – or not centrally – perceived as relevant to them. By saying that they are 'only part of the problem', I mean that they *do have to do* with the problem, but only in a partial sense.

The tension between autonomy and interrelatedness of different social spaces and fields is complex, since different aspects of our identity or identifications are often more related to each other than we tend to imagine. There is a strong link, for instance, between the display of masculinity and femininity and class location, since young people's use of 'toughness' as a source of respect cannot be considered separately from them, or from the interpersonal hierarchies of popularity. The autonomy of certain meanings, practices or social spaces from others is not always what it seems to be. Youth geographies, for instance, are often perceived as transcending general social hierarchies and even being 'authentic' spaces for innovation and transgression of adult norms and social structures. Nevertheless, the partially autonomous youth social space is inscribed in its broader social space in a more functional way than young people and many academics believe, not only

in the sense that their participation does not tend to seriously challenge the good functioning of this broader social space, and in fact often helps to reproduce it⁴, but also in that it contributes to hide the influence of broad social determinations. Young people not only contribute to the development of a very profitable culture industry as part of the economic system, but also carry out their transition to their adult roles and they thus negotiate their location in broader social geographies, and their involvement in youth social space is part of this negotiation, in that it *signifies* social structural meanings, or more accurately, positionings in relation to social structural positions. At the same time, there are certain aspects of the functioning of the broader social geographies that can be modified, challenged and resisted through young people's cultural production in youth social space. For instance, youth geographies often build social spaces where meaningful personal relations are established between individuals and social groups that would otherwise remain separate, as a result of which individuals and collectives culturally produce new, unexpected or contradictory meanings. The youth cultures literature is full of examples of this.

Partially differentiated attention to different hierarchies can help us to understand how young people manage, negotiate and adjust to them. If we take into account that 'people act with an eye to the responses of others involved in that action [... and] take into account the way their fellows will evaluate what they do, and how that evaluation will affect their prestige and rank' (Becker 1991 [1963]: 183), it will be helpful to be able to analyse how different hierarchies of domination (and their definitions of value, as part of particular 'normalities', or 'subcultural' sets of meanings) collude and are articulated in the everyday interpersonal relations through which personal knowledge is developed. That is, some locally produced meanings – 'local' in both physical and relational terms – can idiosyncratically negotiate how broader structural hierarchies are being experienced. For instance, from certain locations in youth social space, or in certain schools, 'commercial' music can be seen as 'the modern music to be into' and in others the 'commercial crap to avoid', and this may relate to embedded notions of ethnicity, class, gender or cosmopolitanism. In the same sense, 'working class pride' can be seen as normative or meaningless depending on the youth style or the localised space of personal relations. The tension and mutual influence between localised networks of personal relations, for instance a school or a neighbourhood, and typified youth styles that partially transcend young people's

⁴ Willis' *Learning to Labour* (1981 [1977]) set up a classical example of this, showing how the young counter-school men he studied, even if their culture partially 'penetrated' the ideological fallacy of meritocracy, ended by socially reproducing capitalist social structure and their place within it. On the one hand, they reversed the valuation of mental over manual labour: 'Manual labour is associated with the social superiority of masculinity, and mental labour with the social inferiority of femininity. In particular manual labour is imbued with a masculine tone and nature which renders it positively expressive of more than its intrinsic focus in work' (Willis 1981 [1977]: 148). On the other hand, however, and as Willis points out, this was not a mechanical result of capitalist production, but a concrete articulation of patriarchy and the distinction between mental and manual labour.

personal relations through the media and stylisation, is what the notion of imbrication aims to analytically identify.

Layers of hierarchies

In our experience with others, the way we live through social hierarchies is quite complex, ranging from the more concrete and personal to the more abstract and opaque. One thing is to be teased by a schoolmate at school and a different one being unable to find a job with a decent salary or to be discriminated by the police because of the colour of the skin. Nevertheless, they can all be related to each other, in the sense that one can be teased by a schoolmate because of one's (parents') class or the colour of the skin, and one's class or perceived colour of the skin can be affected by the way one symbolically and socially negotiates them within the struggle for respect in the school. Increasing social differentiation has made this reality more difficult to grasp, and to bring to the surface the complex relationship between different hierarchies in youth social space, I propose to analytically distinguish between three levels or layers of hierarchies which are closely interrelated or imbricated.

First, there is the layer of *(inter)personal hierarchies*. These hierarchies correspond to socially circumscribed or situated personal interactions that are based upon 'direct personal relations' and 'personal knowledge'. In the case of young people, it refers to the hierarchies in the neighbourhood or the school. I am referring to those youngsters who are 'tough' and feared by many, those girls considered 'popular', that group of '*boffins*' who are not respected by the majority, that other group considered 'cool' and inaccessible, and so on.

Young people are continuously negotiating the hierarchies of popularity and social honour in everyday life. These hierarchies are important for young people's self identity, since they organise the distribution of respect, dignity and social value in their everyday personal relations. Not having a sufficient level of social dominance in these hierarchies can be a source of considerable distress, and many decisions in young people's everyday life are directly or indirectly affected by it. As we will show, however, they are not clear-cut, collectively accepted and lineal hierarchies, since the networks of social relations include sub-groups where alternative sources of respect, dignity and social value are produced. These hierarchies are negotiated on the basis of personal knowledge, in the sense that the individuals occupying them have names and surnames and a history of past encounters and negotiations.

Second, I identify the layer of *typical youth hierarchies*. In this case, the important element is not 'personal' but 'typical' knowledge, and it is therefore linked to abstraction and anonymity. I am referring to the typifications that organise youth geographies as a whole, that is, not only young people that *one personally knows or interacts with*, but also the young contemporaries outside these networks of personal interaction. English and Catalan categories such as '*boffins*', 'students', '*townies*', '*quillo*', '*catalufó*', '*kev*', 'posh', '*pijo*', '*makiner*', '*moderno*', '*skater*', and so on, can be applied to the sphere of personal relations, but also work to

understand, make sense of and organise the co-ordinates of youth social geographies as a whole. They describe ‘types’ of young people, and are thus crucial in ‘imagining’ youth social geographies beyond one’s personal relations. They are categories built and signified to a great extent through youth styles, that is, through the symbolic work upon commodities such as clothes, nightlife and, naturally, music. The following example shows how interviewees described anonymous youth geographies in typified terms when describing the changes in a bar they went to:

Marc: Però no sé què ha passat, però s’ha anat tornant i ara està tot ple de *fashions*, bastants gays...

Roger: Sí?

Marc: Que no tinc res en contra! Però, *hòstia!* D’un bar que... de Los Suaves i de Iron Maiden...

Alan: I gitanos.

Marc: N’està tot ple de *pelats*, gitanos...

Alan: I de *fashions*.

Roger: *Fashions?*

Alan: Són aquells que van així... que porten pantalons amples, en *plan* molt... Són els *tios* aquells que porten la samarreta arrapadeta així... (...)

Marc: Sí, els *fashions* aquests escolten també *house* i tot això (...)

Roger: I allà es troben al bar aquell?

Alan: Sí, ara sí.

Marc: Sí. Ha sigut des de fa poc. És que l’any passat anàvem i estava tot ple de *heviorros*...

Although they base their typifications upon their personal interactions in the bar, they do not use personal but typified knowledge. The ‘meaning-making’ is carried out and communicated through youth styles based on commodities. These typifications imply value judgements, and often hierarchical claims, although they can also be seen as horizontal differentiations as in the case of the preceding quote. The point is, however, that these hierarchies do not have a set of collectively shared co-ordinates. On the contrary, they are seen differently from every single location in youth social space: There is no ‘dominant’ hierarchy but contested views on them from each particular location. Although there might be a consensus on what is ‘popular’ at the time, or what is ‘tough’, this can be evaluated differently by different groups of young people. The relevant point is that young people’s identification for one or other position generally implies a value judgement about the other locations – the play of dismissals we have talked about at the beginning of this chapter.

This layer is closely imbricated with the layer of (inter)personal hierarchies because, on the one hand, these typifications affect how personal relations and hierarchies are negotiated (young people use these typifications to judge others and to present themselves in front of the others), and on the other hand, the negotiation of interpersonal hierarchies in personal relations clearly influences these typifications (young people’s involvement in personal relations and hierarchies

provides, influences and often modifies typified knowledge). In spite of this close imbrication between the two layers of meanings and hierarchies, the distinction is important for two reasons: first, because it analytically distinguishes between those hierarchies based on direct personal relations from those based on typified anonymous relations; and second, because it makes clear the relevance of the culture industry in the cultural production and social distribution of knowledge, that is, as provider of anonymous typifications used by young people to make sense of this broader typified youth space. In other words, the industries provide 'knowledge' or 'information' about this outer social space beyond direct social relations. Through the culture industries, young people have access to anonymous typifications about what exists 'out there' in a much broader sense than other sources of indirect anonymous knowledge like anecdotes from a friend about that same 'outer world': the charts, news and reports about spectacular subcultures, the words of musicians in interviews, specialised programs and reports, the way different media typify musical and youth geographies, the organisation of music categories in record shops, and even the anonymous mutual observation in bars and clubs – like the example of the quote above – are all important – but rarely definitive – sources of knowledge and typifications for young people.

It is in this layer of hierarchies that I situate the 'musical geographies' we have analysed in the preceding chapter. Although music is only part of the story, since dress, nightlife, body language, speech and many other aspects play an important role in forming youth typified hierarchies, in the following pages we will basically look at them through the perspective of musical geographies, and I will only occasionally make references to other signifiers of typified youth hierarchies. After all, music is one of the most powerful signifiers, if not *the* most, of youth social space, but the reductionism of this approach is obvious.

And third, there is the broader layer of *general social hierarchies*. These hierarchies not only affect how young people relate to those they know personally and to other young people, but also their positions in broader social hierarchies based on generalised advantage, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, language, national and religious identity, age, generation or territory. The knowledge about these hierarchies is not limited to either young people's personal relations or their typified social space, but belongs to the terrain of broad social relations – this knowledge makes sense to the general population, and is thus not only negotiated in young people's direct relation with other young people, but also in their interaction with adults. These general social hierarchies are, however, imbricated in both typified youth hierarchies *and* direct personal relations, because they take specific formulations when they are incorporated in those spaces – becoming, in those cases, partially 'subcultural'. In the following quote we can clearly see the imbrication of general social hierarchies (white/black) with direct personal knowledge about the school and implicit typifications about youth social space:

Roger: Could you now tell me which different musical tastes are here in the school?

Tania: Everything: rock, rap, pop, everything.

Roger: But are there groups of people with different taste or not?

Mia: I don't know, I'm not being racist, but black people like more the reggae...

Tania: And the rap. (...)

Mia: I know it sounds very bad to separate in colour, but I find that the culture behind it...

Tania: It's like the people have them like...

Mia: A lot of people like Steps, Five, Backstreet Boys, and all that. But black people they have from Jamaica, the reggae, they've been brought up...

For those girls, musical geographies signify also ethnic identifications. These remain two separate aspects, but they are inextricably linked, and both interviewees experience them from the perspective of their network of personal relations in the school, from where they can 'see it' and make their generalisations, develop their typical knowledge. The notion of imbrication allows us to focus on the relationship between these three layers of hierarchies in a manner that not only each of them keeps some relative autonomy that makes it relevant in negotiating the others, but that makes it possible to understand how broader structural meanings are articulated in youth typified geographies *and* embedded in direct personal relations. This enables us to see the extent to which these three layers of hierarchies influence each other in different ways, and how complex negotiations are carried out.

Hierarchies related to ethnicity, gender or generalised advantage, as well as youth stylistic differentiations and hierarchies, exist independently of a particular youngster's face-to-face relations, but could not exist without the aggregation of all youngsters's face-to-face relations. We have the situation, therefore, where broad general hierarchies and typified youth hierarchies are necessarily present and institutionalised in young people's personal relations. This means that we can see how they are enforced through particular social control mechanisms. At the same time, we can see how young people's ongoing cultural production is challenging, modifying and reproducing them in plural and often contradictory ways. It is in this sense that the notion of imbrication of hierarchies can allow us to focus on both the objectified and the dynamic character of musical and social geographies.

I will soon turn to their application to the analysis of the empirical fieldwork. Before doing so, it is important to recall that the distinction between the three layers of imbricated hierarchies is an analytical fiction, which is useful in developing our argument but will certainly pose problems for our explanation. What I mean is that although in order to explain how the imbrication of hierarchies is actualised in young people's everyday life I will artificially distinguish three different parts that in general terms match the three layers of hierarchies, when explaining the first one I will need to 'hide' or 'ignore' the influence of the other two, and when analysing the second one I will need to ignore the third. Only at the end of the chapter will I be able to directly and explicitly refer to the imbrication of the three different layers. Since all the hierarchies are present (imbricated) in everyday personal interaction, and the distinction between them is analytical, not empirical, this reductionism will naturally pose certain discursive problems. Nevertheless,

the exercise is worthwhile, since it will allow us to grasp the specific nature of the process of cultural production in a commodified youth social space, and how it mediates the way general social geographies are perceived in everyday life.

(Inter)Personal hierarchies

We will first analyse the layer of social hierarchies established in direct personal relations – what I have called ‘(inter)personal hierarchies’ – which are organised on the basis of personal knowledge. In spite of the importance of personal knowledge in the organisation of this layer of hierarchies, typical knowledge is not only present but also determinant in it. In fact, the imbrications with the other two layers are largely produced through the use of typified knowledge – although the social organisation of sensuous meaning is also relevant. The idiosyncrasy of this layer of hierarchies is that the centrality of face-to-face personal relations offers the opportunity for unexpected negotiations and modifications of typified meanings. All meanings finally collude, in one sense or another, in personal relations and their meaning-making practices, in what we have called the ‘paramount reality of everyday life’, so it is here where we need to focus our attention. Interpersonal hierarchies among young people are complex because of the multiplicity of spaces and signifying forms and practices. A youngster can be very popular in one context and virtually ignored in a different one, since depending on the particular group of reference, what is valued can differ considerably and the exact meaning of the same symbolic forms and signifying practices can be notably different. Since the organisation of groups in vertical hierarchies is not self-evident, we will focus on the hierarchies of popularity in the school in order to make it easier to understand the process of hierarchisation and continuous comparison between musical forms and signifying practices.

Being popular and being marginalised

Schools are interesting places because they bring into personal contact quite large numbers of young people and require them to negotiate their respective positions, also allowing them to have direct and personal access to a diversity of objectivated signifying practices in continuous competition and mutual comparison. The point is that the social relations compressed in every single school are to a great extent hierarchical, and we will analyse them through the notion of ‘popularity’, which we will understand, following Parkhurst & Hopmeyer (1988), in a two-fold way: popularity as ‘social acceptance’, which refers to *being liked by others*, or popularity as ‘social dominance’, which refers to the *perception of someone as popular even if not liked*. I am particularly interested in this second sense of the term, understood ‘as

social prestige and influence and the ability to command other's attention, compliance, deference, access to privileges, and respectful treatment' (ibid.: 127).⁵

This distinction allows us to highlight two aspects. First, some young people, *even if almost everybody else hates them*, quite often occupy a position of social dominance over others, either because of the use of physical or verbal violence or because of their reputation in terms of physical attractiveness, socially admired abilities, money or any other feature. Many apparently innocent interactions among young people in early adolescence like teasing or joking have the underlying result of establishing the hierarchies of social dominance. Among the socially dominant, only some will also be widely liked by most people⁶, that is, will gain an important degree of social dominance without offending others and becoming disliked. By contrast, those who are widely liked generally have an acceptable level of social dominance, but only in some cases will score high in this respect (ibid.).

Having an acceptable level of social dominance is fundamental to young people in order not only to have social prestige among their peers, but also to be immune from social ridicule. The implicit or explicit hierarchies of popularity tend to imply that those in the 'higher' positions display social closure mechanisms – it is difficult to be friends with them, even if they are friendly – and those in lower ranks either stick to each other because nobody else wants to be friends with them or become 'loners'. In between, there is an imagined 'middle' or 'normal' group of people who, though not stigmatised, cannot or do not socialise with the 'popular' ones either. This view on social hierarchies in the school, often implicit, assumes that social dominance is not only important in order to avoid social ridicule, but also because the more popular you are, the more 'choice' you have, since a higher 'social value' allows you to choose with whom you want to relate – to build friendships, to have fun, to establish erotic and love relationships, or to achieve any other goal. As one boy in Birmingham put it, 'If you are popular, more people will like you. And if you are not popular, you will not really have that many friends'. This higher 'choice' is not only limited to those young people who are

⁵ Parkhurst & Hopmeyer lay the foundation for this definition in the following works: Dong, Q., Weisfeld, G., Boardway, R.H. & Shen, J. (1996) 'Correlates of social status among Chinese adolescents, in *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 27: 476-93; Weisfeld, G.E., Block, S.A. & Ivers, J.W. (1983) 'A factor analytic study of peer-perceived dominance in adolescent boys, in *Adolescence*, 18: 229-43; and Weisfeld, G.E., Block, S.A. & Ivers, J.W. (1984) 'Possible determinants of social dominance among adolescent girls', in *Journal of Genetic Psychology*, 144: 115-29.

This distinction and what young people said in the interviews, matches what we identified in *El gust juvenil en joc* (Martínez & Pérez 1997) when analysing how young people made sense of the idea of '*enrotllat*' (a Catalan epithet meaning a combination of 'popular' and 'cool'). We found three main meanings of the word: two of them, being nice and liked by others and being notably out-going, referred to the notion of popularity as social acceptance, whereas the third, being a *hard-knock*, to its association with social dominance.

⁶ According to the study carried out by Parkhurst & Hopmeyer (1998), only 31% of the students who scored high on social dominance also scored high on social acceptance.

popular in the sense of 'being liked', but to some extent also to those that are not liked but have a notable degree of social dominance. The following quote illustrates the 'attraction' that social dominance creates in some youngsters (alongside with the 'repulsion' it creates in others):

Mathew: But I don't care. It's just people following other people. (...)

Roger: And then you feel that you need to keep clear of the other ones...

Daniel: Mmm... certain groups, certain groups.

Andrew: Certain groups.

Daniel: Because certain groups there's one person in that group that is like the one that causes trouble and the other people who follow... Keep to yourself.

Indeed, those who obtain social dominance through aggression and a tough attitude, even if they are often widely disliked, do attract attention and even consideration from many others, and respect from all, because even if some like Mathew, Daniel and Andrew dislike and dismiss them, they will respect them in order to avoid trouble. In fact, being disliked is often a 'consequence' of having social dominance, since those who have more choice often need to 'reject' friendships and thus 'offend' others, and so they are often perceived as snobbish and thus disliked.

The second aspect that the distinction between popularity as 'social acceptance' and popularity as 'social dominance' allows us to highlight is the contested character of popularity, since the fact that not all popular youngsters are 'liked' by others opens up the field for an on-going negotiation of its definition. Depending on every personal location in school social relations, young people will perceive each other differently. What is liked by some, is disliked by others, and what is perceived as popular by some will not be seen in the same way by others. As one boy in another school in Birmingham put it, 'The people like... they think that they are popular within their group, but everybody else hates them'. The contested character of 'popularity' is also illustrated in the following dialogue between two young people:

Colin: People who are good at football, people who are harder, people who smoke. They are usually more popular.

Neil: No! We are more popular, because [when playing music] we are on the stage! Everybody knows [us].

In fact, many young people claim that they do not want to be popular, and consider their location in the middle or lower ranks of this hierarchy as a better place to be. One interviewee said that those like him in the middle position 'have got more choice, in it? They are not like the lower people who just stick together and the higher ones who also stick together'. Others, after acknowledging the distinction between the more popular ones and the others, are ready to point out that 'it's not seen as important, no one cares really'. The fact is that on the one hand, many interviewees denied the existence of such hierarchies ('We are all

friends'), but on the other hand, in all the schools there were interviewees who talked about hierarchies and, more importantly, about youngsters that were marginalised and bullied. Here is one example:

Maria: Els *pringats* no fan res (...). És que tampoc ens hi relacionem, no ho sabem...

Roger: I això és més o menys marcat o és molt... molt difús?

Maria: No crec, tu, tu, tu ho pots veure perfectament si una persona és un *primo* o no és un *primo*. Només veure com vesteix i les coses que diu, per com camina... Per exemple, de veure com camina una persona ja pots saber si és un *primo* o un *capullo*.

Roger: I els més... Els que van més de *guais* estan mal vistos? O a la gent els *hi cau* bé, els *hi cau* malament...

Susana: Home si tu vas d'aquest *pal* i caus bé...

Maria: Home, és que també depèn molt de com els hi hagis caigut tu *amb* ells. Perquè si els hi has caigut tu bé, doncs llavors et vindran a parlar, i llavors comences a conèixer-los [i et poden *caure* bé]. Però si no, no. Jo no, mai..

Maria's remark about how easy it is to recognise a 'nerd' [*primo*] only by seeing him walk (or dressing or talking) is a good example of the homologies between different signifying practices and interpersonal hierarchies. The position in these hierarchies is inscribed in different signifying practices, not only ways of dressing, but even bodily practices like just talking or walking. Her final remarks about the different opinion you have of those who are more popular depending on how they treat you is also a good example of the complexity of dealing with the notion of popularity. This is why interviews are a very partial instrument to analyse popularity.

Since neither 'reflexivity' nor 'sincerity' can be assumed in an interviewing situation, a more ethnographic, sociometric or relational approach would be needed⁷. The example of a boy who claimed to be – and tried to act as if he was – tough and popular, and a few minutes afterwards was intimidated and subtly humiliated by a classmate, is quite clear in this respect. Another example is that although many interviewees claimed that in their school they were 'all friends', or that '*ningú mana a ningú*', when asked about the *hard-knocks* or those being teased, they immediately said 'oh, yes, you always have them'. The degree of reflexivity of young people in relation to popularity varies considerably, and the truth is that even those who claimed that they were 'all friends' were part of a social network of interaction with different positions, and these different positions implied hierarchical differences – however opaque and contested. Many youngsters, for instance, noted that they had now 'matured' and developed a less competitive relationship with their classmates: 'I think that now it's become more equal, before maybe there was little gaps, like people that thought they were better than other

⁷ For an example of more in-depth empirical research taking into account interpersonal hierarchies in schools see Jenkins (1983), Blackman (1995) and Alegre (2004), as well as approaches from the field of sociology of education and social psychology, like for instance Connell (1989), Parkhurst & Hopmeyer (1998) and Keltner *et al* (1998).

people (...). We grow up. Mature. You know? No one is special, more special than anyone else. You just get to know each other. Like in school, you are here all the time, and get to know... It's like family, really, it's like a big family, in a way'.

Among the empirical and theoretical options to overcome this problem, alongside deep ethnography, sociometric research and perceived popularity approaches, there is network analysis, which offers an opportunity to differently conceptualise hierarchies: instead of focusing on young people's typifications it is possible to look at actual interactions among youngsters and spatially represent those individuals in 'central' positions, and those in peripheral or marginal ones. Understanding hierarchies in terms of actual relations – symmetrical and asymmetrical, of cooperation or aggression, superficial or intimate, etc. – allows us to understand that even if there are groups of young people horizontally related to each other, the aggregation of all of them systematically forms a hierarchy of 'centrality'. Since no specific use of any of these empirical approaches has been made, the analysis that follows will strictly focus on the way young people made sense of these hierarchies, which means that we will not attempt to 'identify' the exact ways in which they were organised in each school. Therefore, I will just identify the main underlying aspects of the way young people made sense of them and their imbrication with musical geographies in general terms.

When popularity refers to a positive evaluation by young people of others who are 'liked' and 'respected', we are talking about both social acceptance and social dominance. The reasons can range from being nice to being funny, pretty, outgoing or dressing well, and those who are popular in this way may experience respect and a disposition on the part of others to interact with them in positive ways but may also be envied, resented or dismissed because of being cliquey, snobby or just because they refused friendship. In this quote from the Catalan School, Jose describes what he perceives as a correlation between being liked and being popular:

Jose: Home, bàsicament varia de la persona, per exemple, el *capullo* aquest, perquè no té un altre nom, que t'he dit abans... [*making fun out of him*]. *Bueno*, doncs aquell li cau malament a tot... A tothom, pràcticament. I en canvi l'altre que t'hem dit que és tan simpàtic doncs li cau bé a tothom. O sigui, té... Es relaciona bastant amb la gent. Hi ha de tot, no?

It is difficult to isolate one or several reasons why a young person is liked or disliked, but the fact is that some find it difficult to reach an acceptable level of social acceptance and respect from their peers. In the following quote, a girl compares her difficulty in talking to her new schoolmates with the naturalness of an equally new classmate in her first year, and relates it to 'confidence':

Kiran(...) I've been in this school since year 10. And when I was in year 10, by the end of the year, nobody knew what my name was... Because I'd never spoke to anybody. But now is... I'm getting older in this school... It's been like two years, do you know what I mean? And now they get to know my name and now people

start talking to me. And some people come in the school and start talking to people like as if they'd known them for such a long time... But I don't get comfortable with people easy. It's quite hard to get comfortable with people...

Roger: And now is getting better?

Kiran: It's getting better, now, yeah. As it's coming to the end of the year, it's getting better than before. But... July, when she came into this school, she didn't look like she was new in this school. She was talking to everybody, and she was talking to everybody like she knows them for such a long time. And it's not only with July, it's lots of people in this school. And I don't get comfortable with people. Basically it's confidence...

'Confidence' and 'social acceptance' are indeed two of the main worries of any adolescent trying to leave a childish identity and build a new one. Physical appearance is naturally one of the main source of complexes, impeding or facilitating both confidence and social acceptance:

Roger: Do you think that here in the school are like hierarchies? Like the more... either by social class or by being more popular or something?

Sarah: I don't know...

Roger: Like going out more or things like that?

Sarah: Yeah, I think the good looking girls and stuff like that, stick together. And the middle stick together and... the other people stick together... (...)

Roger: Is it only with girls or also with boys?

Sarah: Also with boys I think...

Roger: And the good looking girls go with the good looking boys?

Sarah: Yeah, probably yes.

Roger: Or they are separated?

Sarah: They are not separated.

Roger: And would you say that the hierarchy is for this? Being or not good looking?

Sarah: I think so. Because they're more confident, I think. They look more confident... (...)

Roger: OK, but this group of best looking...

Sarah: They're friendly girls... They're quite friendly...

Roger: They are not naughty people...

Sarah: They are not very... they don't go around being nasty to people...

The quote perfectly illustrates how 'social closure' is not always linked to a dismissive attitude towards those who are left out, to the unpopular schoolmates. Nevertheless, physical appearance is not only about being good looking, but also about many other bodily presentations like talking, walking and dressing. Brand names, for instance, were mentioned by many youngsters as important in determining who was popular in the school. Wearing a brand name is – particularly, but not only, to adolescents – an important means to obtain both

confidence and social acceptance⁸. Statements like ‘They compete with trainers and jackets’ were repeatedly made during the interviews in both cities. This does not mean that the importance of brand names for popularity was articulated in each school and in every group of young people in exactly the same way. In the following quote, for instance, we can see how not all interviewees typified brand names as desirable, and also how homologies were established between particular brand names and other signifying practices, like for instance being a *hard-knock*.

Roger: And do you think that your style of dress would be different from that of the rest? Which styles of dressing are in the school?

Michael: The group I hang around with... we don’t go for names, we don’t buy something that’s Calvin Klein... We just buy something which is good. Whereas the other people are really concerned that they get certain brand names...

Roger: (...) And how is the people that wear [Kiker’s shoes or *jumpers*]?

Michael: That’s like the *hard-knockers* again...

Like all the generalisations we are making in this thesis, and as we have already said, this does not imply that all young people saw it in the same way. A good example is that of a boy in Barcelona who just did not want to relate with other people in his school. He could be seen, and was indeed, as a ‘loner’, but he experienced it as a conscious and intentional decision: ‘Sinceramente que no... Hay... hay gente que no me cae muy bien. Y para no meterme con ellos pues les ignoro. (...) Creo que es... También es mi manera de ser, la mía, porque a mí me gusta, eh? Soy muy solitario’. His point of view is interesting because it clearly shows that not being popular is sometimes the result of an intentional decision, not a structural fate. This idea was more present among interviewees in the ‘middle positions’ of the hierarchy of popularity who declared that they strongly disliked the popular people in their school, although it is probably impossible to determine whether these attitudes had caused or were caused by their position in those hierarchies.

This was the case of a crucial feature that was also linked to popularity: ‘transgression’ and its multiple variations and associations to maturity, from being outgoing or sexually active to showing counter-school attitudes, being involved in drug-taking or using rough language. The way young people negotiated their attitude towards all these transgressions of adult expectations – practically or rhetorically – was central for the organisation of youth geographies, and also raised negative evaluations among those who did not engage (or only partially engaged) in them. The more negative evaluation of higher positions in the

⁸ Research by Miles, Cliff & Burr (1998; Miles 2000) identified that brand names were liked by young people because they helped them to be accepted and feel confident. The distinction between ‘social acceptance’ and ‘self-confidence’ is important because it distinguishes between external (acceptance) and internal, or at least internalised (confidence) sources, which tend to, but not necessarily, go hand in hand. A brand name, even when not seen by others, is capable of giving ‘confidence’ to the person wearing it.

hierarchy of popularity as social dominance, occurred when they were obtained through toughness and physical or verbal aggression. This is not surprising, since being on the receiving end could negatively affect the well-being in very serious ways. In the six schools young people acknowledged the presence of a game of provocation, sometimes direct aggression, with visible consequences. It is important to note that 'aggression' is not an irrational act of violence, but a subtle continuum that ranges from innocent jokes and teasing to extreme physical violence. It is not clear when joking stops being funny and even 'intimate' and enters the terrain of aggression causing moral or physical injuries, when it stops being part of healthy social relationships and becomes face-threatening.⁹ While the way of dressing can help social acceptance, it can also make you the object of verbal aggression:

Susan: Yeah, yeah... If you wear something, you get blazed.

July: Yeah.

Roger: You get blazed?

July: Yeah [*she laughs*].

Roger: And is there some people who gets more blazed than other?

July: Oh, yeah.

Susan: Sonia [July is laughing]. They call her classic because... [she can't help laughing because July is laughing increasingly loud, and describes incomprehensibly how Sonia dresses].

As we have underlined in Chapter 2, in spite of the fact that physical violence is nowadays less obviously present than previously because the state has legitimised its monopoly, there are many interstitial spaces where physical and other types of violence are being exercised. Youth social space is a clear example of those interstitial spaces since the fear and actual display of violence strongly structures it.

Roger: (...) Are like *hard-knocks* here in the school? Like trying to pick on others all the time...

Andrew: Bullies?

Roger: Yeah, or whatever... That you need to be careful...

Daniel: Yeah, there's a few in year 11.

Andrew: That chap, well...

Daniel: People who don't... don't believe in anything, like more of the people who... (...)

Roger: And are there just few people who do it? Or is an important thing in the school? Like a group of people...

Daniel: Yeah, there's.

⁹ Teasing has also positive functions, and must thus be seen as Keltner *et al* point out, as paradoxical: 'Teasing criticizes yet compliments, attacks yet makes people closer, humiliates yet expresses affection' (1998: 1231). Among the positive functions, they recall pointing out other's deviations, enhancing bonds through indirect expression of affection, shared laughter and the message implicit in teasing, that is, that individuals are close enough to tease, and the possibility to learn about, negotiate, and assume social identities (1998: 1232).

Mathew: Yeah, there're the ones who like...

Daniel. Yeah, the ones who... it's like a chap and the people that goes after one chap.

Mathew: Sometimes they bully you because someone has said something behind their backs.

Daniel: They leave you alone, they leave you alone if you don't hassle them or anything. But [they go] after certain kids. Sometimes they are a bit edgy.

This quote shows that bullying is not experienced as relevant by many young people, but that its very existence affects social relations, because you know that they will leave you alone *as long as you don't hassle them*, or as one girl put it in another school, 'they only bully you when you are a bit rude to them'. Bullies have an important level of social dominance: they might not be liked, but they are certainly 'respected'. In front of them, it is important to avoid becoming their object of violence, and because of this fear they can get deference from their peers. In the Mixed School, two boys defined their position in the school as the 'quiet people', in the middle between the 'rude boys' and the 'pussycats' or 'lower rankers', which shows the relevance to them of the hierarchy based on toughness and aggression. Even if several interviewees referred to bullying as a minor problem from which it was possible to escape by simply *not hassling them*, the fact is that some young people are bullied without any justification. And as the following words of two girls in Barcelona show, the bullies can be easily followed by the majority:

Roger: També hi ha el *rotllo* agressiu de vegades, o no?

Maria: A primer i segon d'ESO sí que es fotien hòsties, eh? Però ara ja no.

Roger: Sí, però també d'insultar o enfotre's...

Maria: Ah, això és de sempre, sí.

Susana: Però cada vegada menys.

Maria: Sí, cada vegada menys...

Susana: Són més de la gent.

Roger: I com eren els tipus d'insults?

Maria: *Bueno*, abans hi havia un (...) que era molt lleig i molt *amariconat* i la gent es *fotia* amb ell, i li pegava de tot, i l'insultaven a classe: "No sé què!" Jo no ho vaig fer mai.

Roger: Però qui ho feia? Tothom? O els més *guais*?

Maria: Depenent el què, però *solien* ser els més *xulillos*. Però després és en *plan* tothom, i rius, i "a la merda", i tots insultant.

Roger: I amb vosaltres mai ha passat això?

Maria: Pobre d'ells [*and laughs*].

This attitude of overall indifference to the consequences of verbal and physical aggression is not always the norm. Several interviewees looked with empathy to those who were on the receiving end of bullying with statements like 'But sometimes it hurts other people'. But the sympathy expressed through this sort of comments do not reflect accurately enough the experience of those who are being bullied.

Kiran: (...) I've been having problems in the school... People have been teasing me, which they don't even know how to tease you! They just... they go past, they laugh, all this kind of stuff. Which is funny, because they think themselves bad but they don't know how to be bad.

Roger: Is it hard, when you have people...?

Kiran: It's really hard, yeah, because last... Not now, it's better now, but the end of year 10 a lot of people starting picking on me, and it got really hard for me to study, to concentrate on my work, to speak in class, because if... Like, if people make fun at the end... and if you answer a question and it goes wrong, they start laughing at you, then it's embarrassment in front of the whole class. It just gets really hard to study when they pick on you. You are more like "Oh God! The lesson is gonna finish. It's break next. What's gonna happen? It's lunch next, they might start again!" It just makes it really hard to stay in the school. (...) These people who tease, they haven't been teased ever in their life... That's why they don't know how it feels and how hard it is when you get teased all the time in the school, and bullied... It's just like these people's nature, they like doing it, and the best thing is to ignore them, not listen to them.

It is true that many of the interviewees, all of them in Year 11 (Birmingham) and 4th grade of ESO (Barcelona), that is, 16 years old, said that teasing, bullying and hierarchies of popularity were more important a couple of years earlier. 'Maturity', for them, went hand in hand with a relaxation of competition and conflict. At the same time, it was easy for most of them to recall some recent incident related with bullying. They could all identify the *hard-knocks* of their school, and since they personally knew them, they often typified them in terms of some other features – wearing brand names, talking loud, answering back to the teacher or hanging around in the street – that thus became homological with being aggressive. In the following quote, we can appreciate how three young people verbalise their typification of the homology between all these aspects:

Roger: And why do the higher and lower stick together?

Andrew and Mathew: Yeah, yeah.

Daniel: Yeah, popularity, basically.

Roger: Popularity? How does it work?

Daniel: If you are popular, more people will like you. And if you are not popular, you are not really gonna have that much friends.

Roger: And why do you think popular people are popular?

Daniel: I think it's the way they dress...

Andrew: They are loud!

Daniel:...or something like... yeah, some people answer back to a teacher, and then people say "Yeah, he can stand for what he believes", and they think he is popular...

Mathew: A lot of...

Daniel: Yeah, hang around and...

Roger: And people who is in the lower positions... Why are they there?

Daniel: Sometimes... it's like... everybody's got like Nike, and they've got like High-Tech, and people just look down on them, saying, "They can't afford the

trainers, we don't talk to them". And some is just that people don't like them like... too smart...

Roger: Then if you don't have the good trainers or the right clothes, can you still be popular or be in the middle?

Daniel: Basically in the middle, but it's not gonna be popular... You've got to...

Andrew: Start the rude stuff.

Daniel: Yeah.

Roger: Rude stuff?

Daniel: Yeah, like naughty things.

We do not need to literally believe what they say to see that commodities become important 'markers' of ones position in school hierarchies, as are many other practices which, through a process of homology, are related to each other. In the following quote, it is not brand names but music that becomes another signifier of different positions:

Roger: Then the main thing is hip hop and garage... But what types of people you have in relation to music?

Rod: Strong people go for garage.

Roger: Strong?

Rod: Yeah, B-gangs and all that. They've garage in it. Beastie people. And then wimps (...)... They listen to classical music...

Roger: They don't...

Mark: They do. Wimps. [They] like get beaten up a lot.

Roger: OK! And they like classical music.

Rod: Yeah.

Mark: Not classical but romantic. It's almost Brit pop, but more like... There is a band in Birmingham called the Lemonheads¹⁰... (...)

Roger: And these are the wimps? And they like this music a lot? Or they just don't listen to music?

Rod: Yes, they like it a lot. There's more people who listen to garage as well. But maybe these are the loners and that. (...)

Roger: And chart music?

Mark: Yeah, sometimes. I don't really know, because I'm not a loner [Rod laughs], so...

Roger: It is a clear separation between the wimps and the rest?

Mark: Yeah. Very strong. Like...

Rod: Wimps, 'normal' people and 'beat' people.

Roger: 'Beat' people? It means strong?

Rod: Yeah.

In the case of Barcelona, *màkina* music and '*gitaneo*' were repeatedly linked to tough attitudes. We will come back later to how music is related to the hierarchies of popularity based on toughness. For the moment, it is enough to realise the

¹⁰ He might be referring to the US alternative rock band Lemonheads, formed in the late 1980s.

importance of verbal and physical aggression – as well as the existence of homologies with taste in music – and to underline that aggressiveness must not be restricted to some crazy *hard-knocks*, but to a play of social dominance that is present in one way or another across interpersonal hierarchies and the distribution of respect and dignity. The threat of physical and verbal violence is part of everyday life in many ways. Learning to avoid, negotiate or deal with it is an important element in growing up. Moreover, conflicts often involved not individuals but whole groups or networks of personal relations. Several interviewees, for instance, explained that aggression towards certain youngsters was followed by retaliation, with whole gangs, families or groups of friends backing them, in a collective enterprise to repair ‘honour’ and mark out the territory.

Social acceptance is important to understand young people’s personal relations, but with regard to interpersonal hierarchies of popularity, social dominance is a better indicator, since it points to the way young people perceive their peers in terms of status. Any view of hierarchies of popularity *as if* they were unified, single and clear-cut would overlook the multiplicity of young people’s positions and ‘interests’. The way they made sense and organised hierarchies of popularity, respect and recognition were not unitary but contested. In every classroom and every school there was an ongoing negotiation of what should be respected and valued, and of how aggressive or snobby leaders should be considered and treated, and the result of this negotiation could lead to a set of social relations and interactions that were more or less cooperative, more or less fragmented, more or less aggressive. However, the outcome of this negotiation does not seem to have endless possibilities.

Pluralism and normalcy

Popularity is generally organised not in a clear-cut hierarchy but in complex networks of social relations that offer many possible combinations of the different factors analysed in the previous section. Hierarchies of popularity are not only dynamic, but also diffuse and disputed. In general, there is no agreed view as to the definition, desirability or even existence of ‘popular’ positions, so it can be seen very differently depending on the perspective of every individual or group. Despite this ‘plurality’ of perspectives, however, in each school some of them will have more ‘value’ than others in the definition of what we will call the ‘dominant’ view. The number of factors is limited, since the empirical evidence from our interviewees and from previous research on popularity shows that a limited number of traits appear again and again as the most relevant, so definitions and practices around ‘popularity’ tend to be quite similar, as if there was some ‘dominant’ logic of popularity that could probably be even generalised to all contemporary Western societies. Certainly, every particular localised context negotiated the relative importance of different features and in all schools there were interviewees with ‘alternative’ views on popularity, challenging the dominant perspectives. Therefore, although the importance of toughness, physical attraction, brand names, being out-going and other attributes seem to be present

in all schools, in some of them toughness will be prevalent and in others it will be clearly secondary, in some of them brand names will be indispensable and in others they will only be important for one sector of the pupils. Consequently, although I will not attempt to portray the scheme of popularity in each school, in the quotes of this section I will identify the school from which they came.

Among the dominant views on popularity, we find the one that we have just briefly identified in the previous section, which is the valuing of 'transgression' of adult expectations, the already discussed, toughness and physical and verbal aggression, and others like counter-school attitude, sexual activity, going out at night and drug-taking. In Chapter 1 we have emphasised the paradox that in youth social space normative adult expectations are inverted, to the extent that their diligent observance becomes almost a stigma among young people. The norm, however, is not as much 'transgression' but 'provocation', in the sense that not all young people dare to really transgress adult expectations, and merely carry out a 'rhetorical' provocation of them.¹¹ In fact, most young people will observe most adult norms. The adjective 'normal' is often used among young people to refer to those who neither transgress the main adult expectations in terms of general style, academic attitude, fighting or drug-taking, just to name a few possibilities, nor ignore the rules of youth geographies, that is to say, at least rhetorically dismiss adult expectations. So in youth social space 'normality' is not the observance of behaviour expected by adults, but an equilibrium between the observance of behaviour expected by adults and the observance of the dominant norms of youth social space, that is, normative provocation.

As we have shown in the case of popularity, different dispositions in terms of normative provocation were often homologically related, in each particular context of interaction, to different consumption patterns of music and other symbolic forms and signifying practices like clothes, going out or language. Among the interviewees, 'normality' was often linked to chart music, both in Barcelona and, as in the example, Birmingham:

Dave: Mmm... I like Oasis, yeah, but you find the *hardcore* dance people, that listen to dance music, and the *hardcore* rock people, that like just listen to rock music and nothing in the charts, really. And then all the people in between, that listen to everything and enjoy all sorts of music...

It is interesting, therefore, that one of the axes defining youth social space is a normative provocation that only some push to its limits, so the 'normal' position in youth geographies is defined by a balanced equilibrium between the adult expectations and transgression. In any case, the normative importance of provocation is that it stigmatises 'normality' and adult norms, in a rhetorical inversion of a social worldview that characterised youth culture, and that

¹¹ See Pujolar (2004) for a clarifying reflection on the importance of provocation in his socio-linguistic analysis of his own schooling.

generates important symbolic and social boundaries. We will analyse this in two different directions. First, the link between coolness and normative provocation as a hegemonic view of social value; and second, the contested character of interpersonal hierarchies and the existence of 'alternative' normalities. As we have anticipated at the end of Chapter 2, both perspectives try to complicate the simplistic analysis of young people's 'resistance' to dominant culture by identifying the complex interplay of conformities and resistances to a plurality of norms in interpersonal hierarchies.

The importance of coolness as linked to normative provocation is that it erects symbolic and social boundaries that segregate young people. Transgression or at least provocation of adult expectations is indeed one of the most important normative features of youth social space. Different levels or sorts of transgression and provocation are important markers of positions in youth geographies. This girl in Barcelona provides a good illustration:

Roger: ¿Y el Lobo qué tal? ¿Era la primera vez que íbas?

Roxana: Sí, ¡pues muy fuerte! Las chicas quitándose los pantalones. Una como de 17 años, y se suben a las barras... a quitarse los pantalones y enseñar el trasero, y todos los chicos mirando, y los chicos también quitándose la ropa, quedando en ropa interior... Y luego besándose, *tope* guapos y luego besándose... Que asco...

Roger: No te gustó...

Roxana: Pues la música sí, pero la gente ahí no.

Roger: Demasiado raro...

Roxana: Aquí son muy liberales...

Roger: Demasiado...

Roxana: Sí. Yo pensé, esta gente está loca.

Transgressing adult expectations can be seen as one of the ways of climbing youth hierarchies or, simultaneously, an expected behaviour of those being at the top of youth hierarchies. There is usually a link between popular groups and the transgression of some adult norm:

Colin: Yeah, the popular group, yeah.

Tom: This is the music boys, and then you get the *faggot* boys...

George: And the *dopy* ones. (...)

Colin: You get the ones of the *grass* and the small ones. You get the *faggot* ones and you get the *weed* ones.

'Normal' young people are in fact those who do not 'stand out', who do not transgress adult expectations in terms of style, academic disposition, drugs, violence or any other aspect. As the normative provocation becomes widespread, in what has been called 'bohemianisation of mass culture' (Wilson 1999), 'normality' can become highly transgressive by parents' standards, or to put it differently, 'transgression' of adult expectations can become 'normative' and be thus identified with 'normality'. Transgression as a normative expectation is present in all schools, but depending on the school, on the group within the school

and even the individual, it takes different forms and intensities from a soft normative provocation to a more intense transgression. Analysing how each school articulates the hierarchies of social dominance with the intensity and manifestation of different ‘transgressions’ or ‘provocations’ – from dress to drug-taking, from counter-school behaviour to sex – must thus be a central concern. The higher prevalence of counter-school attitudes in predominantly working-class schools is well-known, and even if it must not be seen as an open transgression of adult expectations (working-class parents’ greater readiness to accept non-academic careers than middle-class parents), it does go against parents’ expectations (in general terms they also expect their children to do well at school). A young woman in Barcelona’s Periphery School, who was labelled by other interviewees as ‘*empollona*’ (‘*boffin*’ or ‘study girl’), explained it as follows:

PERIPHERY SCHOOL

Roger: ¿[Los más enrollados] son los que más *pasan* de los estudios, o no?

Sonia: Sí, son los de... Todo les da igual, todo.

Roger: ¿Pero son el 60% dices? O sea, de los 70 que sois, 40...

Sonia: Sí, 40 o más, 40 o más...

Roger: Y esos *pasan* de todo, ¿pero habrá muchos que no *pasan*, no?

Sonia: Ya, pero como se dejan llevar por los otros, pues claro, llega un momento que también llegan a *pasar*. Por ejemplo, si hay uno que... claro, puede ser muy buena persona, pero claro, si se junta con personas así, pues al fin y al cabo... Pues acabará como los otros...

Roger: ¿No tienen intención de ir a la universidad?

Sonia: No, no creo. A éstos les da igual todo, que llueva, que nieve, da igual.

In Chapter 2 we have already mentioned that ‘normalcy’ is one of the more ideological concepts of everyday life and that the social normality we tend to imagine does not exist except in our very localised network of social relations. When transgression or at least provocation of existing adult norms becomes ‘normal’ in our network of personal relations, there is an obvious tension between the expectations of adults and those of youth social space. Young people are obliged to find their way through this complex web of contradictory expectations, finding an equilibrium between rhetorical provocation or real transgression and adult expectations. Like any claim of ‘transgression’ or ‘authenticity’, the pretension of resubstgmg breaking or being free of social norms is in this case accompanied by the invisibility of the implicit norms of youth social space. Those transgressing or provoking adult norms feel that they are breaking free of social constraint, but generally they are not aware of following other socially structured normative expectations, in this case those from youth social space. Since normative provocation is unequally distributed within hierarchies of popularity, it is obvious that this will be an important aspect to take into account. The plurality of views of the hierarchy of popularity will often be related to a different view of the extent to which different normative provocations are displayed. Let us take, for instance, what is said in the following quote:

PERIPHERY SCHOOL

Alberto: También es verdad que coincide que las chicas, por ejemplo, que les guste la *màkina* son... suelen ser menos estudiosas que las otras. Las chicas, que las chicas son muy...

Roger: ¿Las que les gusta la *màkina* son...?

Alberto: Suelen ser menos estudiosas que las demás.

Juan: Menos estudiosas.

Roger: Ya.

Alberto: Por el ambiente, tal vez, pero... Al ser más rebeldes, les hace ser más rebeldes para las chicas. Para los chicos ya está asimilado, no tiene porqué ser... También se asocia, pero...

We find again that music consumption becomes homologically related to positions in youth social space, in this case in terms of transgression. *Màkina* is associated by these interviewees, particularly in what concerns girls, to a stronger counter-school attitude, whereas pop music is related to a better attitude to studying. This does not mean that all girls who like *màkina* will not study and all who like pop will study hard, but it does point out that different identifications with music and youth styles tend to be associated to some extent with a different articulation of everyday dispositions like school work. Personal knowledge in the school has led to this typification homologically relating musical genres and attitude towards studying.¹²

Transgression and provocation must not necessarily be understood in terms of strategic resources used by young people to position themselves in interpersonal hierarchies. It is more useful to understand them as expectations dominant but unequally distributed within youth social space that mark out boundaries between different positions. Transgression often has important sensuous outcomes that can be understood individually, but once made it creates distance from those who do not transgress and proximity to those who do. This implies that a relevant consequence of transgression is social closure. Alongside resistance to dominant or adult culture, therefore, transgression often also implies conformism to dominant values in youth social space.

¹² Only as an illustration, this impression would be confirmed by the survey, in the sense that among boys, a taste for *màkina* music would only timidly relate to the expectation of going to the university (36% of those who liked *màkina* 'very much' did not expect to go to the university, whereas among those who did not like the music, the proportion of those who did not expect to go to the university decreased to 25%), whereas among girls the relationship was more marked (45% of those who liked *màkina* 'very much' did not expect to go to the university, whereas among those who did not like it the percentage decreased to 9%). Other tastes in music were strongly related to having positive (rock, Brit pop, Catalan Rock, classical) or negative (garage, rap, 'lolaila', rumba) expectations towards going to the university, although the intensity and the homogeneity of this influence across schools varied significantly. As Alegre and myself found in another research (Martínez & Alegre 2002), transition expectations showed a higher relationship with youth taste than they did with social background in terms of generalised advantage).

The question is what happens with those who do not conform to youth social space dominant expectations and score low on interpersonal hierarchies of popularity. Do we need to simply see them as downgraded individuals? Or should we rather understand them as building alternative normalities which even if 'subaltern' can provide an enjoyable space of mutual recognition and respect? We will clarify this through the example of academic commitment, one of the more important adult expectations contested by the implicit norms of youth social space, pushing young people to a difficult dilemma whose solution can mark their transition to adult life. The hierarchy of popularity tends to be inversely related to academic commitment, so those that do get good grades need to rhetorically deny commitment to school work in order to have social dominance. Otherwise, they will be labelled as '*boffins*' or '*empollons*'. The two epithets do not perfectly overlap, but point to the same phenomenon, which is the stigmatisation of those young people who are clearly committed to academic success.¹³ In the dominant view of youth hierarchies, young people called '*boffins*' or '*empollons*' were located at the bottom of the social ladder, in a clear example of how youth hierarchies of popularity generally invert adult expectations about young people, since those students seen by teachers as the '*goodies*' tend to be at the bottom of youth hierarchies. There are many exceptions to this rule, since there were many other variables providing social dominance, and commitment to school work could be either dissimulated or complemented with other positive features. In the following quote we can see how two boys identify the dominant view with the stigmatisation of those who study:

MIXED SCHOOL

Roger: But are not in the school people who the rest of the people think they are stupid?

Asif: Study boys.

Roger: And you call them like this?

Asif: No. Just some people. (...) Boring.

Hamsa: They're... mostly... like... people that are considered for their future. To achieve good grades... But...

Roger: And that's a bad thing?

Hamsa: That's a good thing really.

Asif: People mess about and then they think that they should have been working...

Hamsa: They realise afterwards.

Roger: And you study hard?

Asif: Not really. Study hard.

Hamsa: I try to study hard. I do. Have both: study and have fun.

¹³ '*Empollón*' is probably more straightforwardly negative, whereas '*boffin*', as we will see, seems to allow the possibility of being used in positive ways. Other expressions like 'study boys' or 'brainy' were also used by different interviewees.

Young people feel they are between two contradictory normative expectations: on the one hand, their parents and teachers – if not they themselves – expect them to study hard, and on the other, dominant norms in youth social space expect them to have fun instead of studying. Good grades are not necessarily a problem; what is a problem is ‘not having fun’ because of studying hard. Young people typify those who (they think) do not go out because they want to study hard as ‘sad’ and ‘boring’, and put them at the bottom of the hierarchies of popularity. This means that young people that openly study hard – whose ‘attitude is homework based’, as one interviewee put it – and are labelled as ‘*boffins*’, need to build alternative or resistant views on ‘popularity’. In the White School, many of the interviewees were seen as ‘*boffins*’, but they had an alternative view of what popularity should be. One basic aspect of it was denying any interest in dominant popularity:

WHITE SCHOOL

Roger: And is it important to wear brand names to be popular here?

David: Not necessarily, it depends on who you want to be popular with: if you want to be popular with... sort of the *kev* people, yeah, your shoes and the proper... you know? A lot of them look the same... If you want to be friends with them it's important, but otherwise not really, it doesn't really matter what you're wearing...

Roger: And what's the difference between them and you? Are they more popular?

David: They think they are, but I don't think they are.

Roger: And the majority of people think they are?

David: Mmm... It's hard to tell. I don't know, it depends on what sort of people are looking at it.

When David says that ‘it depends on who you want to be popular with’, he is implying that there are alternatives to dominant popularity held by peripheral groups of pupils. He was in fact quite popular among a minority of the pupils of his school. Their collective resistance to dominant meanings in the school enabled them, as happened in other schools, to culturally produce alternative meanings which, far from dismissing good academic performance, positively valued it. A similar perspective was expressed by these interviewees in the Dual School:

DUAL SCHOOL

Neil: And then you get the *boffins*.

George: Yeah, that's right.

Roger: And you are the music block ones?

Neil: Yeah, we are the *boffins* of the music block.

George: We are the talented. Yeah. We are the talented of the school, basically.

Neil: We are the talented.

Colin: Because... everybody else... we don't.

Neil: They are just sad.

Colin: They don't understand, that's why.

It is clear, therefore, that the hierarchy of popularity is not equally perceived by everybody, and rather than a well-ordered gradation of positions, it would probably be better understood as a complex network of groups displaying a plurality of attitudes towards the dominant organisation of popularity in the school. One interviewee described his group of friends as 'a bunch of freaks', and then immediately added: 'but it's more interesting'. This is a good example of the relative malleability of respect and dignity within the dominant hierarchies of popularity. Each group – this must be a collective enterprise – can culturally produce alternative 'normalities' that not only differ from, but even contradict, central aspects of the dominant one. At the same time, however, there are dominant views that are not so much challenged as differently negotiated, like for instance being transgressive or not liking school work, as is shown in this example of three interviewees seen as *boffins* in the White School:

WHITE SCHOOL

Roger: Are [these other youngsters] more anti-school? Like they gather and smoke...

David: Everybody is anti-school...

Dave: Yeah...

David: ... we just get on with it... we know we have to do it, but they always skip it. (...)

Dave: I don't know anyone honestly who said they like school here. (...)

David: Yeah... it's probably fair to say that our group is probably more intelligent, because the people on our group there'll be more at the top... But they don't care about that. (...)

Roger: They call you *boffins*?

Edward: Because we like music, and we like... And we do alright in the school.

David: If you get an A or something, you are a *boffin*, you know?

Dave: It doesn't matter what it is. It's just a form of jealousy, really. (...) If you... In secondary school, you get all the *proles* and people like that, and then you get less and less of them. And if you go to the university, if you go to Birmingham University, all the people who go to rock bars, they won't go to...

This is an example of how alternative normalities culturally produce subaltern or alternative forms of value, respect and recognition, and how Dave at the end of the quote relates this alternative view to a music genre, rock. Again, we find another example of an homological relation between positions in interpersonal hierarchies in the school and musical taste. We will now look at this more systematically.

The imbrication with music

We have seen a few quotes that relate interpersonal hierarchies in the school to musical geographies. In the previous chapter we have analysed musical geographies organising different artists, genres and even 'traditions', as well as the distinction between a commercial centre and 'alternative' peripheries, but it is now

time to find out if these different locations in musical geographies have any relation with different locations in personal hierarchies of popularity among young people.

As we have seen in some of the quotes above, taste in music can signify a particular location in the hierarchies of popularity. Liking certain music can be homologous to certain locations in those hierarchies. We have talked, for instance, about how the most obvious commercial music can be seen, at a certain age, as ‘childish’ and an unpopular taste to have, or that *màkina* music can be seen as linked to not studying, or that rock is the music of the *boffins*. All these meanings are relational, and must be thus understood in situated terms, although there are sometimes important regularities across schools. Those at the bottom of youth hierarchies, for instance, tended to be thought of as either liking ‘commercial’ music or not listening to music at all:

CATALAN SCHOOL

Roger: I quina música els hi agrada [als que dieu que són més *pringats*]? No vull dir que tingui res a veure la música però allò...

Dani: El Manuel, què escolta?

Jose: El Manuel, no ho sé. Hi ha mús... música Manga?

Dani: No ho sé, no sé [*mocking*]. (...)

Jose: El Bolo comercial.

Dani: Al Bernat?

Jose: El Bernat dubto que *sàpigui* el què és la música [*laughing*]. La Laura els Backstreet Boys i les Spice Girls.

Dani: La Inmaculada també.

The most popular music, therefore, was not necessarily perceived as signifying social distinction among young people. In all the schools, the more ‘commercial’ pop was indeed quite popular, but many of the interviewees characterised it as ‘childish’ and valueless. By contrast, those who liked it often perceived it as the popular music to like, even though they could trace radical distinctions between different acts like, in this example, the Spice Girls and Westlife:

MIXED SCHOOL

Kiran: Some people do that, yeah. It's like, if you say to them, “Yeah, I like Spice Girls”, they think, “Oh, Spice Girls are for 6-year-olds”. Just as if I like Spice Girls, which I used to, but not anymore, and you wouldn't tell anybody “I like Spice Girls”. (...)

Roger: And which kind of people would be the ones who say that?

Kiran: Mmm... just people around the school, some girls in the school that think that they are bit grown up now, and they have to like people who are... like grown-ups and everybody likes so... Some people, what they do, they go to... they listen to the music which is popular. Even if they don't like it. They'll just say “Oh I like that”, so that the next person says to them, “Oh, you've got a good choice!”.

Roger: And which music is popular now?

Kiran: Nowadays, I think, Westlife are really popular. Westlife are my favourite, they've got nice songs...

It is important to note that Kiran's perception of musical geographies with Westlife at the top of popularity contradicted what most interviewees in her school declared¹⁴; they regarded it as a childish, sad and phoney act. The Mixed School was not an exception of the dominant view of pop taste, in both Birmingham and Barcelona, as that of the '*tontitas*', the '*pardillas*', the 'loners' and even the '*empollonas*':

MIXED SCHOOL

Roger: And is there people of your age that still listen to chart music?

Tony: Yeah, a few.

James: People who don't go out, certainly [*he laughs*]

Roman: Lonely.

Roger: And they are the ones who are into chart music.

Roman: Yeah, and they all watch 'Friends' [*a popular TV series for young people*].

The quotes are important because they show how interviewees were basing their typifications on the personal knowledge they had about their schoolmates. The connotations of every musical taste were based on what they saw and negotiated in the school. In the following example, another interviewee in Barcelona relates the '*empollones*' of her school with a particular taste in music:

CATALAN SCHOOL

Maria: [*A aquests típics empollons*] jo crec que els *hi* agrada més el *pop*.

Roger: El *pop* com què?

Maria: Com tot el que siguin grups, saps? Que hi hagi una guitarra, una bateria, però no allò que quedí *a saco*...

Roger: Com qui?

Maria: Ai, no sé, com tots els grups que hi ha, no sé, quan vas a... És que jo que sé, jo no sé tots aquests grups. Jo sé Texas i, *tipo* la Madonna, per exemple, *algo* així..

Susana: Sí, les típiques populars que sempre surten, jo que sé, a programes d'aquests que surten molts videoclips doncs típics d'aquests dels videoclips més *pijillos*, doncs aquests, d'aquest tipus.

The homological relation between taste in music and different locations in the hierarchies of popularity was not restricted to those at the bottom of the ladder. The 'tough' pupils were also often related to music that was associated with their attitude. In Birmingham, in the Mixed and Dual schools, it was garage and rap, whereas in the White School it was some sort of techno music. In Barcelona, it was *màkina*, which one interviewee defined as 'el definidor per separar', and often '*jaloteo*'. Another boy related *màkina* and the '*chulillos*' as follows:

¹⁴ Among the 37 who answered the question of the questionnaire, 22 said that they did not like it and 4 more that they were indifferent, while only 4 claimed to like it and 7 said that it was 'all right'.

PERIPHERY SCHOOL

Roger: Y me podrías decir si los que son más así... [más duros] ¿escuchan algo diferente o no tiene nada que ver en absoluto?

José María: Yo sé que siempre escuchan mucha màkina...

Roger: ¿Los así como los más duros, quieres decir?

José María: Si, si, mucha màkina, y como yo digo *gitaneo*...

Roger: Esto los que *se meten* más con los otros, o los que salen más... ¿Quiénes?

José María: Estos son la gente que más mal me cae. No se como pueden ir *asín* por la vida de chulos... Eso que a veces te tropiezas un poco con él, y "¡Qué pasa! ¡Cabrón!". Yo si me tropiezo, digo, "Perdón", y ellos se ponen "¡Eh, qué haces!"...

Roger: Y estos son más los de màkina y *gitaneo* todo el rato...

José María: Hombre, quizás les puede gustar otra cosa pero normalmente siempre escuchan esto, van a las discotecas por ahí y les gusta escuchar esto...

This is exactly the same identification that a young man in the White School made of those schoolmates who liked 'dance' music ('You find that people who listen to dance music, their attitude is very... mmm... I don't know what the word is... mmm... Is not nice... (...) The people you see in the school, you just say one wrong word or something, and they are like, "I'll beat you up" and this sort of thing all the time'). He and his friends, who liked rock music and were seen as '*boffins*', thought that the most popular people in the school used taste in music to marginalise them:

WHITE SCHOOL

Dave: Because our crowd listens to different music, I know that... And they use that...

Edward: ... for segregating us from them.

Roger: Do you find sometimes that you have to defend yourself here?

Dave: Yeah.

Roger: Because they say something or it's physical?

Dave: No, no, no, it's usually they say it and act as if it's really funny, like, "Oh, you like rock music, don't you?", and then start laughing behind, so yeah, this sort, some kind of joke. But it isn't funny.

Music is thus embedded in personal hierarchies in the school. Liking 'different' music can be a good way of feeling different, but it can also be a source of trouble when relating to others. Music can signify 'toughness' or 'niceness', as well as 'high' or 'low' positions in the ladder of popularity, and can also signify 'weirdness' like rock music in one school in Barcelona, where one interviewee, when asked about rock and heavy music, said that it was liked by 'Eli de clase (...)'. Sí, lo escucha mucho... de ésas más raras. (...) Pero es que yo no sé, yo no las entiendo, se escuchan ruido sólo'. He and his friend also saw rap as weird ('¡Es más rara que la hostia!'). As in the case of the boys in Birmingham, this perception of weirdness was also felt in this school in Barcelona. One young man said: 'Si, hasta me dicen que soy raro, porque me gusta Offsrping... Pero mira, si me gusta pues mira...'. If we look at hierarchies of popularity in the school, and how taste in music relates to

them, we will understand how youth social space has its own mechanisms of symbolic violence that young people need to negotiate. In youth geographies, you do not need to feel ashamed of not liking classical music, but depending on the situation, you might feel embarrassed if you like certain types of popular music. The following quote shows how these girls are aware that the music they like (the boy band Steps) is not valued in the school, but they challenge the dominant view by constructing the authenticity of their taste precisely because it goes against the general opinion – paradoxically, since Steps was a very popular and commercial act at the time:

DUAL SCHOOL

Mia: You won't get many people that like [what we like]... who like Steps. It's not something [very popular]... you know?

Tania: Everybody is socialising... And they will change... the music for the group. I don't care. We are our own group, I'm my group. We listen to it, we don't care. We just listen to what we want to listen to.

In conclusion, taste in music is a public statement that has to do with the impression we make on others, and this statement often relates in one sense or another to one's location in youth hierarchies. We can appreciate in the many quotes how in each school music sounds and hierarchies of popularity have their own peculiarities, but also have important regularities. The most obviously 'commercial' and 'chart' music was often identified with not very popular students, particularly as early-adolescence was abandoned. Nevertheless, in some schools or groups, it was identified with the most popular pupils. This and the other homologies between tastes in music and location in interpersonal hierarchies are not necessarily reflexive. A good example of it is the following quote, where Sofia establishes a homology between being a 'boffin' and liking teenybop artists and not *màkina* music, but adding that 'a lo mejor esto no tiene nada que ver':

PERIPHERY SCHOOL

Sofia: Vale, vale... a ver, ¿tú te has fijado en las, en las que estaban aquí, en frente? ¿En las tres, una de ricitos? Una se llama Ivet, Sonia y Roxana, ésas no las veo yo con *màkina* ni flipando, yo *pa* mí...

Roger: ¿Por qué no?

Sofia: Son las típicas *empollonas* de clase, que... que a lo mejor eso no tiene nada que ver que les guste la *màkina*, pero son las típicas *empollonas* de clase que están más por los estudios que por otra cosa, y que eso no *es plan*, no se tiene que *comer la olla* uno por lo estudios tanto. Pero yo no las veo ni ir a una discoteca a escuchar *màkina* ni tener novio, yo qué quieres que te diga...

Roger: ¿Y qué crees que escucharán?

Sofia: Yo creo que escuchan pop, *rollo* Raul, Backstreet Boys...

Rock and guitar music, on the other hand, tended to be associated to the 'boffins' in the three Birmingham schools, and with 'weirdness' in two Barcelona schools, but in the third one punk music was a somewhat important (popular)

alternative taste, which as we will see has to do with how hierarchies are articulated in this school. In all of them, there were sounds with an anti-commercial image (garage, *màkina*, *jaloteo*, techno, rap) which were very popular and clearly identified with popular groups and individuals within the school. In fact, they included a whole gradation of sounds that ranged from commercial visibility to underground obscurity, and thus required subtle and complex distinctions between them. The point is that these musical differences were articulated with interpersonal hierarchies, and there were both regularities across schools as well as local peculiarities. For instance, in the Dual and Mixed schools in Birmingham, and to a lesser degree in the Inner City School and only slightly in the Catalan School in Barcelona, rap music was seen as a popular, tough and cool sound (even if strong differences between commercial and underground or credible versions were established). By contrast, among the (not really representative) interviewees of the third Birmingham school, the White School, and also among the interviewees of the Periphery School in Barcelona, rap was a rather eccentric music that was not particularly valued.

Personal hierarchies in the school are connected to musical geographies not only because different positions in those hierarchies tend to be associated to different sounds, but also because those in the higher positions in the hierarchy have an important role in the configuration of musical geographies in each school. The most popular youngsters have an important role in introducing or choosing the artists, genres and musical cultures that will be liked by many of their schoolmates. These liked or socially dominant individuals have an important capacity of persuasion, and depending on what they like, musical geographies can vary enormously. In the Catalan School, there was a pupil who had persuaded most of his classmates to listen to punk music ('També va ser el mateix noi, que li va dir [a l'Dani], que "Ei, escolta, que això del *punk* està bé", m'ho va dir a mi i em va mig convèncer per comprar un disc...'). One interviewee also explained that in his primary school not liking Catalan rock was almost a crime: 'Hi havia un noi que era molt, molt català, i tot *lo* que fos català ho posava molt... Saps? I portava molt la veu cantant de la classe... (...) I no sé, a ell li agradava això i li *ficava* al cap de la gent que allò era molt bo, i ho anava escampant...'.

Nevertheless, musical geographies cannot be merely related to personal hierarchies in the school. There were regularities across schools because young people, to some extent, share meanings that transcend local networks of personal relations. It is what we have called 'typified youth styles'. Young people 'imagine' musical geographies as a reality that transcends their particular school, neighbourhood or acquaintances, and even if they access them largely through their networks of personal relations, they also see, through the media, going out or in the street, that they exist 'out there'. Musical geographies are something that exists throughout the world, on local pirate radio stations as well as on satellite MTV. It is true that typified styles have an impact and are experienced through hierarchies of popularity in the school, the street and other networks of personal relations, but they are imagined as transcending these.

Typified youth styles

When young people connect being ‘tough’ to liking *màkina* or garage in their school, they are typifying their personal knowledge about the youngsters that they know. These typifications, however, are not only based on personal knowledge, but also on those typified meanings carried by youth styles themselves. In the school, as well as in the streets and in bars and clubs, typified youth styles are ‘actualised’, experienced by real young people, and it is in those spaces that they are also negotiated and perhaps modified, but they are experienced as transcending each localised context of interaction. This means that when the ‘tough’ classmates start liking *màkina* or garage, they do so because the styles associated with these sounds already have, from their social perspective, ‘tough’ or at least ‘cool’ connotations. The tension between the ‘objectivity’ of those typifications transcending the situated context of interaction (existing out there) and the ‘malleability’ they have in interpersonal contexts is what I try to underline through the notion of ‘imbrication’. Every direct personal relation offers the possibility of new articulations which, when aggregated to many other localised spaces of interaction, can have an impact on broader social typifications. Young people use existing typifications to make sense of each other and to identify with musical forms, but they also make new typifications, based on their personal experience, that can be incorporated into the existing ones. These two girls, for instance, show how their personal experience modified their image of the ‘toughness’ and ‘naughtiness’ of those who like *màkina*:

CATALAN SCHOOL

Susana: La personalitat va amb la música...

Roger: I la màkina, amb quina és?

Susana: És que... És que no pots definir així en general a les persones depenent el grup de música que escolten..

Maria: Ja, però a *lo millor* si és un grupet... així de... Que ja dius: “Aquests típics *xungus*, que van de ‘no me toques’”...

Susana: Que te’ls trobes pel carrer a mitja nit i dius: “Anem per un altre carrer”.

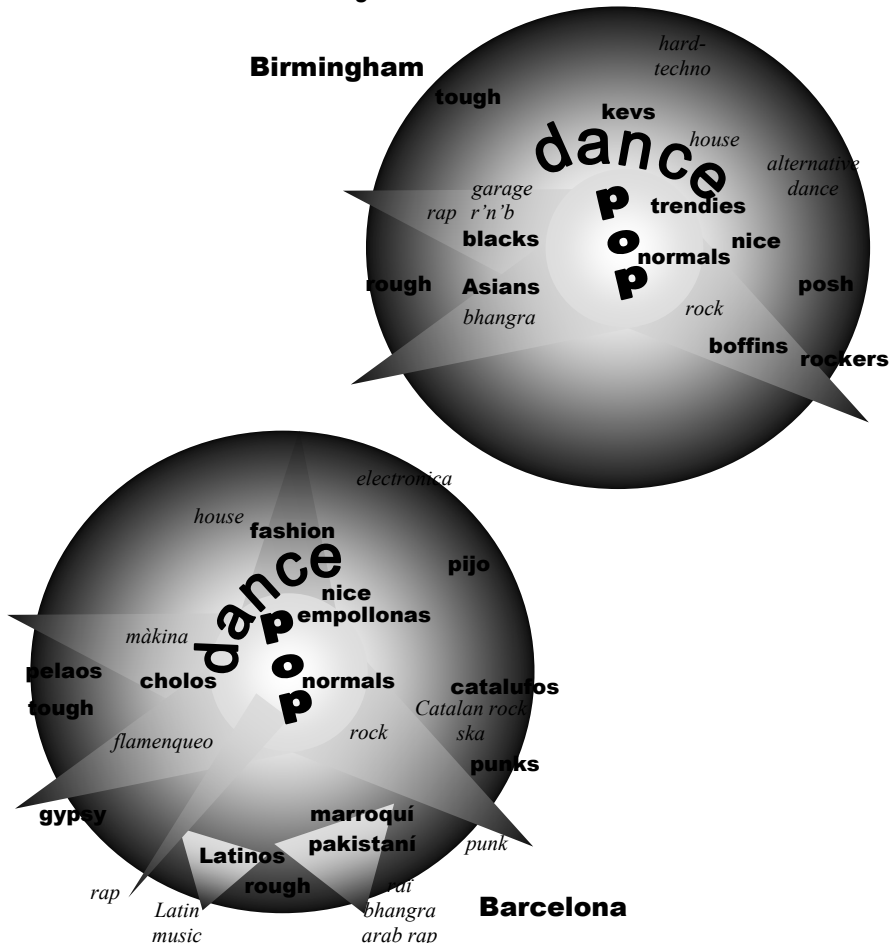
Maria: Llavors sí. Però que en realitat són molt... Si, a espai obert, de cara a la gent [sí que són durs], però que en realitat no són així.

Susana: És la *fachada* només.

As soon as young people enter youth social space, they start to build and continuously adjust their knowledge about youth styles, of which the musical geographies analysed in Chapter 6 are naturally a central element. As we have seen, they were not merely local, but to a great extent shared across schools. Taking into consideration the importance they had in young people’s everyday life, it is not strange to see that they were a central part of the stock of typified knowledge organising social distances and proximities. Nevertheless, youth styles included elements other than music, from dress codes to hairstyle, to ways of going out to attitudes towards toughness, to body language, to styles of talk (and as we will see

when we turn to the next layer of hierarchies, also political stances, linguistic identifications, class connotations or gender associations). When I asked a girl in Barcelona's Catalan School how she would describe those considered more popular, she said 'Els *peladets* i els *house*'. Whereas '*els house*' directly relates the group or the style to a music genre, but implying a broader stylistic combination, '*els peladets*' is a word that directly transcends music and points to a wider youth style that was centrally associated with *màkina* music, but often also included '*flamenqueo*' or even the combination of commercial music with the 'skinhead-inspired' style of dress.

Figure 7.1 Graphic representations of main youth stylistic topographies in Birmingham and Barcelona



Since the social distances and proximities between youth styles are closely related to musical geographies, and because they include social connotations that

have to do with their imbrication with the social hierarchies we will analyse later, in this section we will not analyse in detail the map of positions or oppositions but focus instead on their main structuring factors. To make it easier for the reader to follow and contextualise the different quotes, in Figure 7.1 I have redrawn the graphic representations of musical geographies made in Chapter 6 to include the main youth stylistic features and typifications, and, by taking up an issue from my analysis of musical geographies and the political economy of music, in the analysis I will focus on the distinction between a commercial centre and peripheral alternatives. We will now do this by looking at the way young people made sense of the commercial centre and the periphery, both popular and minority. First, we will analyse the importance, in youth social space, of the social institutions of fashion, celebrities and glamour, all of them structuring hierarchies directly linked to the realm of mainstream commodities and media. These institutions organise the 'centre' of youth geographies, which is very controversial and contested. Second, we will look at the role of 'underground' dispositions as opposed to the normative expectations of mainstream fashion, which will force us to underline that an anti-commercial attitude is not necessarily opposed to popularity. In the final part of the section I will also focus on how young people typified youth styles and used them as symbolic markers of the main co-ordinates of youth social space. The transversal idea of the whole section is that typified youth styles are useful resources for young people to make sense of hierarchies in their schools *and* to typically connect their personal experience to that of their contemporaries, that is, to the broader youth social space. They are what we will call the 'symbolic markers' of these geographies.

Fashion, celebrity, glamour and coolness

Particular youth styles tend to be defined against 'normalcy', and most of all against what is perceived as the world of undifferentiated and homogenised commercial fashion. As in the case of musical geographies, the centre of youth geographies is occupied by the most commercial manifestations, which become the visible point of reference around which specific styles are organised. In this sense, it becomes a 'symbolic marker' of dominant expectations, although because it is the 'centre' it does not have a clear-cut and defined profile. The social institution of fashion is central in modern times, since it offers individuals the possibility of simultaneously being different from, and belonging to, the collective. In other words, it solves the complex tensions of modern individuals which – as Simmel underlined at the beginning of the 20th Century¹⁵ – want to feel different and part of their communities at the same time. Even those who 'resist' its centrality, use it as the reference point against which to define themselves. Needless to say, fashion is not only crucial to the profit of a large industry, but also moves millions of people that make sense of, and use it, in their everyday life. Several of the interviewees

¹⁵ See Gronow (1997) for an analysis of Simmel's conceptualisation of this duality.

expressed the importance of fashion in their lives, whether by simply mentioning brand names and designer labels, or through their more intense involvement in shopping and reading fashion magazines. A female interviewee in Birmingham, after half an hour talking about music, suddenly objected to my questions saying: 'I'm not that much into music. What I am into is fashion'. One boy said that his cousin's sister always called him a freak because he didn't follow fashion, whereas she 'has to be trendy and buy five coats just because the fashion is changing and stupid things like that'. For many, fashion was indeed an important axis of hierarchisation – as well as an expressive arena – in everyday life, as can be observed again in the following quote:

MIXED SCHOOL

Pam: It's like shops as well, you've got... it's like... the bargain shops, and then you've got Marks and Spencer's, and you've got more [exclusive shops]... You wouldn't dare to walk in there, unless you are looking decent, right? Or half decent...

Noorjha: I do!

Pam: Because they stare, they stare...

Noorjha: That's not right.

Pam: Oh, no, no, probably you do look half decent, that's why. So that's... You've got the people who's got the money, basically, or you just... you know?

Noorjha: I think there's a variety... There's the shops that are really cheap, not so fancy... and then it grows up. It's not like this cheap and then expensive, it's like growing up. High street, like top shops (...). But I don't go to the really posh sections like Calvin Klein. Well, I do actually... I don't go to the really really posh ones (...).

Pam: Sometimes you can't help it, because you know what you're gonna see, it's gonna look good, but you know it's what everybody sort of wants.

There is an evident link between fashion and a hierarchy of shops and brand names in terms of (largely monetary) exclusivity, although fashion cannot be reduced, particularly nowadays, to the price of different clothes. Fashion also has a democratic side, the one that has to do with personal style based on individual combination of different items, and with a plurality of trends that do not come necessarily from 'above', but also from 'below'. Contrary to what happened just a few decades ago, fashion is not a mere socially downward extension of new exclusive fads, but a complex collusion of trends from different sources, among them the streets of working-class neighbourhoods. The spectacular subcultures that were interpreted as 'resisting' the dominant culture in the 1970s have become priceless sources of trends and fashions.

It is not the same to be 'fashionable' because you are into the latest street trend, as was the case of garage or *mākina* styles, or because you follow the latest teeny-bopper fad. We will start looking at 'fashion' as the commercial centre, using the notion to stress its importance in defining the commercial centre as the marker of the present time and the socially dominant norm. What is 'fashionable' is important to be 'different', to feel important and special, and also to 'be part' of the crowd.

In another chapter we have quoted a young girl saying that she had her hair like posh Spice because it was currently fashionable, but at the time of the interview there was only one classmate who liked the Spice Girls, and was being blazed because of it. There was a strong link between fashion (not only in terms of clothes) and popular music, particularly chart music. The music that is 'current' and 'visible' (in the media) became the symbolic marker of the times, of 'what was going on' and 'was fashionable', so it contributed to mark out the standards on which fashion was based. Several interviewees justified their taste in terms of 'fashion' ('los que están ahora más de moda'). Both chart music and fashion refer to the most visible definition of the (normative) commercial centre of youth geographies, and can play an important role in the distribution of respect and dignity, articulating it to the passing of time and the way young people made sense of 'modern' and 'old', particularly among female and younger interviewees:

PERIPHERY SCHOOL

Roger: ¿Eso de Spice Girls es para gente más joven también o no?

Sonia: Yo creo que las Spice Girls les gusta más ahora a las niñas pequeñillas. No sé, por la... Por la manera de vestir que tienen, no sé. Se quieren parecer a ellas... Yo que sé. Pero claro, también pasa eso con Britney Spears o Cristina Aguilera: la gente se quiere parecer a ella... Sí, es un poco tonto pero...

It is no coincidence that most of the quotes I am using are from female interviewees, since they were much more concerned with fashion understood as this normative, central expectation. In the case of male interviewees, the competition related to fashionable trends tended to be around music and, in terms of clothing, brand names (in their explanations they did not display the same complexity as female interviewees), but with a rhetorical distancing from the more commercial centre, which was seen as 'effeminate'.

The purest examples of this field of meaning were found in interviews with several females, who not only followed and liked fashion, but also referred to the importance of daydreaming about fashion, glamour and a celebrity status in their everyday life – in this respect, their ongoing day-dreaming with the exclusive world of fantasy of their adored celebrities was an important focus activity. Being 'famous' was an ideal expressed as important by a few interviewees. The most famous artists are indeed important symbolic markers of consumer culture. Fame and glamour are linked to the world of fashion in a way that occupies, as already noted in the 19th century by Flaubert in his novel *Madame Bovary*, much of the day-dreaming and fantasising of many youngsters, particularly girls. Teeny-bop magazines direct much of their attention to how music stars deal with fame and the exclusive Olympus of celebrities¹⁶. Even when pop fans criticise their idols, it is obvious that they are discussing, thinking and fantasising about their status:

¹⁶ Analysing the result of the survey by school and sex of the interviewees, we find that the proportion of female interviewees who never read teenybopper magazines ranged from 24 to 56 per cent. In the case of male interviewees, the numbers ranged from 67 to 91 per cent.

INNER CITY SCHOOL

Sara: Sí, igual que la Cristina Aguilera aquesta no m'agraden...

Ana: A mi m'agrada.

Sara: No m'agrada res com a noia, aquesta, no. Perquè no és una noia, aquesta: són pals. Prima, prima, prima, prima... I la Britney Spears igual. No canvien mai, són famoses i ja... La Britney Spears aquesta va amb una entrenadora personal...

Ana: I totes s'operen!

Sara: I va amb una *guardaespaldas*. Que vagi amb *guardaspaldas vale*, però que si és una noia no *té perquè* anar així tampoc. Si li agrada alguna cosa, que se la compri, però no *té perquè* demanar-li compri'm... (...)

Ana: Els Backstreet Boys a mi em cauen molt bé, és més, el primer que em va agradar és un d'ells, sí, *parece ridículo, pero es verdad*... Si, si.

Sara: Sí, igual que quan són famosos canvien molt perquè ells diuen que sense un plat... Sense tot de plata no menja...

Roger: Ho diuen això, ah, sí?

Ana: I això tampoc és (...).

Sara: Leonardo di Caprio [té] més de cinc cents calçotets.

The importance of fashion – understood in this sense – in typifying youth geographies can be illustrated by a few examples. In Barcelona, one young woman, when asked to differentiate ‘types’ of young people depending on the music they liked or the way they dressed, answered as follows: ‘¿Qué grupos haríamos? La moda, los antiguos y los [laughing] anticuados’. When asked to explain what ‘*anticuada*’ meant, she said: ‘Siempre hablan de música, pero siempre hablan de música que hace tiempo que ha salido’. This does not necessarily mean old 1950s, 1960s or 1970s music, but simply records that were two years old (‘Es que se ponen ha hablar de... del disco que ha salido de Alejandro Sanz, del último, o sea, del pasado, antes del que salga el nuevo...’). In Birmingham, one boy explained it as follows: ‘(...) The trendies or the pop people... They are more like, you know?: “If you are not one of us, then you are a freak”.’

Some interviewees even made a lab-like experiment to demonstrate the existence of this commercial attitude that uses chart success as a guide to what should be liked: ‘We actually tested that as well. Because we like Terror Vision and no one else likes them so... we went to Our Price Records near here, and we picked one of the old Terror Vision albums and put it in the number one stand, and some bought it’.¹⁷ The pressure to adjust to ‘what is fashionable’ has to do with the urge to be accepted. It is a way to *be part* of the collective. Most young people have a ‘commercial attitude’, that is, an inclination to like what is fashionable at the time, although this commercial centre must not be seen as an undifferentiated reality but a diverse, open ended, and contested one:

¹⁷ Dave Leggett (2000) carried out a survey among 79 13-14 years old in England and found that those who declared to try hard to find records that were not in the charts where 16%, and 61% of the respondentats agreed or strongly agreed in that most of the records they bought came from the charts.

DUAL SCHOOL

Roger: But then it changes very fast!

Mia: Yes. People are into it because they want to be in the in-crowd. If something is there for too long, it's kind of "Agh!". But, you know? Or if it comes back like retro sixties and everything... you know? Look, look at those flows [*she shows her trousers*]. I mean, I've got flows, I've got platform shoes, up to there, I've got the... I've got the leather jacket with the tassels for the bike stuff we do... I don't see why old style should go out of fashion!

When one of the boys quoted above was asked to differentiate among the trendies, who he had identified as the majority of the school, he said: 'There's the people who like boy bands, girl bands, then there's the people who like dance music, and then there's the people who like rap music, but they all seem to... be together, if you know what I mean'. It is clear, therefore, that at any given moment, there are different ways of 'being fashionable' or 'trendy'.

What we call 'fashion' directs our attention to the world of exclusivity and glamour that has at its peak the world of celebrities pointing the way forward (replacing the role played in the past by royalty and high society). The combination of fashion, glamour and celebrities is the epicentre of what we have referred to above, and this is an important normative source in contemporary consumer culture. It also naturally generates more popular, individual and horizontal symbolic work with it, but ultimately points to the example of celebrities as the visible markers of the norm. In a way, every school can reproduce on a small scale the same celebrity structure, with the more 'famous' pupils at the peak. In this sense, fashion was often seen as one of the markers of popular positions, and an important requirement to be accepted (and not blazed). These typified meanings connected interpersonal hierarchies in the school to abstract youth geographies, since 'fashion' was something that transcended local interpersonal hierarchies and connected them to the world out there.

What happens, both in school personal hierarchies and in society at large, is that the world of celebrities not only involves more or less conventional fashion, but also extravagant innovations as well as different abilities like playing football, being a media star or playing in a band, both in society at large and within the school. In any case, those entering the world of fame because of their abilities, if they are to be considered part of the Olympus of celebrities, will generally play the game of fashion and glamour, but sometimes they could become trendsetters of previously eccentric styles – this is the case of many popular music stars. The difficulty is thus that fashion and glamour associated with celebrities does not always, or not only, refer to mainstream fashion, but to alternative trends and also, importantly, to transgression. Indeed, transgression can also be very 'glamorous' and a way to achieve a celebrity status (from being counter-school or taking drugs to becoming a popular music star or a serial-killer). This way of becoming popular is different to what we have up to now considered as 'fashion', since it departs from its central commercial meanings.

We could also consider as ‘fashion’ its less conventional and more underground manifestations, since ‘fashion’ is an imprecise term that can refer to mainstream fashion or to underground cutting-edge styles. Rock was just not ‘fashionable’ in the six schools, because it was not perceived as signifying modern times, but rather as an opposition to the idea of changing trends, while boy and girl bands were seen by many youngsters, particularly when leaving early adolescence, as a ‘fake’ and ‘childish’ fashion. The really fashionable music was the ‘really modern’, ‘ahead of the times’, perhaps in terms of ‘arty creativity’, or perhaps in terms of ‘underground’ and ‘obscure’ sounds. The meaning of ‘fashionable’ thus became, like that of ‘authentic’, or ‘good’, contested and disputed, always relative to the every individual’s perspective. Those who achieve celebrity (popularity) could dismiss mainstream fashion and try to impose their transgression as fashionable and, more importantly, as ‘cool’ – that is, combining its normative value and its exclusive and anti-gregarious image. In Barcelona, in fact, there is one usage of the term ‘fashion’ as a youth style which is illustrative in this sense: several interviewees used ‘fashion’ as an English noun to refer to a youth style, or a type of young people, characterised by extreme dressing and a taste for house and electronic music: ‘I una altra cosa són els *fashion* allò extrems, que aquells els veus pel carrer i te’ls quedes mirant per com van vestits. Igual que a la classe, a la classe també hi ha els típics que van allò vestits d’una manera extravagant’. In this case, ‘fashion’ is associated with extreme newness and extravagance, linked to ‘glamour’ in its more spectacular sense.

In fact, part of the glamour attributed to celebrities consists in not being subject to the moral norms of ‘common’ people in terms of sex, drugs and social conventions¹⁸. Celebrities, those living on the Olympus of glamour, are at the same time the desired goal of those who adore them and the moral transgressors of everyday norms in terms of drug-taking, sex behaviour and good manners. Both in society at large and in every school, the tension or duality of celebrities’ combination of glamour and transgression is an endless source of commentary and symbolic work. The focus on fashion was more feminine, whereas the importance of transgression was more masculine, which is a rather imprecise way of saying that whereas women experienced with more intensity the expectation of being ‘fashionable’, men had a greater pressure to at least rhetorically transgress or *provoke* adult expectations. In general, once early adolescence was abandoned, the projection of glamour within the school of all popular interviewees, but particularly boys, tended to stress the normative provocation of youth social space, which was central to what we call ‘underground’ and ‘anti-commercial’ attitudes and trends and the articulation of ‘coolness’. Many interviewees explicitly claimed to be against fashion, understood as its commercial manifestation, using spectacular or alternative styles to resist the pressure to conform to its standards (‘I like bargains’, ‘Expensive clothes are silly’, ‘More than

¹⁸ For a reflection on contemporary celebrity culture see Rojek (2001). Many insights about celebrity like this one are taken from it.

6 quid on a t-shirt is not worth it', etc.), but the pressure to follow, at least to some extent, 'fashion' in its more open, plural and diverse sense, that is, including its anti-commercial possibilities, was strongly present in all schools.

Anti-commercial attitude and pluralism of trends

The world of fashion, glamour and celebrity is ambiguous, because it is the 'normative' referent in contemporary consumer culture, a sort of an 'invisible religion' that organises meaning, and at the same time a space of transgression of moral conventions. The life of celebrities becomes, like soap operas, a reason for public discussion and the negotiation of moral limits and dilemmas. In contemporary society 'official' morality is still clearly conventional, whereas the 'implicit' one transgresses it. Most people publicly criticise plastic surgery, but more and more people privately use it to gain confidence and acceptance. Talking about celebrities' eccentricities is a sort of public negotiation of (complex) moral limits. Among young people, this complexity is still greater, since norms in youth social space are often 'inverted': what is valued by adults (school grades, transition to adulthood) is rhetorically and often practically despised, and what is despised by adults (sex, drugs and rock'n'roll) is greatly valued in youth hierarchies.

The articulation of these paradoxes and complexities has a lot to do with what we have referred to as the distinction between commercial and anti-commercial attitudes, as well as between popular and unpopular trends. Not only different youth styles, but also different manifestations within one style, are ordered according to their perceived commerciality and their perceived popularity both in the school and the whole locality. As we have seen, 'commerciality' is often related to 'normality' as absence of transgression or provocation. 'Undergroundness', on the other hand, is equated with resistance, transgression or provocation of this normality. In some schools, there are quite often music sounds which are perceived as non-commercial but are very 'popular', and thus 'fashionable' within the school. One of the important appeals of *mákina* and garage music, for instance, was that they were perceived as tough, non-commercial styles and, at the same time, popular and locally fashionable. They could be thus considered a collective claim of anti-commercial and anti-conventional attitude, and even of collective claim of resistance to mainstream culture. Garage music, as we have seen, was at the time of the fieldwork very popular in Birmingham, but still kept some of its former anti-commercial connotations. In the following quote, two young men proudly claim their active role in making it popular:

DUAL SCHOOL

Roger: At the beginning [garage music] was a small thing... Do you remember it?

Ben: We brought it at large...

Roger: At large?

Ben: Yes, we did it for our GCSE....

Roger: And people did not listen to it before?

Ben: They did listen to it, but not as much... So we...

Roger: So you're kind of popular in the school...

Ben: Yeah.

Sam: Yeah.

In Birmingham, the constant arrival of trends was frenetic, which meant that there was a feeling that anti-commercial youth styles started as 'underground' trends and then got 'massive' and, finally, either disappeared or went back to the underground. It is clear, therefore, that the realm of mainstream fashion was only part of the story, since these styles combined and often fuelled mainstream fashion, because they were perceived as being 'ahead' of it, as 'cooler' and thus having a plus of 'virility' and 'authenticity', particularly among male interviewees. This does not mean that they did not follow fashion, but that they considered mainstream fashion as unfashionable, as childish and effeminate, and they had their own standards although these could not be clearly distinguished from general trends. In Barcelona, cycles of new music and styles seemed to evolve more slowly and last longer in Barcelona, what meant that whereas in Birmingham young people remembered earlier trends before garage became big, in Barcelona *màkina* had been around for almost a decade – long enough to be the only trend experienced by people who liked it. Both garage and *màkina* were 'fashionable' sounds in a very ambiguous sense. On the one hand, they had a street anti-commercial authenticity, and on the other they were very popular in particular neighbourhoods and present in the mainstream media. Because of this, many interviewees differentiated between the mainstream ('soft') and the underground ('hard') versions of these styles. In general terms, nevertheless, both garage and *màkina* were perceived as non-commercial, as radical, as an alternative sound of the streets, too 'different' to be liked by 'normal' people. They were in some sense very 'fashionable' in those schools, but in a different sense from what we have analysed in the previous section. Their popularity was not part of a global 'system of fashion' that was perfectly visible in the mainstream media, but rather a sort of underground set of meanings that were to some extent subterranean, and so regarded as more 'authentic' and 'credible' by those who identified with them – even if its softer versions were present in the mainstream media and the charts.

'Popularity' and 'commerciality' are obviously related terms, but they are not necessarily equivalent in a particular context like the schools where the fieldwork was carried out. This means that commercial fashion was not the only normative expectation, since it found the competition, often symbiotic¹⁹, of 'anti-commercial' or alternative trends that were also 'fashionable' within the school. The way young people typified each musical genre in terms of its popularity and commerciality was important, and generally linked to interpersonal hierarchies in

¹⁹ See Heat & Potter (2005 [2004]) for an acid but in many aspects insightful analysis of the link between counterculture and consumer culture.

the school. Musical genres had different connotations depending on whether they were (perceived as) popular or commercial, as well as on the degree of social dominance of those who identified with them. Apart from garage or *màkina* styles, for instance, each stylistic differentiation could also be located in terms of its popularity and its commerciality both in the school and the locality. When they were neither popular nor commercial, the respect they raised depended on the social dominance of those who identified with them. Young people with very minority tastes in the school tended to be seen as ‘weird’ by their schoolmates:

CATALAN SCHOOL

Roger: No hi ha també grups així de fashion [*referring to the cutting edge youth style in Barcelona*]? Que és més...

Jose: Bueno, hi ha un, un que és *fashion* [*both of them laugh*].

Jose: I ja està.

Roger: En tot l’Institut.

Dani: Que nosaltres coneguem sí [*they keep laughing*].

Roger: És de la vostra classe?

Els dos: Sí (...).

Roger: Què escolta ell? Ho sabeu?

Dani: No sé, música...

Jose: Una música molt rara, música... No sé, perquè a música, a la classe de música de vegades diu “Ai! He portat un CD” i el posa allà i se’t posa la màkina o el que li *fóti* allà al mig de la classe i va treure una música raríssima.

As happened with the typification of ‘fashion’ in its more commercial and mainstream sense, the structuration of tastes in terms of their popularity or their underground credibility was part of a hierarchy that not only referred to interpersonal hierarchies of social dominance or popularity, but also to broader social distances and proximities within an imagined broader youth social space. *Knowing* the popular, commercial, cutting-edge or authentic character of a particular taste in music was not only about cultural struggles in the school, but also about the ‘reality out there’, about how these meanings were perceived in youth geographies. The role of the media was crucial here, and the information provided by parallel networks of social relations that allowed young people to contrast their typifications was also important. The street was naturally essential, but also family and what we have called alternative networks, as well as visual contact in nightlife practices and concerts. All of these enabled young people to have access to a broader section of youth social space, and thus to negotiate the meanings circulating in the school.

Typified styles as symbolic markers

In the previous pages we have portrayed the importance of mainstream fashion as a symbolic marker of the centre of youth social space, and the plurality of trends shaping a plurality of (at least partially) alternative styles with a more or less pronounced anti-commercial attitude – even when they also had ‘soft’ versions

entering the commercial centre. We have also mentioned that these alternative styles could be very popular in localised contexts, to the point of being 'alternative fashions' or parts of a the plural formation of fashion. Moreover, the boundary between them must not be seen as clear, but diffuse and fluid. Rap and garage music in Birmingham and *màkina* music in Barcelona were good examples of this. All these sounds were present in the charts, but there were also very underground and obscure versions that offered young people materials to distinguish those who identified with the more obscure from those who identified with the more commercial sounds. Youth stylistic geographies, therefore, had those who followed mainstream fashion as the more or less undifferentiated centre, characterised not by particular stylistic adhesions but by conforming and identifying with *whatever was fashionable*. And the other youth styles, even if they were often considered 'fashionable' in a more cutting-edge sense, were seen as having a higher degree of what Hodkinson (2004) calls 'substance'. This does not necessarily mean that they were clearly differentiated 'subcultures', but that their opposition to the commercial and fashionable centre implied that they articulated in one sense or another an *opposition* to what was perceived as the mainstream.

The most visible youth styles are the counterpoint to the commercial centre in drawing the co-ordinates of youth social space. Both the commercial centre and the more or less anti-commercial youth styles were the most obvious symbolic markers of the principal positions and oppositions. I am not talking about well-defined or in any way 'essentialised' youth styles, but about cultural constructions resulting from young people's typifications. Young people tend to map out youth social space from the reference point of spectacular youth styles around the commercial centre, using the typified knowledge they obtain from talking with friends and making generalisations of their experience in the school, the street or going out, as well as from the media and other indirect relations. This is an example of two boys making typifications from their knowledge of *màkina* clubs:

CATALAN SCHOOL

Roger: I *màkina*?

Toni: I *màkina*, més així de fotre't amb *bulles*, quan vas a una discoteca d'aquestes sempre en veus alguna...

Jaume: Sí.

Toni: Segur...

Jaume: Totes les discoteques que posen *màkina* sempre hi ha *bulles* perquè *van els pelats*...

Toni: Necessiten descarregar la seva *mala llet*.

Through going to *màkina* clubs, or talking to others that attended them, they typified *màkina* music and *màkina* style as being rough. This typification affected how they saw general youth geographies and personal hierarchies within the school, where several classmates identified with *màkina* and its associated youth style, which many interviewees called '*pelao*'. In youth social space, amongst the commercial and mainstream normalcy, there are some spectacular individuals and

groups that mark out the extremes, drawing the boundaries and main oppositions of youth geographies. Some youth styles are clearly codified, and therefore recognised and typified as symbolic markers of youth geographies:

PERIPHERY SCHOOL

Roger: ¿Y si tú ves...? Aquí, por ejemplo, en el instituto, ¿verías, por la forma de vestir, a quien le gusta una màkina más *trallera* o...?

Loles: Sí.

Roger: ¿Sí? ¿Cómo?

Loles: Por las marcas: Pitbull, Alpha...

Roger: Eso es más *trallero*.

Loles: O sea, que le gusta la màkina. Luego, los típicos que van normales...

Roger: Pero tú no llevas Pitbull ni Alpha, ¿o sí?

Loles: Ha.

Roger: Algo sí que llevas.

Loles: En la cartera.

Roger: En la cartera.

Loles: No, ha, ha. Pero es que yo si me... No me lo compro para aparentar nada. A mí, porque me gusta la sudadera o la camiseta, pues me la compro.

Roger: ¿Y heavys hay?

Loles: Sí. O sea, también los heavys tienen una forma de vestir que... sabes que son heavys: la típica camiseta por aquí, los pantalones blancos, los pelos largos, tienen, más o menos, la misma forma, ¿vale? Y también cuando ves, puedes reconocer a alguien que le guste la màkina, porque también va con la típica Alpha y eso.

The definition of 'normalcy' is always situated, since when an anti-commercial style is dominant in a particular context, it becomes to some extent 'normal'. Nevertheless, normalcy tends to be linked to mild, non-transgressive styles, so even when an anti-commercial style was 'normalised', there was a distinction between the 'radical' or 'extremist' followers and the less radical ones. The following quote shows how even if the majority in this school in Barcelona identifies with *màkina* or '*pelao*', within this style it is possible to distinguish between those who are 'dominant' and those who are not:

PERIPHERY SCHOOL

Roger: ¿Y cual es mayoría? ¿Cuál es más?

Sonia: *Pelao*

Roger: ¿Hay más que normal?

Sonia: Sí, muchos más.

Roger: ¿Sí? ¿Cuántos hay?

Sonia: Sí aquí, si en... Si en 4º imagínate, somos setenta... mmm, cuarenta o más, o cincuenta, son *pelaos*...

Roger: Y dentro de estos hay los más radicales, o sea los que van más con una estética, ¿sí? ¿Hay como unos más...?

Sonia: Sí, claro, claro... sí están los dominantes, ¿no? Los que... los que dominan sobre todo el grupo.

Roger: ¿Sí? ¿Y se meten con la gente estos o...?

Sonia: Algunos, pero no se... Al menos conmigo no se han metido, por lo menos hasta ahora [*laughs*].

'Normal' young people in the centre are sometimes thought of as completely 'undifferentiated', and thus neutral, or as diversified depending on their more or less intense association to some of the visible stylistic markers. 'Normal', however, is as we have already pointed out more than once, a very polisemic word, whose meaning can only be understood in each particular context, so it can sometimes refer to those who do not have any stylistic preference other than the commercial centre, and at others to those within stylistic groups with a soft adhesion or no transgressive commitment. The extremes are naturally more visible, since they stand out from the normal majority and operate as symbolic markers, as reference points to map out the existing diversity, but those involved in them can also perceive them, in some sense, as 'normal'.

During adolescence, when the search for personal identity becomes particularly relevant, many find in *spectacularity* a good way to feel special. As we have seen in Chapter 2, Simmel already identified the effort to 'be different' through extravagance as a feature of urban life. Spectacular youth styles are a clear example of this effective way of attracting attention amongst the accumulation of stimuli characterising modern urban life. Those who choose a spectacular style become more visible. They stand out, and are thus important in fixing the boundaries of youth geographies. When it is not a 'strange' music, it is a provocative style of dress or a transgressive attitude. Violence is another way of being spectacular, as well as a very effective symbolic marker. A tough and rough reputation attached to youth styles rapidly travels through social networks, becoming an important referent in youth geographies. Stories about fights, even with guns (in Birmingham) or knives (in both cities), were present when describing what *màkina* and garage were. Some of them can easily be exaggerated, but their impact in mapping out youth geographies was in any case strong. This girl explains her experience in an annual *màkina* event:

PERIPHERY SCHOOL

Rosa: Porque... entre la música que se oía fatal, porque claro, un sitio tan grande se oía fatal. La gente ahí... de drogas hasta arriba... Era imposible. Pero imposible de verdad. un montón de peleas...

Roger: ¿Ah, sí?

Rosa: Sí, sí, o sea, yo flipé... Un chico que estaba a mi lado, lo acuchillaron, es que lo acuchillaron... De verdad. (...)

Roger: Y en el Pont Aeri y en el Illusion... ¿hay peleas también? No...

Rosa: Normalmente sí. En el Illusion sí. Porque... cuando ya... al principio empiezan con música... *hardcore*... *hardcore* pero de la normal... Entonces a las 9 por ahí empieza la pum, pum, pum...

The example shows how the tough connotations of *màkina* music in her school and its interpersonal hierarchies were not a meaning isolated from broader youth

geographies. On the contrary, any youngster attending the most well-known *mākina* clubs became familiarised with the importance of toughness in the style, just as those attending indie or goth bars and clubs in both Birmingham and Barcelona became familiarised with their relative ‘softness’ or ‘friendliness’. The interpersonal hierarchies based on toughness in the schools, therefore, were somewhat linked to the organisation of youth geographies and youth styles. It is obvious that scenes like *mākina* or garage were big and diverse enough to make any generalisation excessive, but the young interviewees clearly expressed this typified knowledge during the fieldwork. In Birmingham, several interviewees mentioned the ‘gangsta element’ as central in the organisation and transformation of youth geographies:

MIXED SCHOOL

Roger: And the garage scene? Is it rougher?

Mark: If you are like a white person and listen to garage and you go to a garage think, you'll probably get shot, unless you're like... huge, and you come with about six body guards. Then gangsters in the club really think “What is this white person listening to our music for?”. And you're getting beaten up, or kidnapped, or something, because there's a lot of gangsters that listen to that sort of music.

The different importance of ‘toughness’ *out there* was perceived as relevant. The typification of tough youngsters ‘showing off in their cars’ was repeatedly brought into the discussion, as they were the specific youth styles marking out distances and proximities. Nevertheless, spectacular extremes cannot account for the whole picture. Spectacular youth styles are highly visible, and indeed important in drawing the boundaries of youth geographies, but only a minority of young people are strongly committed to them. *Spectacularity* is a relational concept, since a youth style can only be ‘spectacular’ *in relation* to a ‘normal’ one, and in fact what was spectacular a short time ago is nowadays pretty normal. It might be the case that the majority of young people adopt a quite spectacular style, but if at the same time a spectacular trait is adopted by a wide section of the young population, it stops being spectacular and becomes part of the accepted normality. There are two important indicators of normalcy: one is the localised space of interaction, the personal knowledge produced through direct relations; the other is the definition of it through the media. This second one is crucial, since within typified youth styles, ‘normalcy’ is defined to a great extent on the basis of media representations and is further enhanced by its appropriation by more or less ‘normal’ pupils in the school. It is *against* both of them (mainstream media representations and ‘normal’ pupils in the school) that spectacular styles are articulated, so it is obvious that it is important to take all of them into consideration to understand youth social space.

Music was not, therefore, the only aspect used to map out youth styles. It is true, as we have already remarked when introducing the analysis of this layer of hierarchies *and* been able to see throughout the preceding quotes, that typified youth styles were closely related to musical geographies, so the way young people typified and mapped out youth geographies was largely signified through musical

forms and followed the same general co-ordinates of the musical geographies we have analysed in the previous chapter. As we have mentioned, however, they also included other signifying practices like for instance clothes, hairstyles, speech styles, language and body language. All these aspects were homologically related with each other in a complex combination that was linguistically typified through key nouns and adjectives organising them. Young people in the interviews often referred to specific spectacular youth styles like '*pelaos*', '*skins*', '*red skins*', '*fashions*', '*cyber*', '*heavies*', '*makers*', '*skaters*', '*punks*', '*rapper*', '*goths*', '*rockers*' or even '*cumbaià*'. Sometimes they used stylistic epithets that did not refer to a particular style but to a broader feature that often included more than one particular youth style, like '*guarros*', '*grebo*', '*greñas*', '*histéricas*', '*ancho*', '*baggy*', '*tirat*', '*apretado*', '*headbanger*' or '*trendies*'. Some of these epithets refer to a general stylistic feature, others to a way of dressing or behaving or the taste in music, but all of them are homologically related to all these aspects. '*Guarro*', for instance, points to a non-tidy style, but was homologically related at the time of the fieldwork to guitar music and an anti-commercial attitude, to a more or less anti-authoritarian left-wing stance and many other aspects. '*Histéricas*', to take another example, was related to younger girls identifying with boy and girl bands and probably distanced from relevant transgressions, although in the White School several interviewees saw them as forming part of the popular centre in the school.

As I said earlier, in this section I will not map out the different youth styles in each school, since this would take considerable time and provoke many redundancies with what has already been said and what will be developed in the following section, once we turn to the final layer of hierarchies. Therefore, I will now postpone a more systematic analysis and just indicate that they largely matched the co-ordinates fixed by musical geographies. Here I will just note that youth styles were not perceived equally by all interviewees, since each young person generally considers his or her point of view as the 'preferable' position in aesthetic and moral terms. Their varying imbrication with interpersonal hierarchies in each particular place meant, moreover, that they had different connotations in terms of social dominance, since the sounds and styles of those at the top of each particular interpersonal hierarchy of popularity had a higher implicit value – even if contested. The multiplicity of perspectives on typified styles and youth geographies in general meant that the struggle over value was constant, and had different outcomes depending on the location within youth geographies. In the next example we can appreciate the importance of value judgements marking out social distances in relation to spectacular styles, in this case (what the interviewees loosely typify as) punk:

PERIPHERY SCHOOL

Roger: Y luego, en Barcelona ¿creéis que todo el mundo tiene más o menos el mismo gusto?

Francisco: No, hay los típicos *marginados*...

Álvaro: Depende, ¿eh? Por ejemplo, hay gente se va al Lobo ése, por donde está el Lobo.

Roger: ¿Qué es el Lobo?

Francisco: Lobo, una discoteca de allí de... del barrio *punky*.

Roger: ¿Qué es el barrio *punky*?

Francisco: O sea, el barrio *punky*.

Álvaro: ¿En Marina puede ser?

Francisco: En Marina, está en Marina.

Roger: ¿Eso el barrio *punky*?

Álvaro: No, el barrio *punky*, no. O sea, a la gente les gusta la música *guarra*, así, o sea, que van a sitios *guarros* para escuchar la música ésa.

These experiences are important because they link typical knowledge used in personal relations in the school to the broader reality of youth geographies. They gave young people the sense of being part of a broader community of meaning that was not based on personal but anonymous knowledge, although in every localised context the exact articulation of different styles in interpersonal relations could and did vary. Moreover, the interviewees at the different schools did not agree either on the existing typified styles in the school or their positive or negative, popular or unpopular, connotations. When this typified knowledge transcending interpersonal hierarchies was used in the school, therefore, depending on the particular interactions with those with spectacular styles, the exact meanings might be modified or not. In the following example, a pupil in the Inner City School in Barcelona who had a rock-based spectacular style that was opposed to the dominant styles in the school (*pelao*, hip hop and Arab and Asian styles), managed to be accepted because of his ‘niceness’, but did not change the main typifications about his style, who continued to be regarded as weird and beyond understanding:

INNER CITY SCHOOL

Samanta: Rarito, sí. (...) Ese chico sí que vestía... Con tejanos así apretaditos, no sé.

Roger: O sea, vestían distinto.

Esther: Pero parecía un...

Samanta: Vestía como, como los de un grupo...

Esther: Pero con botas hasta aquí, con botas de... O sea, por debajo de... Eran anchas pero por los pies era más ajustado.

Roger: Entonces que era como diferente aquí en el instituto.

Esther: Sí. Cuando él iba a nuestra clase, parecía muy diferente, nos quedábamos todos, [alucinando, aquello de] “¡Pero madre mía!”... Luego llevaba tres pendientes aquí, y aquí. (...)

Samanta: Sí, era muy buen chaval... porque era un chaval que...

Esther: Era muy buen chico.

Samanta: Pero ahora se ha hecho cien *piercings*. (...)

Esther: Pero es... Es simpático el chico, pero hace el ridículo.

The symbolic work of Esther, Samanta and their class mates to make sense of the spectacular style of this boy, and to adjust their typified knowledge of rock and punk styles to their personal knowledge of this particular youngster, is an example of what is happening every single day in every single school. The same is

true with the final layer of imbricated hierarchies, that linking the meanings of interpersonal hierarchies and typified youth styles to broader social structures.

Learning the social connotations

We now complicate the analysis even further by incorporating the third layer of social hierarchies, the one we have called 'general social hierarchies'. Before doing so, it will be useful to recapitulate what we have done so far. First, in the previous chapter, we have seen through the interviews with young people how musical sounds are organised or mapped out by them in terms of distances and proximities, which we have called 'musical geographies'. Second, we have seen how in everyday life, in precise and localised contexts of interaction, musical geographies are inextricably linked with the terrain of personal hierarchies and also typified youth stylistic distinctions. Different taste in music, therefore, is related to social distances in that to some extent it matches and signifies them. We have postponed mapping out 'typified youth hierarchies' in order to avoid redundancies with the present section, since their imbrication with the final layer of general social hierarchies makes them empirically overlap (the distinction between the three layers of hierarchies, we must remember, is analytical, and thus empirically fluid).

Even though the link between musical geographies and general social hierarchies – that is, what sociologists usually term 'axes of social inequality' – is not simple, since we are not talking about a straightforward and direct relationship, in the following pages we will see how in everyday life music often signifies – and relates to – structural locations, which in their turn are imbricated with typified youth styles and interpersonal hierarchies in the schools, the street and other sites of social interaction. First, we will discuss the articulation of musical forms and social hierarchies around ethnicity (understood in a broad sense that also includes linguistic, national or immigrant differences), generalised advantage, gender and sexuality – always bearing in mind their imbrication with youth styles and interpersonal hierarchies. Second, we will start to analyse how all these elements relate to our perception of time and space, and their connection with the structuration of social reality in terms of age, generation, place, cosmopolitanism and parochialism.

To claim that different tastes in music carry with them different structural connotations is not to say that a structural location determines a precise taste in music, or that a particular taste in music straightforwardly connotes a certain structural location. On the contrary, the way music signifies social structural locations is complex, polyvalent, ambiguous and often paradoxical. Indeed, music provides a complex space for mediating and negotiating structural meanings, and musical forms can only be interpreted when contextualised among other symbolic forms, meanings and the social relations in which they are embedded. This negotiation occurs in the space of interpersonal hierarchies and typified youth styles analysed in the previous sections.

Ethnic, racial, national, linguistic, religious and immigrant typifications

Western societies often make sense of broad generalised advantage not straightforwardly but through the filter of other meanings like, for instance, 'roughness' and 'ethnicity'.²⁰ To put it differently, whereas interviewees' typifications concerning generalised advantage, as we will see later, tended to be generic and opaque, they constantly established explicit connections between specific musical forms and different ethnic, linguistic, national, immigrant or religious groups that referred to generalised advantage in one way or another – mostly throughout the notions of 'poshness' and 'roughness'. In this section we will concentrate on the articulation of ethnicity, while in the following one we will deal with generalised advantage. The fact is that there was an immediate association between certain music genres and 'Afro-Caribbean', 'Asian' or 'white' young people in Birmingham, or 'Arab', 'Pakistani', '*catalufó*', 'immigrant', '*cholo*' or '*gitano*' (Gypsy) in Barcelona. Different sounds strongly expressed 'social injuries' – both in their inner and sensuous sense and in their symbolic representation – which cannot and must not be separated from class injuries, but cannot and must not be confused with them either.

The issue is obviously complex, since these typifications are differently experienced and conceptualised in the two cities. In Barcelona, 'ethnicity' is an unknown concept for many people, which although recently included (imported) in the academic literature, is highly problematic when applied to Catalan society. This is so because the notion is not sensitive to the reality culturally produced through grounded typifications such as 'immigrant', 'nationalist', 'gypsy', 'Catalan', 'Castilian' or 'facha', all of them crucial in understanding how ethnic, national, linguistic or immigrant identities are being produced, reproduced and resisted. The complex geographies resulting from the combination of identities and typifications around 'immigrant', 'national' and 'linguistic' minorities is markedly different from the ethnic groupings in Birmingham. The symbolic construction of 'communities'²¹ is far from simple, so it is necessary to clarify our approach to them.

Not only in everyday life, but also in the sociological literature, we often take the term 'ethnicity' for granted, which prevents us from analysing its exact meaning. The notion is generally defined as a group of people who identify with one another on the basis of a shared history, a sense of identity and cultural roots (language, religion, food, music, dress, etc.), but this definition is unsatisfactory as

²⁰ See, for instance, Dolby (2000), Bucholtz (forthcoming) or Carrington & Wilson (2004) for an analysis of what they name 'racialization'; Connell & Gibson (2004 [2003]) for an approach to music communities that focus on the articulation of national identity, ethnicity and place; and Reay (2004) for an approach relating the perception of 'roughness' to social class.

²¹ I am intentionally using here the title of Cohen's book *The Symbolic Construction of Community* (2000 [1985]), although it is also close to many other approaches to ethnicity like that of Barth in his classical introduction to the book *Los grupos étnicos y sus fronteras. La organización social de las diferencias culturales* (1976 [1969]).

long as it does not enable us to draw the boundary between what can or cannot be considered 'ethnicity'. The symbolic construction of community, whether in terms of ethnicity, national or linguistic identity or any other aspect, is a complex social process of cultural production that cannot be reduced to 'objective' features. Ethnicity, like any other 'communal typification', has at least as much to do with a symbolic construction, both from 'inside' and 'outside', as it does with any given 'essential' feature. What is the difference, then, between 'ethnicity' and, for instance, 'rock culture'? The assumption that ethnicity must have a historical continuity, that is, to be transmitted through generations, might be one criterion. But then we can question the boundary between say 'class cultures' and 'ethnicity'. Can different classes be considered ethnicities under certain circumstances? The case of Barcelona, as we will see, makes these difficulties particularly obvious, since it is not clear whether the term 'ethnicity' – generalised in Catalan academic circles, but not in everyday language, to talk about recent 'immigrants', which do not include Spanish immigrants during the 20th Century — can be easily applied to Catalan society. To start with, in Catalonia the Catalan-Spanish distinction is central, though complex and often paradoxical. It is not clear that Catalan and Spanish identities or cultures can be defined as more or less coherent wholes, or even as 'ethnicities', since their cultural proximity and, above all, the lack of clear 'boundaries' between them, make the exercise analytically uncertain – although there are many parallels with the case of British, English, Welsh or Scottish identities in Britain, in the case of Spain the absence of a national identity excluding Catalonia (as happens with the English in relation to the Welsh or the Scottish identities) makes the confusion even greater. Their articulation in Catalan society is quite fluid and plural, and although we can identify clearly distinct languages, traditions and institutions, individuals often mix all of them. In some cases, moreover, the articulation of national and class identities makes it difficult to distinguish them. If the term 'ethnicity' were applied to this distinction, it would probably contribute to culturally produce a social fiction that would only apply to a small section of the population²².

'Ethnicity' is a term that too often tends to be used when a given 'group' with distinctive cultural manifestations does not have the necessary political sovereignty to be a 'national culture', especially when it also has distinctive phenotypical features or, more accurately, clearly distinguishable external traits (skin colour but also dress or hair style). In Catalonia, however, the Catalan-Spanish distinction lacks clear boundaries between the supposed 'groups', since most Catalan citizens would be diffusely located across both identifications. It is not only that there is no phenotypical external typification than can be related to

²² One could argue about the extent to which the same argument could be applied to the notion of English society. I will just note that the pervasive presence of ethnic typifications in English society makes the use of the notion of ethnicity less problematic, although it needs to take into account the complex ways in which it is experienced, negotiated, as well as related to national, religious and immigrant identifications.

it, but also that most individuals identify with a complex combination of such positions – centuries of common history making the interplay of national and linguistic Spanish and Catalan identities a really complex matter. In terms of power relations, moreover, neither of them clearly predominates. Linguistically²³, for instance, the Spanish language is clearly dominant in terms of everyday and media usage, but Catalan is formally dominant at the educational and institutional level. In terms of linguistic identity, the Spanish language is more present among the working-class and sectors of the upper class, and the Catalan language among rural and urban middle class individuals²⁴. However, it is important that this does not directly overlap with Catalan and Spanish ‘national’ identifications. Indeed, the relationship between all these axes is not easy to portray, as we will see in the following pages. The point is that when new immigration from outside the European Union adds one more layer of complexity to this interplay between different ethnic, linguistic or national identities, the picture becomes really difficult to capture, particularly if we mimetically apply the notion of ‘ethnicity’ used in the English literature.

In any case, the fact is that in both cities identifications and typifications relating to all these aspects turned out to be highly relevant in imagining musical geographies. The stronger associations appeared when different sounds became linked to particular *subordinated traditions of meaning* or *cultures*: rap, reggae, ragga, r’n’b and garage music to the black diaspora and the experience of slavery and racism; raï music to the contemporary experience of Maghribi youth in both their country of origin and in their lives as immigrants in Europe; Catalan rock with the experience of linguistic and national subordination of Catalans to the Spanish state; ‘*gitaneo*’ and *màkina* music with the experience of Spanish immigration in Barcelona²⁵. In spite of the fact that these links were strongly established by many interviewees, as we will see below, they were not monolithic and rigid. When garage music made the charts, it was clearly ‘whitened’; when reggae was

²³ Although the importance of language is enormous, since it is a primary signifying practice with consequences for youth cultural positioning as well as later options in the adult workplace – as Bucholtz (forthcoming) points out –, I will only focus on its more obvious aspects concerning the Catalan-Spanish distinction and, more superficially, the class connotations of different linguistic practices, particularly in Barcelona. I will not analyse it in relation to the Birmingham fieldwork, since although it plays a central role – many Asians speak other languages than English, Afro-Caribbean combine inner-city slang with Jamaican patois, and class accents are strong – I did not cover it adequately in the fieldwork, in part because of my limited linguistic competence.

²⁴ This is a very broad appreciation not sustained in the statistical data. First, because the existing quantitative reports on linguistic usages do not tend to take into account the occupational group of the respondents (see for instance Subirats 2002; Torres 2005). And second, because even if they did, or if we use the academic level instead, which is often asked and analysed, it is not easy to statistically capture this appreciation, which is closely related to housing patterns and lifestyle identifications in Barcelona.

²⁵ Technically, ‘emigration’ and ‘immigration’ refer to mobility between different states, whereas ‘migration’ refers to mobility within a certain state. In Catalonia, however, migrants from other parts of Spain have traditionally been considered ‘immigrants’ because of the distinctive linguistic, cultural and national identity.

exported to Barcelona, it lost its Afro-Caribbean connotations and became clearly '*catalufo*' (associated with strong Catalan linguistic and national identities); when rap was incorporated by Maghrebians or whites in Barcelona, or by Asians or whites in Birmingham, it expressed not 'black' but 'street', 'immigrant', 'Maghrebi' or 'Arab' urban authenticity and resistance. Moreover, as mentioned above, it would be misleading to isolate these associations from class differences. In the following pages we will attempt to understand the complex imbrication of all these aspects.

Before analysing the empirical data, it is important to underline the importance of the white-black dialectic, which is a central and constitutive element of pop music²⁶, as well as the intermingling of other ethnicities and typifications concerning immigration, national identity, language and so forth. Indeed, the relationship between (what is perceived as) 'blackness' and 'whiteness' is and always has been central in the configuration of pop music and youth cultures. On the one hand, from the beginning (what is labelled as) 'black' popular music has been a crucial source of inspiration, innovation and creativity of contemporary popular culture, both in the United States and the United Kingdom, becoming thus an important referent of 'coolness' in youth geographies. From Be Bop for the post-war American Beat Generation²⁷ to garage music for British youngsters at the turn of the millennium, youth cultures and musical forms have always rendered honours to new 'black' musical and youth styles. At the centre of popular music, that is, the United States and the United Kingdom, 'black' youngsters, otherwise subordinated to, and victims of, the racism of white society, become to a great extent a referent for 'coolness' and 'hipness', in the apparent (bohemian) inversion of values that praises what 'normal' society despises. This inversion of values lying at the core of 'hipness' and 'coolness' has been gradually adopted by mainstream consumer culture until it has become part of youth cultures at large²⁸, not only in the cosmopolitan centre but also in the parochial peripheries. Contrary

²⁶ See Negus (2002 [1996]) for a discussion of the white-black tension in popular music that highlights the 'essentialist' tendency in many analyses to use uncritically the notions of 'black' or 'white' music. He believes – as I do – that in spite of the danger of essentialism, the term 'black music' is useful because it is a meaningful category 'out there' (for artists and audiences). I will thus be using the terms 'black culture' and 'black music' not as objective realities, but as categorisations made by young people to make sense of their social reality. As Smith points out, the term 'black music' 'is a contested terrain which gives rise to all kinds of dubious arguments about authenticity, essentialism and appropriation. We need to be clear, then, that the term 'black' music gains currency not because of inherent racial differences and their reflections in musicality, but rather because music has provided such a potent voice for oppressed peoples, especially racialized minorities' (1997: 515). His analysis of 'black music' identifies three features shared by its different sounds: '1) they are embedded in working- or under-class origins and the experience of struggle in the spaces of segregation; 2) they are rooted in black traditions of verbal virtuosity (word play, ambiguity, double meanings, hidden messages); 3) they value improvisation, emphasizing performance rather than composition, creation rather than interpretation, and spontaneity rather than formality.' (1997: 515-6).

²⁷ See Kerouac (1997 [1955]) and Mailer (1992 [1959]) for two different accounts of the link between white bohemians and black 'hipsters'.

²⁸ As a result of what we have called, following Wilson (1999), the *bohemianisation of mass culture*.

to what happens with other popular 'ethnic' music, like for instance Asian or Moroccan, 'black' music has been at the very core of the modern development of popular musical geographies.

This does not mean that it has not been the subject of harsh racism in both everyday life and the sphere of the musical industry, but rather that it has been a constant source of authenticity in musical and youth geographies. This is important because the 'black' source of 'coolness' is related to the organisation of musical geographies as we have defined them in the previous chapter: although what we have defined as the 'commercial centre' of popular music – linked to 'normalcy' – is seen as predominantly 'white', everything related to 'blackness' is seen as a crucial source of 'anti-commercial' and 'subcultural' distinction and 'authenticity'. Even when it sells millions of copies, music typified as 'black' tends to enjoy an extra level of non-commercial credibility. To put it in other words, blackness is negatively typified in general social space but positively respected and valued in youth cultures as a source of innovation, authenticity and coolness. By contrast, as we have just noted, other subordinated ethnicities like Asians or Arabs have no prestige among young white and black people, so they tend to be isolated and marginalised²⁹. Interestingly, in Barcelona 'blackness' has not up to now been a vivid source of authenticity, but a merely 'folkloric' one, and the 'black-white' distinction has not been generally regarded as particularly relevant in everyday interactions³⁰.

Afro-Caribbean, Asian, White

As mentioned above, the ethnic composition of the three Birmingham schools was quite varied. In the White School pupils were overwhelmingly white; in the Dual School pupils were mainly white and Afro-Caribbean, with a slightly higher proportion of the latter, and a small minority of Asians; in the Mixed School there were Asian, Afro-Caribbean and, with a slightly smaller proportion, white pupils. Particularly in the Dual and Mixed schools, where inter-ethnic contact was unavoidable, interviewees regularly used the adjectives 'Afro-Caribbean' (often 'black'), 'Asian' (sometimes 'Indian', 'Pakistani' and 'Bangladeshi') and 'white' to talk about young people and groups, referring to them sometimes as 'races' and sometimes as 'ethnicities'³¹. Young people often referred to the taste in music of

²⁹ This is naturally an oversimplification. See, for instance, Sharma, Hutnyk & Sharma (1996) for a richer approach to Asian styles and their articulations with 'coolness'. Nevertheless, this does not contradict what Huq (1996: 63) mentions explicitly in the same book, that is, that Asians, in contrast to Afro-Caribbeans, have *perennially been considered unhip* in Britain.

³⁰ This has probably changed since the end of the fieldwork, for 'hip hop' is finally becoming popular among young Catalans. Latin-American immigration, as well as the maturity of Catalan and Spanish hip-hop, are probably partial explanations of this recent development that might well have an important impact on youth and musical geographies in the near future.

³¹ I will not discuss the history and cultural politics of the terms signifying different ethnicities in Britain. I will just make two points for the non-British reader: first, the term 'black', which generally refers to the African diaspora (mostly through the United States and the Caribbean islands), can also

these groups without being asked to do so, and sometimes they did so only after they were asked whether there were in fact any differences. Some of them occasionally referred to other ethnicities or national identities like 'Irish', 'Scottish', 'Chinese', 'Italian' and 'South African'. In both schools, musical geographies were depicted in very similar terms, with a clear-cut differentiation between 'black', 'white' and 'Asian' taste in music – the only difference was that in the Mixed School the Asian population was numerically and symbolically relevant, but in the Dual School it was rather marginal. In the White School, by contrast, 'black' and 'Asian' tastes or typifications were marginal and the main difference mentioned by interviewees was between two tastes in music that in the other two schools were equally seen as 'white' – on the one hand 'rock' and 'guitar' music, and on the other hand 'chart', 'pop' and 'dance' music.

It is important to bear in mind that we are drawing musical geographies as they were expressed by the interviewees, who in general were by no means a representative sample of their schools. In the Mixed School they represented quite well the school's diversity, but in both the Dual and the White schools the majority of pupils taking music were labelled as '*boffins*' by the other pupils, and the taste in music of many of them tended to be minority in their schools. Their accounts, therefore, are very informative of the way they made sense of their social world, but not necessarily of the social world itself. They must thus always be taken with caution because of their biased origin. Triangulation with information obtained through the quantitative survey and observation is thus important and will be used when possible. In the White School, for instance, although the survey showed a high presence of a taste for rap and garage music, the interviewees did not consider that these 'black' genres were popular in the school, and hardly used the term 'black music' in the interviews. Nevertheless, the differentiation between 'black', 'white' and 'Asian' tastes in the Mixed and Dual schools is beyond doubt, and as has been said the issue was generally spontaneously introduced into the conversation by the interviewees, like an Afro-Caribbean girl who after listing different music genres liked in the school immediately added: 'It varies... between the races'. The following long quote provides an example of the vivid presence, among many interviewees, of typifications that linked different ethnicities to taste in music – along with gender and other aspects of youth and social geographies:

DUAL SCHOOL

Roger: OK. How is here in the school? Can explain me how it is?

Neil: In the school? They are all into garage in the school.

George and Tom: Yeah.

Colin: Garage and rap.

Roger: Rap, also?

include sometimes (particularly in the political anti-racist movements in the late 1970s and the 1980s) all non-white people (basically Afro-Caribbeans and Asians, but also other ethnicities); and second, the term Asian or South Asian is a category which generally includes youngsters with roots in Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

Neil: Yeah.

Colin: Jungle and stuff.

Roger: Jungle also?

George: A lot of Afro-Caribbean kids... (...)

Roger: And most of them like garage and rap?

George: All of them like garage and rap!

Roger: And what about Asian and white?

Neil: They don't listen to rap.

George: Some of them do, like, du-bu-du-bu...

Colin: Some listen to techno...

Roger: Techno, not garage?

Colin: Well, the Asian people use a lot of techno, and bhangra. And Afro-Caribbean like garage, jungle, ragga.

Roger: And white people?

George: Half of the white people like [*with dislike*] boy bands, and Boyzone and...

Colin: They either follow the Afro-Caribbean people... or follow...

Neil: Or they follow the... pop.

Colin: ... or follow the general path. Or like us, a minority (...).

George: Yeah, we say that we like all the sixties... They will say that's crap and all that. (...)

Roger: What about girls and boys?

Neil: Girls like Steps! Boyzone.

Colin: Girls just like Steps, generally.

Roger: And boys go for...

Neil: Dance music.

George: We don't listen to boy bands very often, you know?

Roger: And girls like dance music too?

Colin: Some of them do.

Neil: Girls like boy bands and girl bands. Boyzone, Steps...

Melvin: No they don't... not them, they are weird.

George: The majority of the girls listen to dance music.

Colin: No, the Afro-Caribbean... they listen to r'n'b and all that.

Melvin: The girls r'n'b, yeah.

Roger: And boys don't like r'n'b.

Melvin: No, everyone is different.

Colin: There are as many different tastes in the school as people... that's it. [*The others clap their hands, as if he has given the definitive answer*]

By comparing and superimposing all the interviewees' typifications which, like the one above, mapped out musical and youth geographies in terms of ethnicity, gender, national identity, religion or language – although not often with the same precise systematisation of the imbrication of ethnicity and taste in music – I will draw the main co-ordinates of the articulation of ethnic and musical geographies and their imbrication with both interpersonal hierarchies and youth styles typifications. First of all, we can stress that in the Mixed and Dual schools, the two with a large non-white population, whites were 'minoritised' in terms of youth geographies, in a complex double bind where their dominant status in British

society contrasted with a minority status in school's social interactions. Their taste was generally linked to 'chart', pop and dance music, along with some rock, styles that were typified as 'white'. We have the situation, therefore, that the more popular tastes of general musical geographies, in terms of media visibility, were typified in these ethnically diverse schools as 'white'. In fact, when a 'non-white' taste made the charts, like rap or, during the fieldwork, garage music, the perception was that it 'whitened'. In these schools, since whites were mainly subordinate in interpersonal hierarchies, the general (expressed) perception was that these tastes were 'ridiculous' and 'uncool'. Two popular Afro-Caribbean interviewees in the Mixed School put it as follows:

Roger: Which other music people like here in the school?

Andy: The white people like Steps and that. [*laughs*]

Gavin: [*laughs*]

Roger: Boys as well?

Andy: Yeah, Boyzone, Spice Girls and that.

Gavin: And Aqua and that. (...)

Roger: And some white people like garage, [*the music you like*]?

Gavin: I don't know.

Roger: You don't mix at all with them?

Gavin: You mix, but you don't wanna talk, you know? They don't listen to our music.

Roger: No?

Gavin: No. They are into rock and that. Do you know like they in our class?

Roger: Yeah.

Gavin: They like more like that...

Roger: And you don't like it.

Gavin: No! Not for me.

The statement 'You don't wanna talk, you know? They don't listen to our music' is clear enough: there was the shared perception that different 'cultures' could be identified. It is difficult, however, to identify the extent to which this was really reflected in taste in music or if it was more an imagined scenario. On the one hand, several white interviewees claimed to like drum'n'bass, jungle, rap and garage music. On the other hand, many Asians and a few Afro-Caribbean interviewees that had previously made fun of white people who liked pop and 'chart' music, said that they liked artists who we would clearly identify as pop and 'chart'. The survey also shows a relatively high proportion of young Afro-Caribbeans and Asians who said they liked these genres, as well as whites who liked other styles of music. It is in paradoxes like this that the ideological and rhetorical aspects of anti-commercial and, in this case, anti-pop distinctions are fully manifested. Some music genres and artists become symbolic markers of different ethnicities, like some young people become symbolic markers of youth geographies, and their higher visibility often prevents young people – and us – from seeing the whole picture, or to put it differently, from getting an accurate drawing of 'real' musical geographies. In many cases the personal knowledge that Asians and Afro-

Caribbeans had about white pupils' taste in music was highly stereotypical. This is why an Afro-Caribbean boy who was in the same class as a group of young white people who liked dance music could answer without hesitating that house and commercial dance music were not popular in the school, or why several non-white interviewees first answered that white people just liked 'classical' and 'opera' music. Skateboarding, which many linked to punk and heavy rock, was also seen as 'typically' white.

Nevertheless, the general perception – in the Dual and Mixed schools – that 'whites' liked more pop, 'chart', dance and rock was also shared by whites themselves (with expressions like 'that's the way it is' or 'that's what happens'; two white boys in the Mixed School, for instance, when asked about rock, answered that it was OK but that 'only white people listen to it, because... that's what happens', and when asked for the reason, they said: 'I don't know, but you won't have a black person listening to heavy metal, they listen to garage, drum'n'bass, hip hop and all of that'). Several interviewees, both white and non-white, further differentiated between 'girls' and 'boys' taste in music: white girls would like more 'pop' music (particularly boy and girl bands) and white boys would like more dance and rock music. In any case, all of them were largely despised by most male Afro-Caribbeans and Asians (even if many of them privately listened to and to some extent liked some or much of it). The following quote is from an interview with two Asian boys in the Mixed School:

Roger: Which music you don't like?

Tahar: Rock [*they laugh*] I hate it so much [*laughing*]. What they do is play loud music. No lyrics, just loud music.

Roger: No lyrics?

Tahar: A bit of lyrics, but at the end of the day... Too loud, man.

Roger: Who likes rock music?

Tahar: In our school. [*Laughing*] No offence... white people.

Roger: Yeah? All white people or...?

Tahar: Not all of them... the majority...

We thus have the situation where the socially dominant ethnicity (white) and its taste in music (dominant in the most visible media) are negatively valued in the interpersonal hierarchies in the school. White interviewees referred to their location in personal hierarchies when they first arrived at the school: 'Everyone just takes the piss out of you completely... But when you get to know it... and you've worked out not to act like a complete dick, then it's all right'. This negative value of 'whiteness' in predominantly mixed schools' personal hierarchies explains the fact that many whites who liked rock distanced themselves from a purely 'white' taste in music in order to gain some acceptable level of social dominance. The following quote of an interview with two white boys justifies its length by the range of different aspects brought into the discussion:

Roger: Are there like hierarchies here in the school, you know? Like the more popular, the nicer girls and so on?

Tony: There is not really that in the school. Because people go around in groups of people... there's not a really popular people. There's groups of people that go around with each other. I mean, there's *un*-popular people in the school. This is the people who do get the piss taken out of them...

Roger: And why? What do you think? Because they are childish? Because of what?
Tony: I don't know.

James: Because they are just sad! They listen to chart music...

Tony: It's just people that get the piss taken out of them. There's no reason. They're just there. Some people just can't... they get picked on and that's it.

Roger: Do they tend to be more black, Asian, white?

James and Roman: White.

Tony: Not really black at all. No Asian gets picked on.

James: Black people in this school...

Tony: Because there's so many of them.... (...) Black people are on the white people, tend to walk... They rule the school basically. Blacks rule over the Asians and blacks rule over the whites.

James: We are OK because we are friends.

Tony: Yeah, we're friends with a lot of blacks and Asians and nobody harms us at all.

Roger: But then all this is important, in some sense? You've got to be careful...

Tony: Yeah, yeah... If you were... I mean, I'm not racist, but if you were and you came to the Mixed School and say that you were racist... you'd be dead man! Dead in a minute.

Roger: And the fact that they like different music makes it more difficult to be friends with them?

James: That's the only way, really.

Tony: Yeah, 'cause drum'n'bass is connected so heavily with house and garage... we are friends... And cannabis connects us as well, it keeps us friends.

Roger: And then these conflicts are important... and if it wasn't for music and cannabis, it would be difficult...

Tony: Yeah. (...)

Roger: What about being tough here in the school. Is it important?

James: Not a good idea.

Tony: If you are white it's not a good idea. Say... if you think you are tough ...

James: To think you're tough it's not a good idea. Say... if you walk down the street,

Tony: ...(...) even the little tiny Asian... because all protect each other.

James: They've got cousins...

Tony: So you don't stand up to them.

Roger: But then you have to be aware of it... All these rules...

James: There's certain people that you can't get away...

Roger: But when you know the rules then...

Tony: Yeah... you know when it's a joke and when it's not a joke, then you're all right, you're not going to get the crap at you.

The richness of the dialogue is that it shows the articulation of interpersonal hierarchies, ethnicity, racism, and music. We see how James and Tony consider whites to be at the bottom of the hierarchy of popularity and social dominance. Through physical toughness, blacks and Asians make racism impossible in the school. Indeed, racism was seen as taboo, and the exercise of physical and symbolic violence by Afro-Caribbeans was the guarantee of this alternative social order – although in the White School, as one interviewee explained, white pupils also policed any racist remark, and just a few months before the fieldwork one young man was beaten up by blacks ‘and everybody else’ because of racist remarks. General social hierarchies, therefore, are inverted within the school walls, since in a way ‘blackness’ has in interpersonal hierarchies more value than ‘whiteness’. This inversion of hierarchies creates a scenario where some whites approach ‘black music’, like Tony and James in the example, and because of this are seen as being closer to popular black pupils. Far from criticising black dominance in the school, Tony and James showed their pride, in this quote and in other parts of the interview, of ‘being friends’ with them thanks to listening to drum’n’bass – typified by them as an originally Afro-Caribbean music style – and smoking marihuana³². Music and marihuana become a ‘bridge’ to establish links between two ‘separate cultures’. Nevertheless, this does not necessarily mean that their taste in music was the same as that of black interviewees. On the contrary, their taste for drum’n’bass was just another aspect of their taste in music, the rest clearly signifying ‘whiteness’ in the context of the school. A female Afro-Caribbean interviewee at the same school, for instance, referred to them as the ‘guitar’ boys in (subtly) derogative terms, and then added: ‘They like drum’n’bass as well, but they don’t tend to like it as much as they do guitar tunes...’. In general, many interviewees tended to link the taste in music of whites to the most ‘commercial’ and ‘visible’ musical forms. In the Dual and Mixed schools, sounds typified as ‘Afro-Caribbean’ were seen as more locally popular, to the extent that quite often non-white pupils did not know much about white taste in music. In contrast, the most popular music ‘out there’, in the country, as objectivated in the charts, was seen as predominantly ‘white’ (even when it was ‘black’ music, as was the case of rap or r’n’b, being in the charts was seen as synonymous with *whitening*).

Further distinctions within ‘white’ taste in music must be made. A few interviewees referred to ‘alternative’ white tastes in music like ‘Irish’ and ‘Scottish’. English ethnicity, because it was the dominant white ethnic identity in Britain, was often seen by whites as ‘neutral’ and ‘invisible’. This idea is what lies behind the following words of a white girl in the Dual School: ‘I think that

³² As Smith underlines, ‘black music is positioned on the boundary with white society, and it contributes to what those boundaries are like, influences their fluidity or rigidity, engages in their negotiation and reproduction as well as in their contestation and repudiation, and helps shape the identities they contain. As such, music contains crucial clues about the social construction of difference and the processes of identification’ (1997: 519). Two good but different analyses of the negotiation and production of boundaries through music are Back (1996) and Sharma, Hutnyk & Sharma (1996).

everybody is the same... only the Irish like their Irish music, then the Scottish like their Scottish music, and then the English everything'. From the other side of the barrier, however, Englishness was often perceived in negative terms by other white ethnic or national identifications. This white boy is a good example:

Alan: I mean, another thing is... I've got two views of this country, 'cause I'm not like purely English, I'm Irish as well, and I've got two... I can judge this country from two different ways. I mean, we've got hooliganism, like people, football matches, causing trouble, and that what's a *geezzer* is, that sort of person that's a complete *prat* (...) I mean, this country is very... I don't know, it's very broken up. It's probably one of the most broken up countries in the world. People are very different to each other here. I mean, you can almost split this country in different countries... I think this country needs to kick out hooliganism out the window. Them people who go to football matches and cause the trouble, they are the people that go to these clubs and cause the trouble, do you know what I mean? In Ireland you don't get any of that. You get into Ireland and people are very... you know? Very like friendly.

Roger: What about Scotland?

Alan: It's very much the same, as Ireland. I think it's to do with the past, England trying to invade Scotland and Ireland...

This view on Englishness and England as a broken-up country was shared by many Afro-Caribbean and Asian interviewees, who did not see white Englishness as a model, so distanced themselves from traditional English national identity, which reinforced the idea of partially 'separate cultures'. Ethnicity can and must not be separated from either socioeconomic position or national identity. To understand 'whiteness' in England, therefore, we need to understand its link with both generalised advantage and traditional 'Englishness'.

With the perspective of the imbrication of 'whiteness' and musical geographies in the ethnically mixed schools, it is mandatory to consider how it worked in the White School, where there was only a token presence of ethnic minorities. The fact is that the typified inner differentiations within white tastes was greater, as well as the appropriation *in white terms* of tastes in music which are not originally perceived as white. In the White School 'blackness' did not tend to be a relevant issue in the interviews, and in spite of the relative presence of rap and garage music, both of them considered black to some extent, the main distinction was – as I have already mentioned – between a main group who liked either chart, pop or dance music, and a minority group known as the 'rockers' who liked heavy metal, punk or rock music, often from the sixties and seventies. In a school where the *knockers* (as they were called by interviewees) were as white as the *boffins*, the diversity of 'white' tastes in music, or the meanings they signified in interpersonal hierarchies, seemed to be higher. Since everybody was 'white', it made no sense to typify as 'white' all chart, pop, rock and dance music. Many relevant distinctions were thus expressed, for instance between *kevs* and *boffins*, which seemed to some extent to replace what in ethnically mixed schools tended to be a distinction between 'blacks' and 'whites'. The point is that the taste in music of (white)

knockers in the White School was often different from the taste in music of (Afro-Caribbean) *knockers* in the Mixed and Dual schools. In the White School, the music typified as characteristic of the *hard-knockers* was techno and hard forms of dance music. One interviewee identified a distinctive genre of electronic music called 'helter skelter', which was included in the survey with the result that 31.3% of the respondents in the White School claimed to like it, in contrast with 0% in the Mixed and Dual schools (where these forms of dance music were despised as 'white' by Afro-Caribbeans and Asians). At the same time, those genres perceived as Afro-Caribbean and tough in the ethnically mixed schools had a large following in the White School, particularly garage and, with notably lower percentages than in the other two schools, rap and r'n'b.

The harder versions of dance music were typified by many interviewees in the White School as close to general dance and pop music, the (perceived as) majority taste in the school, which was typified as the opposite of a taste in rock music. The 'rocker' style combined youth stylistic and academic features, in that they saw themselves as liking 'real' music and being 'really' responsible for their future, and they dismissed the *kevs* and the other pupils not only because they preferred things like pop, 'chart' and 'electronic' music to 'proper' music, but also because they did not think enough about their future. In the Dual School, there was also an identification of those who liked rock music as the '*boffins*', whereas in the Mixed School this identification was not as obvious – although it was expressed by two interviewees.

When analysing the imbrication between musical geographies and 'whiteness', we have seen that several music genres were labelled 'Afro-Caribbean'. In fact, the most popular music genre in the three schools, garage music, was generally identified as such. However, many whites and, in the Mixed School, Asians, also liked it, and this is probably why a few interviewees said that it was equally liked by all groups. In the White School, curiously enough, even though the survey results showed that it was the most broadly liked genre in the school, with 52% of the respondents saying that they liked it 'very much', it was unknown to most interviewees ('I don't know much about it myself; 'I haven't heard about it'). As I mentioned above, the interviewees were definitely not a representative sample of the school.

Garage made the charts during the fieldwork, which makes the analysis both richer and more difficult, since its commercial success replaces its underground meanings with the association of the more popular versions of the genre with 'pop' music. Some interviewees in the White School, for instance, said that they had known about it through commercial radio, or just guessed that it referred to the Artful Dodger, a musician who had recently made the charts. Only three interviewees were clearly aware of its popularity in the school, one of them saying that it had been around for two years, and all three of them noting that it had recently become very popular. They basically saw it as a type of pop music: 'It's like in "Top of the Pops", it's in the charts'.

The fact is, however, that in spite of its general popularity and its recent commercial success, garage was generally associated with Afro-Caribbean

youngsters, particularly in the Dual and Mixed schools. Many interviewees put garage as the latest version of what they called 'black culture', which, as we have mentioned above, included rap (particularly the boys), r'n'b (particularly the girls) and to a lesser extent reggae, ragga, jungle and drum'n'bass. This 'black culture' was seen as distant from (the 'white') pop, dance and rock music. These white boys from the Mixed School talked about it as follows:

Mark: Yeah, it's the culture, not just garage, but that... garage over the place, hip hop, that sort of music.

Rod: It might be not that culture in other countries, but over here...

Mark: This is how it kind of works, in this area. If there is more... if there is a lot of black people in the area, it's gonna be garage, hip hop... that sort of music.

Rod: Because... whoever does music in the school, if you take the tape recorder, you hear garage, mostly. Every lesson. They just listen to garage.

In the last sentence we can see how personal knowledge about Afro-Caribbean classmates ('whoever does music in the school, if you take the tape recorder, you hear garage, mostly') is taken as the illustration of the link between garage and 'black culture'. By contrast, the White School interviewees' perspective on garage was not based on direct personal knowledge but on typified knowledge. In the Mixed and Dual schools the music had been introduced, and was strongly liked, by Afro-Caribbean classmates long before it made the charts, but in the White School there were almost no Afro-Caribbean pupils to visibly appropriate the music, and most of the interviewees had the impression that garage had arrived through the mainstream media. As an illustration of the fact that black music, and in this case garage, lost part of its 'blackness' when becoming more popular among whites and Asians, we can see what two interviewees in the Dual School replied when asked whether garage music was 'black' or not: 'It has spread now. Most people thought it was black, but it's spreading really'. The same process was identified by several interviewees in relation to rap, drum'n'bass and jungle music. Nevertheless, even when it stops 'being black,' subtle differences can still be established between different garage followers, like the interviewee in the Dual School who specified that even if many young white people liked garage, they liked the 'more commercial stuff... like Artful Dodger'. Those who 'really' liked garage, they claimed, were the ones who hung around with black people.

The link between garage – as well as rap, r'n'b, jungle, drum'n'bass, reggae and ragga – and 'black culture' implies an association between blackness and many meanings which are activated with the music – meanings related to what has been called the 'black diaspora,' including the experience of emigration, slavery, racism, discrimination and generalised disadvantage. At the same time, as we have explained when analysing the position of young white people in the two ethnically mixed schools, black culture was seen as tough, linked to 'lots of attitude'. An Asian boy in the Mixed School, for instance, said that 'All the people who are *hard-knocks* are black people... (...) They've got their own music'. It is relevant to note here that many rappers and garage MCs explicitly used 'gangsta' narratives

in their music. Two black interviewees of a youth club, for instance, insisted in that ‘some people would get affected by like some of the lyrics (...), gangsta rap, you know? About going out, killing’. Garage, indeed, was linked by many interviewees to youngsters from rough areas, particularly rough black areas. These two black girls in the Mixed School provide a good example of this association:

Roger: Which are the main tastes in the school? Everybody like more or less the same thing or are there different groups with different tastes in music?

Lyla: (...) You've got some of the roughnecks... I don't mean roughnecks... No, sorry, I don't mean roughnecks, some of the boys...

Roger: What do you say? Roughnecks?

Beth: (...) Ghetto...

Lyla: Some of the black boys, they just think that they are too heavy, the *garagehead* or whatever...

Beth: Speed garage.

The association between garage, young Afro-Caribbeans and roughness is thus not merely abstract ‘typical knowledge’, but very actual personal knowledge in the school. In both the Dual and Mixed schools the interviewees linked garage and being Afro-Caribbean to what they called ‘roughnecks’, ‘*beat people*’ or ‘*hard-knocks*’. In the White School, as well as in the other two schools, several interviewees specified that those whites and Asians who – like the Afro-Caribbeans – liked garage were also ‘the *hard-knocks*’: ‘[In the White School] a lot of people like garage... The *knocker* people like garage...’; ‘[In the Mixed School] some of them [whites] like garage, the gangsta ones’.

What was perceived as ‘black culture’ was thus at one and the same time feared and respected as a source of coolness. Afro-Caribbeans ruled the school *and also* introduced new trends. A few years ago it was jungle, drum’n'bass and even rap, and now it was garage. These trends started as underground, introduced by some pupils and popularised by pirate radio stations, and then became massive and even made the charts. A similar pattern seemed to repeat itself time and again. The popularisation of the trends implied their ‘whitening’, since once a new trend had taken over from the old one, what could happen, as we have seen in Chapter 5 was the case with drum’n'bass, was that the formerly popular sound was kept going in a mainly white underground scene, and thus changed its connotations from tough Afro-Caribbean to nicer and softer underground white style.

Several whites, Asians and Afro-Caribbeans explicitly used the term ‘black culture’, vaguely linking it to the experience of suffering, racism, but most of all to a long tradition of separate or particular pop music. This culture was understood as a mix of Caribbean origins, American influences and Afro-Caribbean immigrant experience in England. All rap, r’n'b, garage, drum’n'bass, jungle, ragga and reggae music, therefore, was seen as variations of the same root or cultural and musical tradition. Depending on the interviewee, different nuances were identified between styles. All agreed that r’n'b was liked more by Afro-Caribbean girls and

rap and garage music by Afro-Caribbean boys. Ragga was sometimes identified as liked more by girls (to dance) or more by boys (to MC on top of it). Reggae, jungle and drum'n'bass, as 'past' styles, were not identified in terms of sex. The importance of the imbrication of ethnicity and gender is quite clear in quotes like the following from the Dual School, where a white boy establishes four groups that were identified by many interviewees in the same terms:

Colin: If you want to, you can split it into four groups, can't you? The white girls, the white boys, the Afro-Caribbean girls and the Afro-Caribbean boys. (...) The white girls listen to the boy bands, like Five and this kind of stuff. The white boys usually listen to techno or dance, or garage and stuff. Afro-Caribbean girls usually listen to r'n'b and soul. Afro-Caribbean boys usually listen to garage...

The other large minority group in both the Dual and Mixed schools was Asian, who are a completely different reality. Most interviewees consistently agreed that Asian girls liked basically bhangra and traditional Indian music, whereas Asian boys varied depending on the school. In the Mixed School, interviewees said that Asian boys liked rap and garage music, whereas in the Dual School two non-Asian interviewees claimed that Asians liked techno music. The following quote is from an interview with two Asian boys from the Mixed School:

Roger: And what do Indian girls like?

Hamsa: They probably like Indian...

Roger: And Indian boys?

Hamsa: It depends.

Asif: Mostly garage.

Roger: Then there is a difference between Indian girls and boys?

Asif: Yeah.

Roger: Boys more into garage and girls more into bhangra.

Asif: Yeah. (...)

There was a generalised perception that whereas a few years ago, male Asians *still* liked bhangra music, they were now moving into less *stigmatised* tastes in music. Asian boys tended not to claim they liked bhangra, and they considered it as a not very fashionable taste that was currently liked basically by Asian girls. bhangra was indeed neither 'cool' nor 'popular' among pupils of other ethnicities, and was only considered a 'possible' taste by Asians, and increasingly only Asian girls. Whereas 'black' music was considered 'cool', and many whites and Asians liked it, bhangra and traditional Indian music were dismissed and often ignored by many interviewees³³. Its invisibility and lack of value in youth geographies explains

³³ This matches the Rupa Huq's remarks – already noted – about the marginal and 'unhip' position of bhangra music in Britain, where it 'has failed as yet to make major inroads into the mainstream' (1996: 62). As Huq underlines, 'Western popular culture has long been over-endowed with stereotypical images of Asians as submissive, hard-working, passive and conforming. (...) Black iconography in popular culture contrastingly has always been seen as cool and hard by youth culture at

the surprise of one Asian boy who did not like bhangra: 'Yeah, there's a white boy that likes bhangra' In one interview with three young women in the Mixed School, one of whom was fully white (Susan), one Asian (Kiran), and one a mix of Asian, Italian and English (July), the invisibility of bhangra was even more explicit:

Roger: OK. Are you from Asian origin?

Kiran: I'm Asian.

Roger: Were you born there?

Kiran: No, I was born here. I'm from Pakistan, but born here.

Roger: You were born here too?

July: Yes, my dad is from Pakistan, and my mum is from Italy and here, she is half-and-half.

Roger: Do you like bhangra music?

July: No...

Roger: And you?

Kiran: I listen to it sometimes. Sometimes bhangra music is very nice.

Susan: What is it?

Roger: You don't know it?

Susan: No...

Roger: OK, tell them what it is?

Kiran: Bhangra music is like kind of a fast kind of music, it's a dance music...

Roger: And it's from people of Asian origin... yeah?

Susan: I'm English... [*laughs slightly*]

Both Susan's previous unawareness of bhangra music and the justification of her ignorance ('I'm English') illustrate the low appreciation of Asian music in the school. A white girl at the same school argued that bhangra was not very popular 'only because we don't understand it. I suppose if they sang in English, maybe...', which reminds us of the – at least apparent – importance of linguistic difference in reinforcing the distinction between Asians and youngsters of white and Afro-Caribbean ethnicity. All of this, as mentioned above, implied that bhangra and traditional Asian music was perceived as a 'non-modern' or rather 'non-trendy' sound that even Asian males were abandoning. As noted by one interviewee in the Mixed School, Asians did not only like Asian music 'anymore', choosing instead a variety that included what she called 'westernised music'; another corrected a friend who had just referred to Asian people and 'their tradition and music' by saying: 'I think now Asians listen more to hip hop and rap... I can't really be sure'; or still another one: 'Asians... Their own music is gone to... so they like a bit of English, you know? They've got electronic stuff...'. The following example, from the Mixed School, shows how bhangra is dismissed by Asian males, and how rap is perceived as part of the fashion that is cool to follow:

large: something to aspire to' (1996: 63). In spite of the development during the 1990s of what have been called 'post-Bhangra' music scenes (Sharma, Hutnyk & Sharma 1996), none of the interviewees referred to them.

Azhar: I started listening to music when I was about ten years old. I used to... bhangra.

Tahar: Eleven years old. But we had enough of that. [*Laughing*] They've got nothing in my culture. Tupac [*a popular US rap artist*]...

Azhar: I don't like that. Everyday. I didn't understand Tupac. Listening to it four-five times, then I did...

Tahar: Listening listening, then you get the story. (...)

Roger: And when did you change from bhangra to rap?

Tahar: About three years ago. Yeah, I've got a cousin, that's got all the shit about Tupac. (...)

Roger: And how did you start listening to rap? Listening to the radio?

Tahar: A few years ago... a lot of people were talking about rap...

Roger: Yeah... it became fashion.

Azhar: One day... a program came on TV talking about Tupac's life.

Roger: And you saw it?

Azhar: Yeah. I saw it. So I bought it.

Roger: And was because of seeing it on TV? But it was fashion also?

Azhar: Yeah.

Tahar: A lot of black people...

Both the interviews and the survey show that Asians, even some Asian females, also liked pop and chart music quite a lot. One Asian boy said that he started to listen to music when he was 10 years old, and immediately added that it was 'English' music. Even if their discourses tended to be strongly anti-commercial, they also showed their taste for very commercial pop acts – an apparent contradiction that was by no means exclusive to Asian youngsters. The point is that abandoning both bhangra and traditional Indian music was seen by others as 'trendy', as shown by the words of this black boy in the Dual School:

Roger: What about Asians? Do they listen to the same as everybody else?

Joel: Mm... you do get the few occasionally that... Well, you get a lot of them.... The trendy Asians. But there's still a few that listen to their own Asian music.

Roger: Which music is it?

Joel: Just like the Asian music, the traditional Asian stuff.

The preposition 'still' ('there's *still* a few that listen to their own Asian music') makes clear the perception of an almost 'natural' evolution towards what was perceived as 'Western' popular music. Needless to say, however, many Asians combined these different tastes. In any case, the point is that what was seen as 'Asian' music, as well as Asians in general, were perceived as *not fully Western* youngsters, as traditional and parochial and not yet imbued with modern cosmopolitan popular culture. Their separate language and traditions, as well as their closeness to each other, made them – from the point of view of white and Afro-Caribbean interviewees – a distinctive group that had only recently started to dialogue with general youth cultures. Two Asian interviewees in the Mixed School said that they did not tend to go with 'whites' and 'blacks' because 'They

change you' or 'You wanna copy their style', which was seen as negative. Some interviewees identified religion, and particularly religious intensity, as part of this distinctiveness. The following white girls related taste in music and religious intensity, and showed a condescending stance towards those who they implicitly assumed 'needed to be taught':

Roger: And the Asians?

Mia: It's a bit difficult to ask anybody in the Dual School what the Asians listen to. Asking me I think it's a bit easier, because I went to a school where I was the only white person in my year. There were a few black people, but the rest were Asian. They listen to Asian songs. Either the people that kind of go against their religion and are not brought up strict Muslim or strict... you know? They listen more to what we listen to. Otherwise it's like, you know...

Mel: A friend of us is half white and half Asian, and she's got a tape full of Backstreet Boys, and one song of Hindu culture... I was quite surprised!

Roger: Would you think that here would be difficult to know what they like?

Mia: Not impossible, but for our type of group, we play Steps, if we don't have any Asian people, it's difficult to teach them, because you teach a group of people that not so much want to know, and it doesn't mean anything to them... (...).

Two male Asians interviewees mixed their taste for gangsta rap with their religious beliefs, however confusingly and probably provocatively: 'Yeah, [I like Tupac's way of seeing life] (...) The way he lived his life. The gangsta... (...) Because we are Muslims... we have a... like a... Jihad...the name is Jihad... we like to fight. It's a fight for liberty. (...) It gives youngsters braveness. (...) We fight the freemasons...[*laughing*] Kill them'. The importance of religious intensity was perceived as more relevant among Asians than among any other ethnic group, where it remained relatively unnoticed. A few white and black interviewees talked about 'church parties' or about their taste for Gospel Music ('It makes sense... 'cause... it's talking about... (...) God, *init*? So that's what I prefer, so I listen to it more, I prefer it more, I like it more...'), but this was not mentioned by their classmates as relevant when typifying them.

Contrary to the general perception of Asians as sticking closely to each other, some Asian interviewees said that they *did not only* hang around with Asians but mixed with everybody. The fact is that even if Asians were perceived as considerably distinct, isolated and even 'backward' in (popular) cultural terms, interviewees depicted them as notably respected in the schools, apparently because of their group solidarity preventing them being the object of physical or verbal aggression. If one of them was attacked, many Asians would strike back (as one interviewee put it, 'they've got cousins').

The imbrication of musical and youth geographies and ethnic differentiations provided, as has been showed, a fairly clear objectivated set of distances and proximities, although there were many nuances and crossings between ethnicities and tastes in music. The typified knowledge we have analysed, in general based on personal knowledge in the school, did not prevent young people from using it

profanely. In general, young people do not very much like making generalisations of this kind – so appreciated by journalists and sociologists alike – since they ‘know’ that in everyday life typifications must be understood in situational and relational terms. In the end, as many interviewees pointed out, ‘it depends on the type of person you are’, ‘it varies’. Although I will analyse the negotiation of meanings in the following chapter, I do want to focus here on the segregation practices resulting from the association between ethnicities and tastes in music.

When asked about the extent to which different ethnicities mixed in their schools, the interviewees’ answers were generally not clear, even though in general, behind assertions of mixing when socialising, a rather segregated reality emerged: ‘It depends on the type of person you are. (...) I got quite a few friends, but they seem... It is like very... black stick together... But then again, there’re people who mix and that’. The crucial aspect is that separation was not perceived to be made in ‘racial’ or ‘ethnic’ terms, but on the base of either cultural dispositions (taste in music being an important one among them) or social extraction or ‘roughness’. Many talked about Afro-Caribbeans or Asians ‘sticking to their culture’, or about the roughness of their neighbourhoods. Other interviewees also distinguished between white people from ‘quiet’ areas, who liked ‘old people’s music’ and ‘a lot of dance’, from those who lived in areas with a ‘higher concentration of Afro-Caribbean people and rap, where white people also listenee to garage’. The importance of these statements is that they make explicit the cross-over of ethnicities and tastes in music, but also that these cross-overs were thought of in terms of ethnic essential sources of influence (white people being influenced in areas with a higher concentration of Afro-Caribbean). Ethnic tastes in music, even if they were open to *cross-overs*, were quite marked, so they became active sources of segregation, since different tastes in music could reinforce barriers between individuals of different ethnicities. One black girl, for instance, explained that different ethnicities mixed a lot in the school, but not outside, because of their different taste in music:

Roger: There's a lot of relationship between different races... They go together... You say that they have more or less different tastes... but they go together a lot. You say that they mix a lot... or they tend to go more...?

Spartaca: Mix a lot in the school, but like saying... [when I'm] going out to a club or something, [in] the places where I go you won't see a lot of white people, no... Because [the music they play] it's mainly ragga and garage... and then a bit of r'n'b.

Roger: And you wouldn't like to go to a place with more white people?

Spartaca: It depends on what type of music they're playing... Because I don't have nothing against white people or different race of people... Depends on what music they're playing...

Roger: If they are playing more house, or more trance, or chart, or...

Spartaca: I don't think I'd go there. (...)

It is not surprising, therefore, that taste in music and mixing of ethnicities are related to each other. As we have seen above when analysing taste in music of a white boy, they claimed that *if you like their music it is easier to get along well with them*, or as seen in the following quote, *if you mix with them it is easier to like their music*:

Roger: And the music is different?

Alan: Yeah. A lot of white people are not into drum'n'bass and that. A lot of white people mainly (I mean, this is the stereotype), a lot of white people seem to be into like rock. (...)

Roger: I thought that house would be big as well...

Alan: Well... I'd say, you find that... the white people at the school, it's about... 20% house, and the rest I would say... 25% rock. And then you've got black people, and it's like garage, and drum'n'bass and stuff. This is why I had like... friends, quite a few black friends, because I used to do that sort of music, I used to like it.

Roger: How did you get interested in the music? It was before knowing them?

Alan: Drum'n'bass... I didn't like it until I met them, really, until like they were playing it and stuff... I got into it then... before that I was into just the Chemical Brothers and...

Roger: You met them because you got along well with them or because you liked the Chemical Brothers and it helped...

Alan: Mmm... I did have some... I did get along with like... some of them, before that. When they were doing their... Because they used to bring in tapes and just... drum'n'bass, and I heard it and I got into it then... I started to make it then... And some of them would come in here, and they heard my stuff, and really liked it and stuff... And I liked some of the chatting on it, and after that it was like... we were friends and that.

Ethnic segregation and racism are in any case not aspects that can be analysed with simple superficial interviews³⁴. Young people's verbal typifications ranged from denying the existence of racism to acknowledging the prevalence of considerable segregation and some views on increasing discrimination. Those interviewees who said they were 'mixed-race' (black and white, since Asian-Italian, Asian-English or Irish-English were not considered as such) were the ones who experienced it most acutely. One of them has already been quoted in Chapter 4, commenting on a garage MCing session given by two Afro-Caribbean pupils in one of the schools, where only three whites ventured to attend. She noted that the fact that 'There weren't that much white people in there' was a bad thing, and that whereas 'Black people must have been thinking why they are in here' white people who wanted to attend did not dare to because they were scared. Thus the interviews, showed a range of attitudes to racism, from energetic denial to critical denunciation. An Asian boy who had previously gone to a public school noted that the Mixed School was not racist at all, whereas he had felt terrible in the former

³⁴ See Back (1996) and Sharma, Hutnyk & Sharma (1996) for a more nuanced and in-depth discussion of racism in Britain.

school. He associated racism with ‘posh white people’. Similarly one girl, who had been raised in South Africa, saw the same school as happily free from the racism she had experienced in her country. In terms of taste in music, she experienced the Mixed School and Birmingham’s musical geographies as notably different than those in South Africa, where she basically liked ‘*kwaito*’: ‘Yeah, yeah, it’s very different, because in South Africa we listen to *kwaito* a lot to... Do you know what *kwaito* is? (...) They just talk their language, right? And it has a different beat... It’s like reggae, but it’s not reggae...’. In her case, her taste for *kwaito* remained private. This is important because we will see how in Barcelona some immigrant interviewees made their original tastes in music public, doing their best even to push them into local musical geographies in their school.

We have seen how musical geographies were closely articulated with ethnic differences, in that the way interviewees made sense of ethnic relations was closely related to the way they made sense of taste in music. Taste in music was indeed an important signifier not only of ethnic differences, but also of their imbrication with interpersonal hierarchies and youth stylistic typifications. To some extent, ‘ethnic’ typifications indirectly signified differences in generalised advantage. Comparing these meanings with those found among Barcelona’s interviewees will provide important insights about the imbrication of hierarchies in youth geographies.

‘Catalufo’, ‘cholo’, ‘gypsy’, ‘immigrant’, ‘moro’³⁵

In Barcelona, what in Birmingham is called ‘ethnicity’ is thought of and typified in quite different ways, since in spite of the increasing symbolic importance of ‘Arab’, ‘Moroccan’, ‘Latin-American’, ‘Chinese’ or ‘Pakistani’ – as well as the long-running ‘gypsy’ – typifications, more ambiguous epithets such as ‘Catalan’, ‘Castilian’ (as ‘Spanish’), ‘Andalusian’ or ‘immigrant’ have played and still play a crucial role in the understanding of cultural identity. This implies that very often what is at stake is not so much an ‘ethnicity’ matching phenotypical features, or cultural groups with (apparently) clear boundaries separating them, but more diffuse linguistic and national identities, as well as the migrant experience of Spanish citizens from outside Catalan-speaking territories (in Spain, Catalan is spoken in Catalonia, the Balearic Islands, Valencia and the eastern part of Aragón – la Franja –; outside the Spanish state, the language is also present in Andorra, the French Eastern Pyrenees Department, and the Sardinian town of Alghero). During the whole of the 20th Century, Barcelona and Catalonia in general experienced a lot of immigration, particularly from other parts of Spain. The perceived difference of those newcomers in terms of language (Spanish and not Catalan), national identity (generally Spanish and not Catalan) and other cultural traits – particularly during the years of the most numerous arrivals throughout

³⁵ Ethimologically, ‘*moro*’ (Moorish) has its origin in the Latin ‘*maurus*’, that is, an inhabitant of the old Roman province of Mauritania. Semantically, Roman languages link the term to darkness (the Catalan and Spanish words for tanned, ‘*moreno*’, are derivations of ‘*moro*’. This original meaning has subsequently been transformed, particularly when it has been equated with ‘*muslim*’ (Besalú 2001: 158-59).

the 1960s, when they tended to settle in specific areas of the city – popularised the label ‘immigrants’ to typify them. (However, both the Spanish language and national Spanish identity were by no means absent from Catalonia at the time; Spanish has been present in Catalonia since the Spanish state started to impose it in the 18th Century).

The term ‘immigrant’ thus acquired a bunch of connotations that included, among others, national, linguistic, class and migrant experiences, identities and typifications. It is in this context that we must understand the arrival of new immigrants from Morocco, Latin-America, East European countries, Pakistan and China – among other places – since the early 1990s, as well as their impact on the meaning of the term ‘immigrant’, now increasingly circumscribed to newcomers from developing countries and Eastern Europe.

We will start with the analysis focusing on the articulation of musical geographies and the Catalan-Spanish distinction. As we have mentioned above, this must be seen as different from Birmingham’s differentiation of Afro-Caribbean, white and Asian ethnicities associated to phenotypical features and more marked cultural boundaries (although we could naturally also challenge the reification of the boundaries that the term ‘ethnicity’ produces in the UK). Catalan and Spanish linguistic and national differences are, for most citizens of Catalonia, diffuse and subtle, since many of them position themselves in the middle-ground of a ‘continuum’ – even if calling it a ‘continuum’ is in itself an analytical fiction – that goes from an exclusively Catalan to an exclusively Spanish language use and national loyalty. This means that even if the terms in which typical knowledge is built are often those of the ‘extreme’ poles, they only represent a minority of the population. ‘Catalan’ and ‘Spanish’ identities, in both linguistic and national terms, have an important element of ‘voluntary adscription’, in contrast to the weight of external labelling in Birmingham’s ethnicities, since ‘origin’ is less relevant than linguistic practice and national identification. The truth is that there are many gradational and open-ended combinations of the different elements at play. It is not only that both adjectives, ‘Catalan’ and ‘Spanish’, can refer to linguistic, national or merely geographic features but that the absence of phenotypical traits and the less marked cultural differences make it quite different from what we have seen in Birmingham.

Nevertheless, the fact is that in terms of youth geographies, slang epithets like ‘*choló*’, ‘*quillo*’, ‘*facha*’, ‘*catalufo*’ or ‘*independentista*’, are extensively used by the interviewees to signify and typify the differences, or at least their more stereotypical manifestations. We will start by analysing the typification of ‘Catalanness’, and to do so we will focus on the use of the term ‘*catalufo*’ – also used in its variations ‘*catalanufó*’ or ‘*lufo*’ (Martínez & Pérez 1997; Marimon 2006). This slang term, which is derogative, is a cultural innovation of the last ten or fifteen years, and in its narrow sense signifies not so much the fact of speaking Catalan but of being proud of being and speaking Catalan and having a ‘Catalanist’, ‘nationalist’ or ‘independent’ political stance. In its broad sense, however, and depending on the context of the conversation, it can be applied to

most young Catalan-speaking people. ‘*Catalufo*’ is an exclusively derogative term, and my guess is that we could probably link its appearance, among Spanish-speaking working class youth, to the end of the Spanish dictatorship and the arrival of an autonomous democratic Catalan government. Before that, and particularly during Franco’s dictatorship, the Catalan language was not associated with power, but with oppression by the authoritarian government that strongly and belligerently oppressed it. Catalan was thus identified with pro-democratic resistance – at that time the language was unofficial and there was no hint of what it would become after the arrival of democracy, that is, the voice of many institutions identified with power, from schools to the public Catalan TV, from the politicians to the middle-class, as well as a condition for many private, and almost all public, jobs. The democratic positive discrimination policies to recover the language after the decades of hostile opposition from the Spanish government generated among important sections of the largely Spanish immigrant working class an identification between Catalan and ‘imposition from above’³⁶.

Bearing this in mind, we will see how the Catalan/Spanish distinction was imbricated with musical geographies in the three schools. During the fieldwork, as already mentioned, ‘*catalufo*’ in its narrow sense was not directly identified with those young people who spoke Catalan, but with those who made it a sign of identity that transcended linguistic practice and became a public display of identity and a political stance. These two Spanish-speaking boys of the Catalan School, the only one of the three schools with a high proportion of Catalan-speaking – and middle-class – pupils, defined it as follows:

Alberto: Sí, bueno, catalanistas y estos. Pero el grupo más grande...

Juan: Que les gusta la música... lo comercial...

Alberto: Sí, Gossos [*a Catalan Rock band*] y esto, comercial, *catalufo*, digamos, lo que en toda Catalunya... Entonces, lo que es...

Roger: ¿Rock catalán?

Alberto: Sí, rock catalán.

Roger: ¿*Catalufos* es sólo los que están por Catalunya o los que hablan catalán?

Juan: No. Los que están por Catalunya.

Roger: Aquellos que...

Alberto: Los *catalufos*, digamos, los que nosotros llamamos *catalufos*, son los que van directamente por la independencia de Cataluña, entonces van sólo a por lo catalán-catalán.

Roger: ¿Y son como un grupo? ¿Se les ve así como a un grupo?

Alberto: Sí. Son minoritarios, pero sí.

Juan: Son... ¡Bah! Son cuatro [*mocking*]. Son cuatro, son cuatro.

This quote shows how ‘*rock català*’ was not seen as a ‘politically or nationally neutral’ taste in music, but linked to a specific national identity with a ‘separatist’

³⁶ See Pujolar (2001) for a sociolinguistic analysis of the non-masculine and ‘uncool’ connotations of Catalan in opposition to Spanish, which for his informants sounded ‘cooler’ and ‘tougher’ than Catalan.

(*'independentista'*) political stance. This is important because the same was not true of 'Spanish' rock, which tended to be seen, by most young people, as politically and nationally 'neutral'. *Rock català* was the music style most often identified with '*catalufos*' in the three schools, in the sense of a strong – and often politicised – Catalan national identity. One interviewee also mentioned ska as linked to this narrow sense of the adjective (in the other 7 appearances of the style ska, it was not clearly linked to Catalan national or linguistic identity, even though other research points in this direction³⁷). In its broader sense, punk-hardcore, symbolically and numerically significant in the Catalan School, was seen by the interviewees of the three schools as '*catalufo*', not as signifying an 'separatist stance' but as being liked by Catalan-speaking pupils (those who liked this music in the Catalan School, saw the followers of punk-hardcore as critical of 'the system', which included any sort of 'nationalism').

The complex symbolic division in youth taste between Catalan- and Spanish-speaking pupils was particularly relevant in the Catalan School, where those with a taste perceived as 'Castilian' were a minority in both numerical and symbolic terms. In this school, those with a linguistic Catalan identity, however mild, outnumbered those with a Spanish one, and this implied that Catalanness was not as stereotyped as in the other two schools. In terms of taste in music, for instance, the fact that many Catalan-speaking pupils liked pop, alternative pop, house or other forms of dance music which were not generally typified as '*catalufo*', was obvious to Spanish-speaking pupils. When one group – in this case Catalan-speaking pupils, but we have seen the same situation with 'white' pupils in Birmingham – occupies the social centre in a particular site of interaction, its diversity is highlighted, whereas when it has a minority status, like Catalans in both the Periphery and the Inner City schools³⁸, or whites in both the Mixed and the Dual schools in Birmingham, it remains either strongly stereotyped or hidden. The lower presence of Catalan-speaking pupils in the Periphery and Inner City schools, moreover, made the opposition more dependent on 'typical' rather than 'personal' knowledge, especially in the latter. In the Periphery School, '*Catalanness*' was generally seen as distant and stereotyped, as well as disliked, by the majority of the interviewees. This is perhaps the reason that Catalan-speaking pupils (around 10% of the total) tended not to publicly show strong cultural differences, particularly the boys, and thus remained quite unnoticed by many of the interviewees – some of whom did not even know that there were any Catalan-speaking pupils in the school. Several pupils used the term '*catalufo*' or another form of 'anti-Catalan' stance, such as deprecating a Catalan singer, Serrat, with arguments like 'que tiene el acentillo ese catalán catalán, el tío [*with contempt*]; no,

³⁷ See Martínez & Alegre (2002).

³⁸ Naturally, we are talking about its use in informal situations, since in all the schools it was the dominant language in the institutional interactions with teachers. As explained above, Catalan had the paradoxical situation of being subordinate in informal interaction, and dominant in terms of school and many other official institutions.

no me va eso'³⁹, or showing a stronger and direct anti-Catalan attitude with arguments like 'todo lo que sea catalán no, no me gusta'.

In the Inner City School, there were very few Catalan-speaking pupils, and the image of Catalanness was even more distant and stereotyped than in the Periphery School. The main difference was that in the interviews the interviewees did not show a significantly anti-Catalan stance. Since there were almost no Catalan-speaking pupils, the interviewees did not have personal knowledge of the music that young 'Catalans' listened to. In the minds of most pupils, therefore, 'Catalans' were mostly a stock of very diffuse typical knowledge, an unknown and alien reality that only sporadically appeared in the interviews in terms like 'Supongo que a la gente catalana les gustará... les gustará el rock catalán...' or '[La gente catalana escucha] la sardana⁴⁰, supongo... y eso, y el rock catalán y todo eso...'. Catalanness was just *alien*, strange, but (in the interviews) not strongly opposed. Some interviewees showed a slight anti-Catalan stance like that of several of their Periphery School counterparts, but they did not express it with the same clarity. The social distance between them and Catalanness seemed in a way irreflexive, a practical consequence of the symbolic (and physical) distance they perceived between themselves and any form of Catalan linguistic or national identity. Their contact with Catalan was mainly through school teachers and, in some cases, youth workers but not in the street or in their peer relations. In order to satisfy the goals of both linguistic normalisation and effective communication with their pupils, many of whom had arrived in Barcelona just a few months before the fieldwork took place, teachers spoke in Catalan and some Spanish, since the latter was better understood by many of the youngsters..

The importance of the term '*catalufo*' is that even if in its narrow sense it only applies to a minority of young people, it nevertheless has a tremendous symbolic power in delimiting youth geographies. Its power, however, does not lie in that it reflects a large clear 'essence', in terms of youth geographies, but that it offers a symbolic marker of a dialectical relationship between 'Catalanness' and 'Spanishness' or 'Castilian-ness'. At one pole we find the term '*catalufo*', while the other is occupied by terms like '*cholo*', '*garrulo*', '*calorro*', '*lolailo*', '*quillo*', '*jezna*', '*del palo*', '*pelao*' or '*facha*', depending on the context. Interestingly, whereas the term '*catalufo*' seems to have been around for no more than 10 or 15 years, the terms '*quillo*', '*garrulo*' or '*cholo*' are at least 20 or 25 years old, and even have earlier versions like '*xarnego*', which date from at least the mid-20th Century.

All these epithets ('*cholo*', '*garrulo*', '*quillo*', '*lolailo*', '*calorro*', '*jezna*', '*del palo*', '*pelao*' or '*facha*') were often used as synonymous during the interviews, and in their broad sense referred to a whole disposition identified with a working-class,

³⁹ The example is even more significant because the interviewee Serrat is considered to represent a low Catalanist profile, and did for instance receive criticism because of editing many of his records in both Catalan and Spanish.

⁴⁰ 'Sardana' is a traditional Catalan dance not very popular among young people.

Spanish-immigrant origin, combined with what we could describe as a ‘street culture’ and the particular accent of Spanish labelled ‘stylised Spanish’.⁴¹ Thus, on the one hand, all these terms were often used interchangeably, and were homologously related to taste in what was called ‘*gitaneo*’ (also typified as ‘*jaloteo*’ or ‘*flamenqueo*’) and *màkina* music (although at the time of the fieldwork the label ‘*màkina*’ seemed to be losing ground to others like progressive, hardcore and trance). On the other hand, each of these terms had its specific meanings. When cultural appreciation of ‘flamenco’ music, or what was broadly named ‘*flamenqueo*’ or ‘*gitaneo*’, was highlighted, it was thought of and verbally identified as close to or intermingled with ‘*gitano*’ (gypsy). When toughness was stressed, it was through the expression ‘*del palo*’. When the anti-Catalan stance was emphasised, it was through the term ‘*facha*’ (fascist). And when its stylistic closeness to the skinhead subculture and *màkina* music was stressed, it was through the term ‘*pelao*’. The broader adjectives, which tended to include the others, were ‘*cholo*’, ‘*quillo*’, ‘*jezna*’ and ‘*garrulo*’.

In contrast to the term ‘*catalufo*’, which was never used in a positive sense, ‘*cholo*’ and its variations could be either derogatory or proudly self-applied terms, and even though all of them meant different things, in some contexts they could be used interchangeably. For instance, a Catalan-speaking boy in the Catalan School defined ‘*garrulo*’ in a negative sense as ‘*aquella persona inculta, mmm... que, amb perdó cap als andalusos, però que tenen aquell accent andalus i basto, no saben parlar, parlen amb tacos...*’. Other interviewees saw all or most of these terms as ‘descriptive’ or even laudatory: ‘*O sea, me gusta lo cholo*’. The ambivalence of the terms does not stop here, since as in the case of *catalufo*, we could also distinguish a narrower meaning of these terms, not applied to all or most working-class Spanish-speaking youngsters or those with a Spanish national identity, and referring rather to an extreme, tough transgressive street style close to, or part of, the world of crime and urban Gypsy culture.

In general terms, these terms referred to a distinctive style – or range of styles – that was seen as the opposite of *catalufo* and included particular music, talk, body movement and dress. The following quote from the Catalan School is illustrative of this, since the two punk fans show the incompatibility between being a punk – which in their school, as we have seen, was mainly liked by Catalan-speaking pupils – and being *cholo*:

Roger: *I cholos n’hi ha entre els punks?*

Toni: *Cholos, entre els punks? És difícil trobar-ne, de cholos, dintre els punks.*

⁴¹ I am borrowing here the notion used by Pujolar (2001) to identify the speech style that incorporates many elements of the southern Andalusian dialect, even though it is spoken not only by the children of Andalusian immigrants, but also those from other parts of Spain and even some children of parents born in Catalonia. This ‘stylised Spanish’ signifies street and working class authenticity, since, as Pujolar notes when talking about his fieldwork among youngsters in Barcelona, ‘the degree to which men used Andalusian features did not seem to have much to do with their family background but with their commitment to particular masculine values’ (ibid.: 139).

Jaume: És que un *punk* que vagi amb pintes de *punk* ja no pot ser *cholo*. No és... L'estètica *cholo* és de l'altre.

Toni: *Bueno* però *cholo* es refereix al típic... Sí que hi ha famílies *choles*, per exemple. És o no? Doncs tu pots provenir d'una família *chola* i fer-te *punk*.

Roger: Això n'hi ha o no?

Toni: No n'hi ha... No ho sé [*they laugh*] *Bueno*, n'hi poden haver, però és molt *xungo*.

Jaume: Sí. Jo no en conec cap.

When Jaume says that 'un *punk* que vagi amb pintes de *punk* ja no pot ser *cholo*' is not saying that a '*cholo*' cannot be 'punk', but rather that if a '*cholo*' becomes a 'punk', he immediately stops being a '*cholo*'. This means that even if '*cholo*' is linked to your social origin ('pots venir d'una família *chola*'), it is ultimately a style, not an essence. The quote is also illustrative of the fact that punk, even if it is not explicitly or discursively 'catalanist' or '*catalufo*', given that it was basically liked by Catalan-speaking pupils, at least in that school it acquired 'non-Spanish' – or rather '*non-cholo*' – connotations.

A different thing is the association between both the term '*cholo*' and its associated music, particularly *màkina*, with what was called '*facha*', even though with some nuances: 'Si se asocia, pero no necesariamente. Dos de los mejores DJs que hay ahora, [*Piyuli i Carrió*], los dos son catalanistas, cuando hay entrevistas hablan en catalán y son catalanes y lo reconocen y no son fachas, ni mucho menos. [*Es decir, esto es una prueba de que n*]o tendría que estar asociada [*a ser facha*], pero se asocia'. It is clear that the term '*facha*' must not be understood in literal terms – even though one of the symbolic markers of this position was the Spanish-nationalist fascist skinhead style and its soft version '*pelao*' – but a general and diffuse expression of Spanish national identity as opposed to Catalanism:

Sofia: Lo que es *màkina* se sitúa en lo *facha* total, total. Pero... Lo que... Estopa y todo eso también se situaría "*facha*", entre comillas. Es así más *cholo*.

Montse: Y luego [*en el lado opuesto*] el catalán más independentista.

Roger: Pero en cambio las letras de Estopa no tienen nada de *facha*.

Sofia: No, pero o sea... Es como yo que sé... Como sí, no sé... Hablaban de su padre, no sé, es como... Tú los entiendes así, ¿vale? Yo que sé, yo desde pequeña me han metido a mí canciones de estas. Yo siempre hablo castellano, siempre voy a Andalucía en verano y *to* eso. Yo ya pienso de una forma, no me pidas responder porque... porque quiero que... [*No me pidas una razón de*] porque [*me identifico con*] España y no Cataluña, porque no te la voy a dar, porque no la sé, pero...

We are seeing here not so much a 'fascist' stance but a type of imbrication between musical sounds and a particular 'experience' and 'culture' in a similar sense to the way 'black' music was seen as an inherent part of 'black culture'. In neighbourhoods where Spanish immigration had been massive, as was the case of the Periphery School, the '*cholo*' or '*facha*' stances were dominant. The immigrant experience and particular cultural referents like '*flamenqueo*' music, stylised Spanish speech and working class pride, were all parts of this style, although they were unevenly embraced by different individuals. The fact is that '*cholo*' and

'*catalufo*' described more a range of positions than a clear cut opposition. When young people referred to its more extreme – and minority – manifestations, including a strong politicised Catalan or Spanish national identity, they tended to use the terms (Catalan) '*independentista*' and (Spanish) '*facha*' – although, depending on the context, these terms could also be simply synonymous with the broader '*cholo*' and '*catalufo*'. In the following quote we can appreciate how two boys in the Catalan School, when asked about the Catalan-Spanish distinction, describe the spectrum of positions, and alongside the link between Catalan rock and '*independentistes*', also related *màkina* music to 'Spanish nationalism':

Roger: I després, ¿[em podrieu dir si hi ha diferències] amb el català, castellà, més *quillo*, més no sé què, *catalufo*... coses d'aquestes, pels gustos que heu dit?

Dani: El noi aquest [que et deia que li agrada molt el rock català] és molt català, no? Aquest noi. (...)

Jose: Aquell és... Aquell és un independentista, és un estil total. Típic del... del reivindicar amb la seva roba, així més *maltrecha* i més... No sé, vestit com si diguéssim més *barato*, saps? Llavors sí, doncs els que *li* agrada la música, doncs... hi ha... A veure, hi ha un noi que per exemple li agrada molt la *màkina*, el *techno*, i el *dance* i tot això, però que vesteix normal. El Pep [they both laugh]. [N']hi ha, però... Però generalment, per exemple, després veus els *pelats* que saps que els *hi* agradarà la *màkina* totalment.

Roger: I n'hi ha aquí de *peladets*?

Dani: Sí. De tercer sobretot.

Jose: Ah, sí! De tercer d'ESO. I aquests, d'aquest curs, no. No hi ha extrems d'aquells que dius: "*Jolin*, quin *pelat* que..." (...)

Jose: Home, els veus que sí que vesteixen amb l'Alpha, i amb el... Tot això. Però no sé, els del nostre curs no arriben a ser molt... molt extremistes. Per exemple, l'Alberto sí, també li agrada tot això. *Bueno*, és [d'aquells que diuen]: "*M'agrada eso del Ejército Español*" [they laugh].

Roger: Que ha fet la mili o què?

Jose: No, no, si és de... [Només té] un any més que nosaltres, però si... Aquest vol ser... vol estar a l'exèrcit i...

Roger: I quina música escolta?

Both: *Màkina*.

Roger: O sigui, que això normalment va lligat a *màkina*?

Jose: Sí, sí.

Roger: Però no pel fet de ser *màkina* vol dir que tinguis això, pel que dieu? O sí?

Jose: No necessàriament, però normalment sí que va molt lligat.

The opposition between '*catalufo*' and '*cholo*' or any of the terms mentioned above was also present in the other two schools, as it was at the time in most schools in Catalonia⁴². The following example is from the Periphery School:

⁴² See Martínez & Pérez (1997), Serra (2001), Martínez & Alegre (2002) or Marimon (2006) for empirical research documenting this in different parts of Catalonia (Terrassa, Sant Cugat del Vallès and Castellar del Vallès, among others).

Roger: ¿Aquí hay gente que hable catalán?

Marta: ¡Que va! A mi que no me hablen en catalán porque no lo entiendo bien
[laughs]

Roger: ¿No lo entiendes?

Marta: Si pero [laughing] no quiero entenderlo.

Roger: ¿No quieres que te lo hablen?

Marta: No. No me gusta.

Roger: ¿Te revienta?

Marta: No me gusta, el catalán.

Roger: ¿Y aquí más o menos todo el mundo es así?

Marta: Si. Casi todo el mundo en la sociedad es igual. Menos los *pijos*, porque son de barrios diferentes. Pero los de barrios más o menos medios-bajos, es que todo el mundo es igual.

Roger: Vale. Y los *pijos* entre ellos son iguales, también...

Marta: Si. Todos son iguales. Son los *pijos*.

Roger: ¿Y los que hablan catalán crees que son *pijos* por definición?

Marta: Porque hables catalán no quiere decir que seas *pijo*. *Pijo* se te nota si eres *pijo*. Que seas catalán no quiere decir que seas *pijo*...

Roger: Porque aquí alguien habrá que hable catalán ¿no?

Marta: No sé, supongo... No lo sé.

Besides making clear the link between anti-Catalanism and a working-class identity as opposed to *pijos*, which we will analyse later, the quote is informative in showing how Marta (said that she) did not know any Catalan-speaking pupils in the school, and that she assumed that ‘casi todo el mundo en la sociedad es igual’; that is, she assumed that only a minority spoke Catalan. We must not assume, however, that her perception was shared by all her classmates: although some of them showed similar attitudes, many others rejected such typifications: ‘Bueno, [los catalanes y los *pelaos*] están mezclados, ¿no? Porque yo creo que... la lengua no tiene que [ver con] ir a un lado o a otro, o sea, no...’. In general, however, it was agreed that ‘catalanist’ and ‘*facha*’ represented quite well two opposed positions in the school, and that it was linked to taste in music, pointing again to a link between being ‘*catalufo*’ and liking ‘*rock català*’ and, in the case of one interviewee, who gave the example of a cousin of hers, liking ‘house’ (‘pues mi prima es catalanista y está con el *house* que no caga, *tío*’). The following quote from two girls in the Periphery School provides an illustration of how the intensity of these meanings helped the interviewees to map out youth geographies in the school, and also to the many intermediate positions young people negotiated there:

Rosa: Pasa que la gente inculca mucho la música con el lenguaje, ¿eh? Parece mentira, pero... Pero es verdad.

Roger: O sea que...

Rosa: Sí porque a ver, a la gente catalanista les gusta una serie de música que a los... Que por ejemplo a los *fachas* no [les gusta]... Y viceversa.

Roger: Porque “catalanista”, ¿qué quiere decir? ¿Que es un catalán o que son...?

Rosa: Que viven en Cataluña, que hablan el catalán y que...

Eli: Y que quieren independizarse de España, vamos.

Rosa: También. Además tu ves... Tu ves a un facha y ves a un catalanista, y a cien metros a la vista los diferencias. Pero visten de otra manera, hablan de otra manera... Hablan de otra manera.

Eli: Los catalanistas casi siempre llevan pinchitos por aquí y...

Rosa: Llevan la ropa ancha, llevan el pelo... Las chicas [llevan el pelo] corto normalmente y con... Y tin... Y pintado de colores. Y el típico facha[, en cambio,] lleva el pelo corto. Sí, que se diferencia en todo: que si la [chaqueta] Alpha, ropa ajustá... O sea, llevan siempre los tejanos *ajustaos*, o ropa de chándal ajustada, corta. Todo de marca, casi todo de marca.

Roger: ¿Y el catalanista? ¿Y aquí [de] catalanista habrá alguno? ¿En el instituto habrá, alguno?

Eli: No he visto ni uno. [He visto] de chicas yo sólo.

Rosa: Yo de chicos no he visto ninguno.

Roger: ¿Y de fachas y así?

Rosa: Todo el mundo, todo el mundo.

Eli: Yo no soy facha, sino catalana y española. Yo facha es que... Uno, que esta gente [que dice] "Soy facha, soy facha" [no tiene mucho sentido]. Tú... considerar... [Yo les diría:] "¿Tú sabes lo que es facha?" A ver, [ellos dicen] "España, España", [pero yo digo] "¿Cataluña qué? Cataluña te está dando de comer, le ha dado un trabajo a tu padre, un trabajo a tu madre y..."

Rosa: A mí me da igual.

Roger: Pero la otra gente, la mayoría sería así, más o menos.

Rosa: La mayoría de la gente, o sea... Repudia, o sea, son catalanes y repudian a los catalanes. La mayoría de aquí [en el instituto yo les diría: "Pero] si eres catalán, catalán. ¿De qué estás hablando?" Por eso que *pa mí*, como no entiendo... A ver, no es que no entienda... [Pero] como no me he puesto a leer lo que significa ser facha o ser catalanista pues...

Eli: Es que son una... Una ideología, ¿sabes? *Mu* rara.

Rosa: La mayoría de los grupos y la mayoría de todo. Todos se relacionan con lo mismo, con la ideología que tengas, y eso es cierto. La mayoría de... O sea, si tú vas en un grupo de amigos y son todos iguales... No puede haber uno que sea tal y otro cual. No, no, no. Como seas de ideología, te gustará la música, te vestirás, irás con los amigos, irás a las discotecas, o lo que sea...

In general, besides anti-Catalanism, the extreme '*pelao*' or '*facha*' style, and in milder terms the softer versions of it, also showed an open racism towards non-European immigrants. The *màkina* style, in contrast with its homologous '*hardcore*' music style in Birmingham, was linked to what was named '*pelao*' style, that is, an adaptation of a neo-Nazi – the narrower sense of '*facha*' – skinhead style combined with *màkina* music. The '*facha*' identification of this style was focused on its anti-catalanism and its racism. As two *màkina* fans put it in the Periphery School:

Francisco: No sé.. Hay que ser racista, para los inmigrantes que vienen, porque encima que vienen a tu país, sin papeles...

Álvaro: Encima te vienen a atracar.

Francisco: Encima te vienen a robar y a todo... a cualquier cosa que pillen.

Roger: ¿Os han atracado alguna vez o no?

Francisco: No. A mí moros no. A mí... Lógico, la única vez que me han robado han sido tres personas [del barrio de al lado].

In the Inner City School, however, both the Catalan-Spanish divide and the racist remarks against non-European immigrant youngsters were generally absent from the interviews. As we have mentioned when analysing the term '*catalufò*', in contrast with the Periphery School the interviewees did not express an overtly 'anti-Catalan' stance. Two of them, in spite of being much more proficient in Spanish, answered some or all the questions in Catalan. A Moroccan boy explained that he used bits of Catalan because 'Si le hablas en catalán [a los catalanes] se ponen contentos...'⁴³. It is difficult to know to what extent this absence of an open anti-Catalan stance applied also to private situations, but the difference was nevertheless significant⁴⁴. Another notable difference was that in the Inner City School, those youngsters with a *màkina* style did not show the open racism generally linked to it. Although the *màkina* style was important and almost hegemonic among 'white' Spanish-speaking pupils, their need to deal with racism on a day-to-day basis made it different from the Periphery School. In both the school and its neighbourhood, this open racism was difficult to sustain, since it would bring direct confrontation with 'actual immigrants', so those who liked *màkina* were either not racist or showed their racism in more subtle ways, adjusting to what Maza (1999) identified as one of the core values of inner-city neighbourhoods: respect, understood as not being hassled or bothered as long as you do not hassle or bother others. Racism did exist, but could not take the crude, simplistic and typical form it took among some pupils in the Periphery School. Just like in Birmingham, many pupils also had a reflexive attitude against racism, and analysed and scrutinised their classmates' behaviour in terms of the presence or absence of racist attitudes and practices. This interview with a white girl and an Indian girl is a good illustration of this anti-racism:

Samanta: Porque es que [los inmigrantes] tienen mala fama y les acompañará en todo. [Los de aquí] ven a alguien [que es de fuera] robar, y les coge a todos [los inmigrantes] mala fama.

Esther: Claro. Ahí... A ver, los marroquíes son los que roban, pero no todos. A ver, aquí en este *cole* hay personas... No sé, ves la Darija, es majísima.

Samanta: Y el Karim también, de mi clase, es majísimo.

⁴³ Exactly the same reason why I always ordered 'bitter' when I was in Birmingham. After a while I naturally started to treat 'lager' with suspicion.

⁴⁴ According to my personal experience as a pupil of the Periphery School fifteen years before the fieldwork, at that time did there was no public expression or representation of an open anti-Catalan stance. At that time, such positions were much less visible and labelled as 'eccentric' by both Catalan- and Spanish-speaking pupils. Pujolar (2001) provides a good ethnographic account of the way in which they were experienced in 1992, when a mild anti-Catalanism could already be identified but neither the adjective '*Catalufò*' nor other visible representations had yet become popular.

Esther: Claro. Luego hay otras personas que no son iguales... Pero a ver, [si] yo tengo la culpa [de hacer algo malo, y yo] soy india, no todos los indios tienen porque pagar, ¿no? Porque la culpa la tengo yo, pero no los otros.

Samanta: Por cuatro malos que hay pagan todos.

Roger: Y dices que entre los jóvenes eso pasa menos, ¿o también pasa?

Samanta: Muy de vez en cuando, pero en una pelea sí que suele salir.

Esther: Sí.

Roger: ¿En una pelea? Y entonces salen los insultos, los... ¿Pero si no, no?

Esther: Si no, no. Si ya van bien.

The example of *màkina* music being popular in the Inner City School but without its radical racist connotations shows how, depending on the school context, each style and its meanings must be, and is, negotiated. The Catalan School provides another illustration of this phenomenon, since the relatively important presence of Catalan-speaking pupils and the related fact that *màkina* music was not very popular, made liking it a completely different experience from the other two schools. One interviewee who liked *màkina* in the Catalan School put it as follows:

Alberto: Sí. Porque por ejemplo, aquí la *màkina* está peor vista porque es *màkina*, parece más de *pelado*, de *chungo* y tal. Y en cambio, en otros barrios, pues como la gente... es un barrio... digamos peor o de menos nivel, pues la gente va más de *pelada* para ir más *de puesta* y le gusta la *màkina*. (...) O sea, es que para verte así importante, pues te haces *facha* y ya está. Sin sentirlo a veces, pero te haces *facha*. Es que aquí[, en cambio]... digamos [que] en este tipo de institutos [como Catalan School], es más real quien es... quien es *facha* y esto. Es más real porque en el fondo lo siente, porque es más difícil serlo aquí. En cambio, en otros sitios, pues casi casi si no lo eres estás marginado. (...) Aquí es más real.

When I asked him to define himself, he said he was ‘más nacionalista [español], más *facha*’, and his friend, present in the interview, added: ‘Yo voy en contra de los catalanes (...). No los catalanes, porque yo soy catalán, ¿vale? Pero yo soy nacionalista [español, y a] los catalanes [es que] no... No los entiendo [a] los independentistas, los que se quieren separar. Es a lo que yo voy en contra de eso’. This is a good example of what has been said above, since although the interviewees typified the more ‘extreme’ end of the spectrum, most of them perceived the majority of their classmates and themselves as mainly undifferentiated in the middle, with just a slight inclination towards one of the poles. This is why, as seen above, we must bear in mind that the terms ‘*cholo*’, ‘*catalufo*’ and others are ‘relational’, since their meaning varies according on the context. It is as if all young people could be placed on a supposed ‘*cholo-non cholo*’ as well as on a supposed ‘*catalufo-non catalufo*’ continuum. Since these are mutually exclusive, depending on their position they would see each other as ‘more *catalufo*’ or ‘more *cholo*’, although it is also possible to be neither of them. A ‘mildly *cholo*’ interviewee, so to speak, would only see as ‘*cholo*’ the more extreme manifestations of this style, whereas a ‘markedly *catalufo*’ interviewee would group as ‘*cholos*’ both

the extreme and the mild manifestations of it. A girl at the Catalan School provides a good example of this: she liked some ‘*gitaneo*’ music – like Estopa, Niña Pastori and Camarón – and spent her holidays in the south of Spain (‘en verano me lo paso en el sur, porque mi familia es del sur’). In this sense, she perfectly matched the stereotype of ‘*cholo*’ or ‘*quillo*’. Nevertheless, her accent and style were not openly ‘*cholo*’, and for instance she liked house music, which was seen as rather ‘*pijo*’ by most classmates. In the following words, we will see how she did not consider herself ‘*chola*’, and in fact tried to distinguish in terms of ‘*cholo* intensity’ between herself and those who liked *màkina* compilations:

Roger: Luego el *house* que tienes, *màkina*, que ¿qué CDs son? ¿Son recopilatorios de discoteca...?

Sofía: El último que me he comprado es el Pioneer, ¿sabes cuál es?

Roger: No.

Sofía: El Pioneer, ay, es muy conocido: Tiene tres CDs, uno es de *house*, de *dance*... Uno es de *house*, otro de *dance* y *progressive*, y en el de *progressive* sale la de Björk que es la número siete, y en la número siete empieza lo *guapo*.

Roger: ¿Y [compilaciones] de Pont Aeri y esto también?

Sofía: No, eso es más *cholo*.

Not all youngsters shared her view of the club Pont Aeri and *màkina* music as more ‘*cholo*’ than ‘*gitaneo*’. For instance, two male classmates of hers who liked *màkina* music very much defined Los Chichos and Camela, generally seen as ‘*gitaneo*’, as ‘too *cholos*’. Sofía and her friend Montse, moreover, laughed at what they called ‘*chololiné*’, even though at least Sofía might be partially seen as ‘*chola*’ by many classmates. Indeed, she established how, while not being overtly anti-Catalan, the Catalan-Spanish distinction was useful to define her identity as ‘closer to the *fachas*’ than to the ‘*catalanists*’:

Roger: ¿A quién le gusta el *rock català*? Esto no lo habéis dicho antes, cuando hablábamos de aquí, ¿no?

Sofía: Es que a mí no me gusta.

Roger: Ya, no, no... Pero cuando hablábamos de grupos que yo os digo “¿Qué grupos hay aquí en el Instituto?”...

Sofía: Sí, más la gente independentista y así. Bueno, hay los independentistas y los que serían *fachas* ya. Los catalanes, catalanes y los que serían *fachas* (...).

Roger: ¿Y que son dos minorías o la mayoría más independentista, o nada de los dos?

Montse: Minorías.

Roger: ¿Sí? ¿Y qué?

Sofía: Pues yo me decanto por el otro, porque del otro participo más.

Roger: ¿Por cuál?

Sofía: Yo, España.

Thus, the existence of the terms must not make us think of an extremist segregation between ‘*cholos*’ or ‘*fachas*’, on the one hand, and ‘*catalufos*’ or

'*independentistes*', on the other. On the contrary, many interviewees explicitly rejected either this opposition, its simplification or being positioned in it. We have already seen some examples of this in different quotes, where interviewees claimed that '*pelaos*' and '*fachas*' mixed completely, or that identifying with '*fachas*' was senseless. Another good example is the following quote, where Susana, who likes *màkina* music and has Spanish-speaking parents, even though she answers in Catalan, rejects making a direct association between *màkina* music and being '*facha*', using her case as an example (her friend Maria spoke Catalan at home and did not like *màkina*):

Susana: No, però és una cosa que aquesta imatge d'anar de *pelat*, només per anar de *pelat* doncs has de ser un repel·lent i un *xulo* i, tampoc és això.

Roger: I lo de la imatge també de... allò d'anar més de fatxa?

Susana: També, però, això de fatxa, buff! Vull dir [que] jo per exemple... Jo no sóc fatxa, igualment dic "Visca Catalunya" com dic "Visca Espanya", perquè... Perquè jo no sóc de família catalana, però això és un tema personal. No perquè t'agradi la *màkina* has de ser...

Maria: Fatxa.

Susana: Home, també... Normalment els revolucionaris o els independentistes no els *hi* agrada la *màkina*, els *hi* agrada el *ska*. Això va molt amb el teu àmbit social amb que *hi* vas...

Roger: Sí?

Susana: Sí.

Roger: I els de *màkina*? Els que són així més per Espanya tendeixen més a agradar més la *màkina*, en general?

Maria: Normalment, sí, eh? Sí és que... Jo tota la gent que he conegut així... No fatxa, però, molt així...

Susana: Normalment no es posen a parlar en català, es parla molt més en castellà.

Maria: [La Susana] Parla castellà [amicably teasing her]

Roger: O sigui, *algo* té a veure?

Susana: Sí.

We see that Susana simultaneously rejects and partially acknowledges (although only as a generalisation, not as a norm) the identification between *màkina* and '*facha*'. Another interviewee, a boy, did not consider that *màkina* could be considered '*facha*' or 'skin', because 'real *fachas*' listened to 'otro tipo de música esta, de más, estilo Imperial, y cosas de estas más radicales'⁴⁵. He claimed, as Susana partially does in the previous quote, the neutrality of *màkina* music and style in terms of national and linguistic identity.

The truth is, therefore, that even if there was a broadly shared stock of typical knowledge that organised the world in the polarised terms explained above, young people negotiated and used it in complex and diverse ways. The fact that Flaix

⁴⁵ See Viñas (2001) for an analysis of the link between skin-heads and music, including the role of '*imperial*' music and what he calls '*nacional-bakaladeros*'.

FM, the radio station which was perceived as closer to *màkina*, broadcast entirely in Catalan, originate some tension and contradiction in a couple of interviewees:

Sofia: *Cuarenta, Flaix FM*, aunque es bastante independentista pero me gusta la música.

Roger: Pero es independentista ¿por qué, porque es en catalán?

Sofia: No sé... Sí... no es que no sé, no sé... [*she laughs because she does not know*]

Roger: ¿Te provoca conflicto escucharla?

Sofia: Sí, no, no...

Sofia: No, no entro en ningún conflicto ni nada por el estilo pero, a ver, preferiría que fuera en castellano la radio, o sea, traducirlo, que estoy en Cataluña, vale, pero que sea en castellano, no sé... Pero a ver, lo escucho todo...

In other words, the fact that the main *màkina* (and dance) radio station in Barcelona broadcast in Catalan was experienced by a few interviewees as ‘contradictory’, and it is not difficult to guess that it probably mitigated the anti-Catalan connotation of *màkina* music. One interviewee even linked *màkina* to ‘Catalanism’ because of associating it with *Flaix FM* and one of its owners, a popular TV presenter with a well-known Catalanist stance.

In a way, we could see terms like ‘*cholo*’, ‘*facha*’ or ‘*pelao*’ as the Barcelona version of what young people in the White School called ‘*kevs*’ – that is, a working class youth style representing toughness and an archetypical masculinity – but with two crucial differences, one of which was that the class and toughness distinction was combined with the Catalan-Spanish distinction. The ‘opposite’ term to ‘*cholo*’ could be either ‘*pijo*’, if it was in terms of class or generalised advantage, or ‘*catalufo*’, if it was in terms of national identity. The articulation of the two axes (generalised advantage and linguistic and national adscription) is crucial to understand how it works. Just as ‘*quillo*’ and ‘*cholo*’ had strong working class connotations, ‘*catalufo*’ was often identified with ‘*pijo*’, although for middle-class Catalan-speaking youngsters the ‘real *pijos*’ spoke Spanish (not the working class stylised Spanish but a very different speech style).⁴⁶ The point is, however, that ‘posh’ Spanish-speaking youngsters are symbolically absent from the ‘*cholo-catalufo*’ opposition, which constructs ‘Catalan’ as ‘posh’ and Spanish as ‘*cholo*’, and thus ignores the relevance of the posh-Spanish reality and speech style.

Since we will analyse the opposition between ‘*cholo*’ and ‘*pijo*’ when dealing with the imbrication of generalised advantage, I will concentrate now on the opposition between ‘*cholo*’ and ‘*catalufo*’ and look more closely at the link between ‘*cholo*’ and ‘gypsiness’, which played a strong symbolic role in the definition of the ‘rough’, ‘tough’ and ‘street-wise’ features associated with ‘*choloness*’. It is not only that ‘*flamencueo*’ music was often named ‘*gitaneo*’ (flamenco music, as well as *rumba*, is mainly played by gypsies, and is particularly popular in Andalusia, where the

⁴⁶ In Catalonia, from the 19th Century on, Catalan was progressively abandoned by many middle and upper-class families in favour of Spanish, which was regarded as more ‘cosmopolitan’ and ‘refined’. See, for instance, McDonogh (1989[1986]).

gypsy population is proportionally greater than in the rest of Spain), but also that the gypsy imagery was very often part of the equation when describing the meaning of 'cholo'. We have said above that the terms 'cholo', 'lolailo', 'jezna' or 'calorro' were often used synonymously. 'Gitano', in a wide sense, was also linked to them, as when one girl, when asked whether they used the term 'quillo', answered 'Quillo, sí: Quillo, gitano, cholo, claro...'. Only one of the interviewees declared a real link with gypsies:

Roger: ¿En tú casa qué les gusta?

Eli: ¿En mi casa? A mi madre le gusta *to*.

Rosa: *Jaloteo*.

Eli: ¡Eh! Sí, bueno, como mi tío. Mi tío coge la guitarra, nos vamos pa'bajo al local, nos metemos toda la familia y todos los del fútbol y ahí fumando. Se pega las horas muertas con la guitarra, cantando y de *to*. *Flamenqueo*. Pero más bien... Mi familia es más bien como medio gitana por parte de mi padre.

Rosa: Ya se la ve.

After Eli explains that her family is half gypsy, Rosa says, '*ya se le ve*', implying that her gypsy influences explained her identification with '*flamenqueo*'. Later, Rosa herself, when explaining how she had started to like '*jaloteo*', which was not liked by her parents, said that after liking her mother's music, from Madonna to George Michael,

un día me fui con una amiga mía [que es], o sea, es que es la cosa más gitana que te puedes tirar a la cara y en plan de música [le gustan] que si los Chichos, [que sí] el Camarón... Y a mi al principio, yo que sé, [pensaba:] "¿Qué es esto?". [Pero poco a poco] ya me empezó a gustar. Empecé... Esto hará pues un año o dos... Es que me empezó a gustar, tal... Estopa me encanta. [Y entonces] que ya empecé a ir a las discotecas, no sé qué...

She explains her taste for this music through the fact that a friend (not Eli), 'es la cosa más gitana que te puedes tirar a la cara'. In her case, as in the case of many youngsters, this music was not part of their family background, but was adopted as part of working-class and Spanish-immigrant identity in Barcelona. In this production of meaning, 'gypsiness' played an important role in providing authenticity, even though at the same time it was in a way strongly stigmatised. '*Gitaneo*' music, depending on the context, was sometimes even linked to actually being a gypsy. Moreover, terms like 'cholo', 'quillo' or 'lolailo' were sometimes used in a narrow sense that directly referred to actual gypsies, like when one girl in the Inner City School said that in her school nobody liked '*lolailo*' music: 'No, no, no, no, *lolailo* aquí no. No hi ha gitanos ni res, em sembla...'

The 'gypsy' connection was nevertheless more often merely symbolic, and the word '*gitaneo*' generally referred to the music style, but not to gypsy ethnicity. We can see a very broad reference to 'gypsiness', in this case in relation to '*gitaneo*' music, in the words of another girl, who when asked about what was generally liked in her school, the Periphery School, answered as follows: '[A todo el mundo

le gusta] muy parecido, o al menos con las que voy yo, muy parecido: Gitaneo, Chasis, Área, pero sobre todo gitaneo, Estopa a mí me encanta, los Chichos...'. Her answer makes '*gitaneo*' music, *màkina* music and Estopa part of the same taste. Estopa was a social phenomenon that year. It was composed of two brothers from Cornellà, born in Catalonia, and they combined the rock and '*rumba*' sounds of the Barcelona Spanish-immigrant periphery of the 1980s with lyrics about their everyday reality in the streets. They were not 'gypsies' nor had any connection with 'gypsiness' other than their '*rumba*' sound, but they were seen as the popular expression of '*gitaneo*', that is, of '*jaloteo*' and what we could loosely term '*cholo* identity'. This is what we must understand when two Moroccan boys said that they liked '*gitano*' music, or when a youngster recently arrived in Barcelona from an Eastern European country said:

Sebastian: Me gusta la música gitana.

Roger: ¿Te gusta?

Sebastian: Sí. A mí me gusta, pero no toda.

Roger: ¿Cómo cuál?

Sebastian: Me gusta Estopa. Que mi novia la escucha.

'Gypsy' was symbolically important not only because of the music, but also because of its connection, in imagined terms, with street culture including toughness, crime and even prison. Even though during recent decades many Spanish gypsies have gradually become invisible through a process of integration within the mainstream institutions of housing, schooling and the job market, the popular typification identifies them with outsiders using tricks and robbery to earn a living, as well as with urban marginal and criminal gangs. 'Gypsiness', therefore, connoted both musical and cultural authenticity *and* toughness and a delinquent inclination. One Moroccan pupil in the Inner City School, when asked about whether there were 'tougher' people that you had to beware of in the neighbourhood, answered that 'Según por qué parte vayas, por ejemplo, si vas a [esa calle], pues ahí hay gente... (...) Los gitanos esos'. Even Eli, the girl in the Periphery School who was 'half gypsy', dismissed one night bar because the last time she went to it there were a few gypsies around:

Eli: Y mucho, hay mucho gitano allí, o sea,

Rosa: No, en Señor Lobo no hay ningún gitano.

Eli: ¿Qué no? Mira, fui yo ese día y era dar una de... Este de cerveza, una maceta de cerveza, y cogieron y se la echaron a una chica dos o tres gitanas. Y dicen: "¿Qué haces? ¡No sé qué! ¡Que me vas a manchar la ropa nueva". Y le dicen: "¿Qué has dicho hija de puta?" Y la cogieron, pegándole puñetazos, con la navaja *navajándola*. Sí, sí, las tuvieron que echar fuera y no las dejaban entrar.

The representation of 'gypsiness' as both a source of authenticity and a stigmatised ethnicity is similar to what happens with 'blackness' or 'Afro-Caribbean' ethnicity in Birmingham. In a sense, 'gypsiness' becomes the source of

working-class 'coolness' and 'authenticity' in Barcelona similar to 'black culture' being the source of working-class coolness and authenticity in Birmingham. The difference is that (middle-class) Catalan-speaking youngsters and their music do not seem as permeable as their English counterparts. This means that in contrast with black influence in middle-class popular music in Birmingham, popular '*jaloteo*' remains a strictly working-class phenomenon. It is true that during the last decade (more or less purist) flamenco music has gained recognition among what we might call 'middle-class cosmopolitanism', and that an '*aflamencado*' sound in popular music has lost some of its 'no-way' status in the eyes of many Catalan-speaking youngsters. Nevertheless, its influence on Catalan and middle-class popular culture is rather slight.

The question is what will happen with these positions and oppositions once the new 'immigrant' youngsters – Latin-American, Moroccan, Pakistani or Chinese – fully enter youth geographies. We have already mentioned the open racism of the *màkina* or '*pelao*' style, which although it was not shared by all who liked the music, was part of the dominant connotations it projected. In Barcelona, Pakistanis and Moroccans (popularly and derogatively referred to as '*moros*', Moorish, and also typified as Maghrebis or Arabs, although many Maghrebis are Berbers, not Arabs) are more stigmatised than Latin-Americans and 'blacks' ('blackness' is not as strongly associated with 'trouble' and 'crime' as is the case in the US or the UK; this link is mainly made in relation to Moroccans and Pakistanis). However, all of them face racist reactions in their everyday life. One interviewee from Periphery School, for instance, when asked about the commercial centre with night bars Maremagnum, answered the following: 'A mi no me gusta. A mi no me gusta, porque desde que Maremagnum es *Moromagnum* que no. No me entra'.

The only school with real ethnic diversity was the Inner City School. In the Catalan School, everyone was white and Catalan or Spanish-speaking. In the Periphery School, only one – Roland, from Colombia – was mentioned in the interviews (and interviewed), even though the school had a few other pupils from Latin-America and Morocco. Roland, who was black, was seen as 'different' because of his strong commitment to rap music – which was at that moment not very popular among the other pupils: only two, a Catalan-speaking boy and a Spanish-speaking girl, said they liked it quite a lot. Roland had kept the same taste in music as he had in Colombia, where he lived until he migrated to Barcelona two years before the interview.

In the Inner City School, by contrast, most of the pupils were not from either Catalonia or Spain. It was here, therefore, that the articulation between music and ethnicity was more vivid and complex. Two white girls put it as follows:

Roger: Em podeu dir ara, aquí a l'escola, a l'institut, quins gustos hi ha més? Vegem, a vosaltres us agrada més el *pop* que dieu, no? Llavors quins grups hi ha per gustos musicals?

Ana: (...) Clar, a veure, els marroquins i els àrabs escolten la seva música, àrab. La àrab, música àrab...

Roger: No t'agrada a tu la música àrab?

Sara: Una cançó, la marroquí m'agrada perquè a més que entenc em va començar a agradar i...

Roger: La música marroquí.

Ana: Els espanyols estan les noies, amb els Backstreet Boys i els nois màkina, màkina, i més màkina.

Sara: *Bueno* això de quart.

Roger: Sí, sí, de quart sí.

Sara: *Bueno* alguna de quart li agrada Melón Diesel, també.. (...) I després el dels *colombianos* i tot això els *hi* agrada salsa, tots. A mi no m'agrada la salsa.

Ana: Però a mi la salsa ballable.

Roger: Però també els *hi* agrada el *pop* a les colombianes?

Sara: Sí.

Ana: Sí.

Roger: I als marroquins?

Sara: No. No gaire.

Ana: Home, alguna, alguna noia ara li agrada els Backstreet Boys, ara.

Ana and Sara later characterised the Moroccan girls who liked Backstreet Boys and other pop music as those who were more 'adapted', that is, who participated in the cultural pattern of Barcelona's youth social space. In general, those Moroccans, or immigrants from any other country, who had already been in Barcelona for a long time, were more likely to listen to some pop or *màkina* music, and to mix with young indigenous people, like the Moroccan boy we have quoted in Chapter 4 differentiating between Moroccan youngsters depending on whether they had arrived to Barcelona long ago or recently ('Aquí cada uno tiene su sitio'). Rock music, on the other hand, tended to be perceived as distant, rare, strange, and in general it was not considered a 'possible' choice. In contrast to Afro-Caribbeans or Asians in Birmingham or Spanish immigrants in Barcelona, these youngsters in the Inner City School, like Roland in the Periphery School, were not descendants of immigrants, but had immigrated *themselves*, so their personal trajectory was important in understanding their location in Barcelona's youth geographies⁴⁷. One Moroccan boy who had arrived in Barcelona many years previously, when talking about Moroccan girls' taste in music, put it as follows:

Karim: Las marroquíes... [escuchan] *raï* sólo. *Raï* y la música árabe. Y alguna que otra... Las que escuchan *màkina* o así o rock son las que hace tiempo que están aquí... Porque las que han llegado no saben lo que es *màkina*... Están muy metidos en su mundo. Y las españolas de aquí escuchan la música española esta de Estopa y *màkina*...

Karim's words also stress the importance of gender. As another Moroccan boy said, 'Yo creo que hay chicas que les gustan... No les gustan el mismo tipo de

⁴⁷ See Feixa, Porxio and Recio (2006) for a portrait of the experience of immigration among young 'Latinos' in Barcelona.

música...'. Whereas Moroccan boys usually liked *raï* and Arab rap, and quite often *màkina*, Moroccan girls seemed to prefer traditional Arab music and some *raï*.⁴⁸

Apart from what was called 'Arab' music and some *màkina* and pop music, Moroccans also liked some 'Asian' or 'Pakistani' music, in some cases liking it a lot. This was expressed by whites and Pakistanis, and acknowledged by some Moroccans when asked. Pupils from Pakistan and Morocco formed different groups, but in some respect were seen as close to each other, not only by outsiders but also by themselves. The musical similarities, in addition to their common immigrant experience and their often shared religion, facilitated bridges between them. One Moroccan boy, for instance, when asked the extent to which they were different, answered 'Un poco sí, en algunas cosas, la tradición del país, a lo mejor, sí. Después, la religión todos iguales, todos hacemos el Ramadán, todos iguales'. Pakistani interviewees said they liked *bhangra* and some traditional 'Indian' music (they did not use the adjective 'Asian'), as well as, in some cases, some pop and *màkina* music.

The fact is that both Arab and Pakistani music were practically invisible to the whites. This invisibility was 'naturalised' by both whites and Moroccans or Pakistanis because of the language barriers. One Moroccan boy argued that white people did not like *raï* because 'hay que traducir para enterar', and several white interviewees used the same linguistic arguments: 'Pero ellos escuchan la suya, ellos la entenderán, es su idioma... Nosotros escuchamos la música nuestra'. Nevertheless, language did not seem to be a problem in the case of American and British pop music ('Canciones en inglés yo las escucho y no sé ni lo que dicen, pero me gusta'). In any case, it is clear enough that there was a significant distance between 'Arab' and 'Pakistani' music, on the one hand, and 'Western', on the other, although there were several Moroccans and Pakistanis who liked 'westernised' music (one white girl, for instance, said 'Màkina, algunos sí, pero otros no', and one Moroccan boy, in relation to English music, said that 'Hay marroquíes que les gustan los de inglés y esas cosas...') and a few whites who had a certain liking for Arab and Indian music (like one girl who, when she moved to the neighbourhood, found cultural diversity very interesting: 'Cuando llegué aquí me gustó mucho. (...) Conocer otros países, conocer otras lenguas, otras culturas'). When whites liked Arab or Pakistani music, however, their involvement tended to be rather superficial:

Karim: Se mezcla mucho...

Roger: ¿Sí?

Karim: Sí, porque por ejemplo hay gente española aquí que también escucha *raï*...

Roger: Que tiene cintas y todo...

Karim: No, cintas no...

⁴⁸ See Schade-Poulsen (1995), Sánchez García (2002) and Huq (2006) for an analysis of *raï* music and youth culture.

In some cases, the distance between the groups meant that some young white people did not even know the music that was liked by Moroccans and Pakistanis, had not heard of *rai* music, or thought that Moroccans and Pakistanis liked the same music as everybody else ('Es igual, es lo mismo. Yo no lo distingo, para mí es lo mismo'). As a young Moroccan man put it, 'los españoles, pues *màkina*... El *rai* no saben lo que es. Yo les digo, "¿Sabes lo que es *rai*?", y no lo saben...'. Another illustration of the distance between the groups was the difficulty of many Moroccans and Pakistanis in portraying youth geographies, since they tended to have imprecise and opaque mental maps of musical geographies in Barcelona. It is not only that when asked about rock or heavy music they seemed generally confused, but also that most of them had never heard of the Beatles, the Rolling Stones or even Estopa, the most popular Spanish band at that moment in the three schools. Others had heard of Estopa or the Spice Girls, but had never listened to them, and claimed that in their school 'A casi nadie le gusta'.

As happened with what was called '*gitaneo*' or '*flamenqueo*', all the musical forms associated with 'immigrant' youngsters were experienced by those who liked them as an expression of their immigrant experience or origin (in the case of the Spanish, they were the children and often grand children of those who immigrated several decades ago). When asked about what they liked about the music, some said things like 'la realidad (...). Lo de las pateras, ¿sabes? Pues a veces... se dice, yo que sé, que hay gente que ha venido desde Marruecos para echar la cabeza en el agua...'. A couple of interviewees also named the importance of the religious lyrics of some Pakistani music they liked.

The other significant 'ethnic' group was the Latin-Americans, who included a variety of origins. Even though their linguistic and cultural proximity to the locals facilitated their relative invisibility in ethnic terms, or at least meant a less clear separation from the locals, their immigrant experience led many of them to stick together, and they were in fact stereotyped by the major society as '*pandilleros*' (gang oriented).⁴⁹ In terms of music, particularly when their arrival to Barcelona was recent, their taste was notably different from the locals. Roxana, a Colombian girl, for instance, showed a strong commitment to the music she liked back in Colombia – which she called '*merengue*', '*salsa*', '*pop Latino*' and '*trance*'. There was one group, the Dominicans, who were seen as markedly different. Two local female interviewees expressed the difference by saying 'Hay sectas, son sectas... (...) Es que hay una música que es muy rara, no sé, por ejemplo, un día fui a una tienda de ropa, y había música rarísima, no sé que música era'.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Corona (2006). See also Feixa, Porzio & Recio (2006) for an in-depth analysis of Latin-American youngsters in Barcelona and what they describe as a process of 'ethnogenesis'. As happened with Asian identity in Britain, a new 'Latin' identity is created by emigrated Latin-Americans in Barcelona and many other cities.

⁵⁰ None of the interviewees named 'reggaeton', which Feixa, Porzio & Recio (2006) identify a few years later as a central sound in the new Latin identity of Latin-Americans in Barcelona.

The Inner City School was the only one of the three schools in Barcelona where tension among the pupils seemed comparable to that in the three Birmingham schools. In comparison to the Periphery and Catalan schools' relaxed atmosphere, in the Inner City School there were many pupils with a marked anti-school attitude⁵¹. Interaction was notably physical in the corridors, as it was in the neighbourhood – quite rough in comparison to the others. Ethnic diversity was yet another element of tension, since cultural differences could sometimes become sources of conflict. In general, the interviewees valued the acceptably good relations between the different ethnic groups, as happened in Birmingham's schools, and racism was not considered an important problem. All agreed that the teaching staff did an excellent job preventing racism within the walls of the school and, as happened with Afro-Caribbeans and Asians in Birmingham, Moroccans in the Inner City School also used group solidarity to prevent direct racist remarks.

Samanta: Si se pelea un marroquí con un español, todos los marroquíes a por el español.

Esther: Aquí eso no suele pasar, porque aquí si un español se pelea solo tiene que pelear el español, se tiene que defender por sí mismo. Pero ellos [los marroquíes,] no. Si, por ejemplo... si yo me peleo ahora con una chica... marroquí, estarán al salir veinte marroquíes esperando. Y en cambio yo solo... Y eso... La pelea están todos. (...)

Esther: Tienes problemas, después.

This is not the same as saying that racism was absent. A female white interviewee who was dating a Pakistani boy experienced racist remarks ('A ella le dicen: "¿Qué haces con un pakistani?"; "que no sé qué"; 'O pelean, porque si el español está, por ejemplo, con una marroquí, [le dicen]: "¿Qué que haces con esa? ¿Que no sé qué, que no sé cuantos!" Y eso pasa mucho...'), but more from adults in the neighbourhood than from young people in the school. Only two white female interviewees made racist remarks directed against the '*pakis*' during the interview (the same two girls were criticised by other white classmates because of their 'racism').

After analysing the imbrication of 'ethnic' hierarchies with personal hierarchies and typified youth styles differentiations we become aware of both the interconnectedness between the different dimensions and its complex, dynamic character. The comparison between the experience of ethnicity in Barcelona and Birmingham has highlighted the tension between its more marked and diffuse organisation. When marked, ethnicity becomes more salient to individuals' sense of self and more social mechanisms are enforced to make sure individuals match what is culturally expected of them. This can lead to what is often referred as an experience of ethnicity as a 'prison'. Closure, however, is never complete, and even in the case where it was most marked, like the Birmingham differentiation of Asian

⁵¹ In the Periphery School, several interviewees were from the UAC, a specific group of students who were either disruptive or could not follow the regular classes. The atmosphere of the school, however, seemed much more relaxed and peaceful than that of the Inner City School.

and Afro-Caribbean ethnic minorities, or the emergent differentiation of Moroccans, Pakistanis and Latin-Americans in Barcelona, we have seen how its meaning is negotiated on an everyday basis. Particularly among young people, youth styles and their constant redefinition of the sources of coolness and authenticity, boundaries, alliances and distances are constantly reshaped. We have seen, for instance, how individuals' taste in music is often read as identity statements, since a young white man in Birmingham liking rap, drum'n'bass or bhangra, or an Affro-Caribbean liking pop, or an Asian liking rock, are all crossing the boundaries of the more obvious *ethnic* expectations. Similarly, a 'Catalan-speaking' girl in Barcelona liking *hardcore màkina* music, or a working class Spanish-speaking one liking *rock català*, or a Moroccan liking ska, would all be regarded with surprise. This is because different social positions in terms of ethnicity imply different expectations in terms of taste in music. This is, at one and the same time, a limitation and an opportunity: whereas in one sense it constricts young people's musical experiences, sometimes even operating like a prison, in another sense it offers a tool to use music to negotiate their experience of ethnicity and find polyvalent, alternative and creative ways of experiencing it. This is not to say that they *transcend* it, but rather that they constantly renegotiate and culturally produce it and its boundaries. Musical geographies, therefore, cannot be understood autonomously from either ethnic differentiations or interpersonal hierarchies and typified youth styles. On the contrary, ethnicity, language and national identity are central in the cultural production of social distances and proximities and their articulation with musical geographies. This is because they largely 'racialise' and 'ethnify' differences of generalised advantage.

Generalised advantage

We have seen in the previous pages that ethnic differentiations could hardly be understood independently from 'socioeconomic' differences. The cultural production of ethnic boundaries is indeed closely related to differences of generalised advantage signified through terms such as 'rough', 'tough', '*kev*', '*cholo*', '*quillo*', '*pijo*' or 'posh', to mention just a few. We have seen how Birmingham's interviewees, for instance, generally identified 'blackness' with 'roughness' and 'whiteness' with 'poshness', or how in Barcelona '*cholo*' could be opposed to either '*catalufo*' or '*pijo*'. Even though isolating any of these axes of hierarchisation is an analytical fiction, since it is only through their imbrication that young people – like everybody else – experience them in everyday life, we will attempt in this section to deal with the way hierarchies of socioeconomic advantage are experienced in musical geographies, and to do so we will use the notion of 'generalised advantage'.

The term 'generalised advantage' points to the particular way of conceptualising social stratification used by the Cambridge stratification group (Stewart *et al* 1980; Prandy 1998 & 1990; Bottero & Prandy 2003; Bottero 2004), which understands the differential patterns of association and lifestyle not as an 'effect' of the structure of stratification but as a key *constituting* aspect of it (Bottero & Prandy 2003: 178). This approach focuses on interaction distances 'as a social structure in

its own right which, whilst reflecting the diverse influences – material, social and cultural – on association, is not reducible to any of them’ (ibid.: 184). This perspective on structured stratification is very different from ‘class analysis’, or most approaches based on ‘status’ or ‘occupational groups’, because its focus of interest is actual social distances in patterns of interaction, that is, ‘material social interactions’. Instead of assuming any structuring principle, it measures empirically the link between social interaction among people and their different occupations, and as a result builds a scale of social distances between people with different occupations. These distances are understood as a hierarchy of ‘generalised advantage’ because the CAMSIS scale strongly correlates with different indicators of generalised advantage and disadvantage, as well as with its social reproduction across generations. The approach is interesting because its point of departure is (measured) social distances in everyday crucial interactions like best friendship or marriage, so it fits our approach to the imbrication of ‘general social’ and ‘interpersonal’ hierarchies⁵². From this point of view, ‘class identity’ is not understood as an explicit attachment to a collectivity, but ‘to a sense of relational social distance within a hierarchy’ (Bottero 2004: 990). Even if people avoid locating themselves at the poles of the social structure, and tend to present a ‘middling’ self image, social inequalities and social comparison are important features of their everyday interactions. Alan offers us an example of it:

Alan: Mmm... (...) This school is pretty much working class, I’d say. I wouldn’t say there’s many upper class people in it. But a good example of that is... I went to this party, my mates... upper class person, he’s in Edgbaston, in a massive house... (...) And then, when you walk in there, into the party, full of upper class people, you can just tell, straight away... It’s weird, because you just can feel the... When they look at you you know that they... You can just feel that... You know? They look down on you, you know what I mean? It’s weird. But, the only reason... The reason I get on with my friend is because his family are not... like from a long line of upper-class people.

Roger: Then he’s different?

Alan: Yeah, because his mum and dad were like from the same sort of class as we are.

Roger: Otherwise would it be impossible?

Alan: Ehhh...

Roger: You felt bad in the party, you didn’t like it?

Alan: I don’t know... They’re just... upper class people, you just know, you just feel wrong there, do you know what I mean? When I go to the [pub in the city center] with like DJ and rap and all my mates playing there, I feel like at home, I feel relaxed. When I’m in a house full of really posh people, you know, rich people, I feel funny...

Roger: In the [pub] which people go there?

⁵² We will understand that the interviewees’ position on this scale of generalised advantage is determined by their parents’ position in it, since as students they are not fully incorporated into the labour market.

Alan: You get, yeah, you get, occasionally like the people like my mate, the one who is upper class one, he goes there with his mates sometimes.

Roger: But it's different? Or you get the same feeling?

Alan: No, I don't get that feeling, because I don't really talk to upper-class people, we just hang around... I mean, when we go there, there's lots of us anyway. There's twenty-five of us, and we just hang around and talk, we never really notice the rest of them. I mean, the bar staff and everyone else are like working class.

Nevertheless, the interviewees only rarely expressed class differences with such clarity, and did not tend to make any explicit reference to a politically articulated 'class consciousness'. When 'forced' to talk about class differences, many of them seemed puzzled, sometimes even understanding by it hierarchies of popularity within the school rather than 'social class'. However, the absence of a reflexive articulation of class differences does not mean that they did not experience generalised disadvantage as a crucial aspect in their everyday life. In fact, they often referred to differences, injuries and strong attitudes that must be understood in terms of generalised advantage and disadvantage or what we could even call, however loosely, 'class position'. And music was often closely related to them, as we will see in the following pages.

Even if meanings around socioeconomic inequality are not immediately visible – apparently in contrast to the situation several decades ago, when the 'collar divide' was clearly demarcated⁵³ – and because their imbrication with musical geographies is often subtle and complex, the fact is that they remain fundamental if we are to understand the cultural production of musical and social geographies. We only have to listen to young people's use of words like 'posh', '*pijo*', '*cholo*', '*kev*' or '*geexer*' (and the emotional and judgemental intensity they attach to them) to understand that this variable strongly structures their social experience and practices⁵⁴, since behind these expressions, as noted by Holt & Griffin (2005), we find a 'coded talk about class'. At the same time, it is true that nowadays it is increasingly difficult to establish an immediate connection between taste in music and social location, not only because every social location has a wider range of 'available' or 'expected' tastes in music, but also because any taste in music can correspond to different social origins. The example of the use of brand names will clearly illustrate it.

We have already noted when dealing with interpersonal hierarchies that wearing brand names was often closely linked to popularity. Whereas our

⁵³ Although, as Bottero points out, 'the evidence of collective working-class identities in the past is comparatively thin' (2004: 996), the clearer collar divide – or what Willis (1981 [1977]) called the mental/manual divide – reinforced the perception of class as oppositional.

⁵⁴ These terms have recently started to appear in youth cultures literature. Examples of this are Hollands (1995), Thornton (1996 [1995]), Martínez & Pérez (1997), Pujolar (2001), Martínez & Alegre (2002), Chatterton & Hollands (2003), Reay (2004) or Holt & Griffin (2005), who have analysed the meaning and usage of the terms '*scallies*', '*Kevs*', '*Trevs*', '*Tracys*', '*Sharons* and *Tracys*', '*Geordies*', '*townies*', '*locals*', '*toughs*', '*quillos*', '*cholos*', '*students*', '*poshies*' and '*pijos*', among others.

common sense tends to identify a broad use of brand names with a high disposable income, and thus with high positions of generalised advantage, the reality is far more complex than that. On the one hand, as we have already seen in this chapter, in the schools young people often marginalised those who did not match what they considered to be the minimal standards of clothing and consumption in general, with sentences like ‘She is like cheap, she can't afford it’ or, to partially repeat a previous quote, ‘It's like... everybody's got like Nike, and they've got like High-Tech, and people just look down on them, saying, they can't afford the trainers; we don't talk to them’. Another interviewee explained how others in the school talked about those who could not afford brand names:

Joel: The commoners, the people that can't exactly afford... labels (...). Yes. This seems stupid: the common people as in general working class, they are common people, but within them there's the commoners, you know? The less well-off people, like in big families: not the greatest clothes, you know? (...) Mmm... yes, [social class] has a lot to do. I mean, there are the exceptions, that are accepted, but a lot of the time, they are looked down on by the richer people. (...) It's just the fact that they haven't got the clothes, the trendy hairstyles, and... I mean... even the fact that they are not good looking.

These statements were made by many Birmingham interviewees. In Barcelona, the ‘value’ of brand names was also important, although youngsters did not talk about them as crudely as they did in Birmingham. Moreover, in both cities the relationship between brand names – or ‘being able to afford’ them – and position of generalised advantage was also challenged or brought into question by many interviewees:

Ana: Uy, la Paqui, (...) sempre va tota de marca ella. Jo tinc coses de marca però no tot... Jo m'he donat compte que la gent que més marques porta és la gent que *menos* diners té.

Roger: Sí?

Ana: Perquè la Paqui aquesta, [ho porta] tot de marca i s'està morint de gana. A la seva casa no treballen. La seva mare només renta una casa i no sé si li donen tres mil *peles* a la setmana, i en canvi la veus i dius... Et preguntes: “D'on ho treu?”. I no té diners...

Sara: Tot *lo* que guanyen és per ella.

Ana: Perquè els meus pares treballen els dos, estan bé econòmicament. I jo em vull gastar dotze mil *peles* per unes bames i em trenquen la cara. No em deixen...

This perception, which was also present in Birmingham (‘people who like dance music, somehow, get all this money, I don't know where they get it from, but they get lots of money for these designer clothes’), shows the ambivalent situation in which the population is not clearly divided between the ‘rich’ – *who can afford it* – and the ‘poor’ – *who can't*. Because young people are aware that many well-off people refuse brand names, and that expensive clothes are sometimes more obviously displayed by some working-class individuals, the

language of hierarchies of generalised advantage is more subtle than that. It is natural, therefore, that young people invest a lot of effort discussing and making sense of differences of generalised advantage through the negotiation of the meaning of concepts like 'poshness', '*pijeria*' and other which are even more difficult because they combine generalised advantage and other aspects like toughness, national and linguistic identity or taste in music, like '*cholo*', '*kevs*', '*geezer*', '*pelao*', 'house music', 'indie pop', etc. Since they are not 'essentialist' concepts, but relational and situational, and since they not only refer to generalised advantage, *but also* to performance, voluntary adscription and lifestyle choices, they can be practically opaque. In order to be able to cope with the complexity we are facing, we will analyse separately the cases of Birmingham and Barcelona.

'Posh', 'rough', 'kev', 'geezer'

In Birmingham, although not many interviewees referred to social reality in terms of 'social classes', they did often use, when thinking of youth hierarchies, notions like 'posh', 'rough', '*kev*' and '*geezer*', which were in fact connected to generalised advantage. If we start by focusing on the meaning of 'poshness', we rapidly realise that it has – as its Catalan equivalent '*pijeria*' – a flexible and relational meaning that can vary depending on the situation. It can refer to class position but also to a snob attitude or a smart style of dress. In any of these cases, it can raise strong feelings in young people's minds, visible enough in sentences like 'They don't like music. They like piano, that's it. They are fucking idiots' or 'I hope they go to hell, anyway'. When describing differences within their schools, several interviewees spontaneously used the term, like for instance one girl who referred to the 'like posh type of girls... snobs...', or a young man who described other schools in the neighbourhood as such. When directly asked about the music they thought was liked by middle-class young people, many interviewees rapidly introduced the term 'posh' and answered that they liked 'classical' or 'opera' music – although as seen in the following quote this answer was also contested by other interviewees:

Roger: And what do you reckon that people from middle class like?

Neil: Posh, if they are posh?

George: Yeah.

Neil: Classical music.

Colin: That's your stereotype, that's your stereotype!

Neil: No.

Colin: Yeah, of course you are. You say: rich people, classical music [*and they start a long discussion about it*]

The association between 'poshness' and both classical and opera music was part of the stock of typical knowledge in both Birmingham and, as we will see later, Barcelona. Nevertheless, when interviewees had personal knowledge of particular 'posh' people, they often abandoned this simplistic view, either by not mentioning a taste for classical music or complementing it with popular music

genres: 'The rockers are like *headbangers*... (...) Posh people... They like sort of classical music. They are the *boffins*...' (it is ironic that rock, the music originally thought as *opposed* to classical music, was thought of as almost equivalent to it in its association with the middle and upper classes). In young people's everyday life, however, 'poshness' was not straightforward but rather ambivalent requiring a subtle eye to distinguish the nuances that it involved:

Roger: And do you think that middle class like a different type of music? What'd you say?

Tony: It depends what are you... Adults listen to the middle class... classical... Stuff like that... But the kids don't...

James: Posher kids...

Tony: Some posh kids like... Peter, have you seen his house? It's so posh! [*The others are surprised*] He is! A lot of the posh kids... People we know... We do not think they are posh, because they try not to talk posh, because they know that they would be beaten up. And when you actually see their house...

The quote shows the complexity of making sense of poshness: on the one hand, the very definition strongly depends upon the position in social space (what from one position seems posh, from another one is far from posh); on the other hand, individuals partially see it as an 'essential' condition of individuals, and partially as a performance and stylistic ascription. Some 'posh' youngsters try not to seem posh, and some youngsters who are 'not posh' make an effort to appear so. In spite of being identified with an advantageous position in the hierarchy of generalised advantage, in schools with a majority of working-class pupils being seen as 'posh' can be synonymous with marginalisation and low value in the local interpersonal hierarchies. A good example of this is the bad reputation white people had from the start in the Mixed or Dual schools because they were seen as posh (just because, according to them, they were white): 'When we first came to school, everyone called us posh. If you're white...'. The negative image of 'poshness' in these working-class schools implied that many pupils who could easily be labelled as such did their best to play down their 'poshness'. We get a situation, therefore, where young people can play with their public presentation or their location in hierarchies of generalised advantage, playing-down, playing-up or trying to blur-out their 'real' position. Nevertheless, in spite of their efforts, their schoolmates might 'uncover' them anyway, like in the example above. In other words: the fact that they did not *act posh* did not mean that their schoolmates would not *consider them posh* if they found out *they were so*. Young people continuously discuss and try to make sense of the interplay between 'acting' and 'being', not only with regard to generalised advantage, but also ethnicity, coolness, toughness, and specific typified youth styles.

The terms operating as antinomies of 'posh' were not straightforward or broadly shared by all interviewees. If 'poshness' did not merely refer to position of generalised advantage, but also to stylistic displaying of this position, in the case of the terms opposed to 'posh' the performative aspects were even more relevant. I am referring to terms like 'rough', 'tough', 'geezer' or, in one of the schools, 'kev'.

We will start with this last one, '*kev*', which was only used in the White School by the 'rockers'. They did not know the origin or literal meaning of the word – most probably 'Kevin', a name with a working-class connotation like Trevor, Sharon and Tracy – but used it to describe many of their schoolmates. '*Kev*' was not a synonym of 'working-class' – in fact, some of the 'rockers' were working class themselves – but rather a style that embedded many of the traditionally working-class attitudes like toughness and a counter-school culture, on the one hand, and a mainstream, commercial taste, on the other:

David: Yes, you've got different types, the people who just wear the designer stuff, we usually call them *kevs*, I don't know why. Proles.

Dave: They are like the same, they hang around, they go the corner of the playground, and smoke, and think that they are really...

David: And fight. They start fights.

The pupils that the rockers called '*kevs*' were, in that school, the contemporary version (and in derogative terms) of those Paul Willis labelled 'lads' in *Learning to Labour* (1981 [1977]), that is, those working-class pupils with a counter-school attitude, as opposed to the '*ear'oles*' who had an upwardly mobile meritocratic orientation. In the White School, the rockers were seen by the rest of the pupils as the '*boffins*', that is, as the equivalent of Willis's '*ear'oles*'. These broad youth styles and differentiations pointed therefore to the cultural signification and articulation of different ways of experiencing generalised disadvantage in which the mental/manual distinction identified '*kevs*' – as well as '*geezers*' or, in a much broader sense, 'roughs' – with an archetypal 'tough' counter-school masculinity and '*boffins*' with an effeminate one. Another distinction that follows this pattern, although it did not appear in the fieldwork, is the traditional English *town and gown* opposition typified through adjectives like 'student' and '*towny*' or 'local'. This implies that rather than social position 'determining' stylistic features, stylistic features *articulate* and *signify* a particular stance or identification towards one's own social position. A working-class position will thus lead to a differentiated stylistic performance depending on whether or not an upwardly mobile orientation is held, just as a middle-class position will lead to a differentiated stylistic performance depending on whether or not accompanied by an identification with distinguished and '*snobby*' middle-class attitudes.

The issue is naturally not as simple as that. Middle-class 'downward' styles, for instance, can also be part of a type of a further social and cultural distinction, developing what has been called a 'tourist gaze'⁵⁵, which, instead of going to exotic places in the search for authenticity, looks for it in 'distant working-class' social spaces. Or the other way around, working-class 'upward' appropriation of

⁵⁵ Holt & Griffin (2005) use John Urry's concept to describe middle-class students who go to working-class pubs 'as performing a form of *class tourism* in representing the experience of going to a locals' pub as both risky and rewarding' (ibid.: 262).

mainstream commercial leisure does not imply an indiscriminate social mixing, but rather a subtle but clear segregation between ‘upmarket’ and ‘downmarket’ commercial spaces. In the following quote we can see how Alan, in his comments about different clubs, differentiates between them in terms of the number of ‘*geezers*’ they have, relating it to – although not identifying it with – social class:

Alan: They have a lot of fights and stuff, it’s like down in the Dome. (...) Some clubs you’ve *gotta* watch yourself, that’s the *geezers* thing.

Roger: Is more working-class people or it’s nothing to do with it?

Alan: Mmm... it’s mainly working-class people. Ministry of Sound, you get a lot of upper- and working-class people.

Roger: Mixed?

Alan: Yes, mixed. Because it’s that sort of... That club’s got a very high reputation, but... a lot...

Roger: They are not *geezers*?

Alan: Some of them can be. When you go to a club you just have got to watch it. You see them walking up and down Broad Street, shouting. Idiots...

Roger: Which are the places with more *geezers* in them?

Alan: Mmm... Dome, Miss Money pennies, the ones on Broad Street are very mixed, they vary... it can depend... Broad Street is totally different from the clubs in Queensway, the Dome, Miss Money pennies and stuff like that. Broad Street’s more mixed. Because it’s like... you only need to look at the place to realise that it’s high class, but the clubs down there in Queensway are next to the shady areas and you get shady people coming to the clubs.

In a more general sense, ‘roughness’ was directly linked to the more marginalised areas where generalised disadvantage was assumed to concentrate. We see, therefore, how ‘*kevs*’, ‘*geezers*’ or ‘rough people’ are related to an attitude which has to do with ‘toughness’, but also with generalised disadvantage. The important thing is that it is not a straightforward relationship, since young people are aware that not all *kevs* are working class, nor all working-class kids are *kevs*. The class connotation, however, is important, as can also be seen in the following words of Mike, one of the rockers in the White School:

Roger: How would you say that the *kevs* would see you? Do they have a word for you as you have the ‘*kev*’ one?

Mike: I don’t think they have words but they probably just think “Sad, old kid that doesn’t do anything”, basically... Basically they don’t know me or anything about me so they can’t really say anything...

Roger: And in general you think that they do not have words? They wouldn’t see you as more posh or...?

Mike: They do see me as more posh, yeah. Which I probably am, but... yeah, yeah.

The point is that in a school like the White School, where the pupils that the ‘rockers’ called ‘*kevs*’ represented the broad majority, they could be considered as occupying the top of the hierarchy of popularity: ‘You got probably the *kevs* at the top because they’re so many of them... They are more than 80% of the school...

Then you've got the rest of them, which just comes down really... I don't know...'. As happened in the Mixed School, where white people were identified with 'poshness', the social hierarchy of generalised advantage was inverted. Nevertheless, to understand this cultural production, we must bear in mind its imbrication with 'ethnicity', since 'blackness' and 'roughness' were generally seen as closely linked. The presence or absence of ethnic diversity seemed to lead to a different organisation of the imbrication between interpersonal and generalised advantage hierarchies. Whereas in the White School the opposite of 'posh' was the (white) '*kev*' or '*geezzer*', in the other two schools it was rather seen as the (black and Asian) 'roughness' or streetwise, gangsta edge of the popular garage music of the time. 'Roughness', and this is important, was indeed linked to 'black' and, to a lesser extent, 'Asian' neighbourhoods, even though it was known that there were rough white neighbourhoods and young people as well:

Roger: And in this school black people come from rougher parts than white people?

Erving: The majority of them, yeah, the majority...

Roger: But there're also white people from rough areas...

Erving: Yeah, well, (...) there's a lot of white and black people from those areas... But there's more black people that tend to come from rough parts... And they're like the troublemakers or so... A lot of them are, but still... a lot of them, many are not...

Roger: And you can tell the people that come from the rougher parts...

Erving: Yeah, it's all about... they way they act, the way they talk, the way they walk...

Roger: And people from rougher areas like different music?

Erving: Yeah, they like more like garage and jungle. They're more like MCing, so they can chat to... (...) And then (...) the white people who like garage tend to hang around more with black people than white people.

As we have previously seen in this chapter, we see how particular music genres (in this case garage and jungle, and particularly the less commercial versions of them) were linked to 'rougher' areas, articulating the attitude of individuals since being strongly involved in this music was seen as signifying 'roughness'. In the White School, rough pupils were identified with 'dance' and 'techno' music. Taste in music and music genres were generally not straightforwardly related to 'social class', but most interviewees did link them to the opposition between what they called 'poshness' and, at the other extreme, 'roughness' and an anti-school disposition seen as leading to a disadvantaged position in transition to adulthood, like these two young men in the White School in relation to what they called '*kevs*':

Roger: And they skip more classes then?

David: Yeah, they don't think... usually they don't understand that if they got no GCSEs or results or anything like that, they are not gonna get a job, they don't understand it.

Dave: They don't care, if you look at them that their parents are on the dole

David: Yeah... it's probably fair to say that our group is probably more intelligent, because the people in our group there'll be more at the top... but they don't care about that.

Roger: You said that it has a lot to do with their parents...

Dave: Yeah... it's not really their fault, I suppose. They think that they are only going to grow up like their parents anyway, that they are going to be on the dole: most of them will go on the dole, join the army....

In conclusion, it seems impossible to ignore the presence of generalised advantage in young people's experience of musical and youth geographies. The link between generalised advantage and youth stylistic differentiations was not univocal, since the play with upward and downward meanings, dispositions and performances was complex. Nevertheless, what was clear was that young people were constantly negotiating the meanings that related their everyday interactions and their taste in music in connection to hierarchies of generalised advantage – even though they often did so in unreflexive ways, intermingled with aspects related to personal and typical hierarchies such as ethnicity, school popularity, the importance of brand names, toughness, studying, going out or, as seen above, taste in music.

'Pijo', 'quillo', 'cholo', 'del palo'

In Barcelona, interviewees used the slang words '*pijo*' and '*cholo*' to refer to concepts similar to 'posh' and '*kev*', respectively – although each of them had its own specificities. '*Cholo*', and the more ethnified notions of 'Moroccan', and 'Pakistani' (as well as the migrational notion of 'immigrant'), were strongly identified with 'roughness' – as happened in Birmingham with the terms '*kev*' or '*geezzer*' and also with Afro-Caribbean and Asian ethnicities. The word '*pijo*' appeared as more ambivalent than 'posh' since, depending on the context, it referred not only to being a snob or from a well-off background, but also to simply dressing smart or being 'refined'. As happened with Birmingham's 'poshness', even when '*pijería*' referred to a hierarchy of generalised advantage it appeared as a complex concept that young people did not experience as simple socio-economic position, but rather as a matter of what in Catalan was called '*manera de ser*', and thus a particular performance.⁵⁶

I will focus here not only on the social usage of the word '*pijo*' among the interviewees when it signifies position of generalised advantage and an attitude of social distinction, but also when it signifies the use of brand names, a smart style of dress and, most of all, a 'refined' and 'soft' (effeminate) performance signified through mainstream commercial music. My focus of interest will be the imbrication of the uses of the term '*pijo*' and specific musical and youth styles. In

⁵⁶ In Martínez & Pérez (1997) we identified and attempted to define how the terms '*pijo*' and '*quillo*' (equivalent to '*cholo*') were used by young people in Terrassa. The ambivalence of '*pijo*' led many interviewees to highlight the apparent contradiction when many working-class youngsters tried to dress like '*pijos*'.

Barcelona, in fact, popular music styles were typified as ‘posh’ more clearly and by more interviewees than in Birmingham. Whereas in Birmingham’s three schools poshness was linked to classical music in typical terms and to rock music in personal knowledge terms, in Barcelona several interviewees linked *pijo* to house, dance, pop or ‘commercial’ music in both personal and typical terms: ‘És que és clar, els *house* són molt més *pijets*’, ‘Yo pienso que [en los barrios más *pijos*] más que la *màkina* [les gusta] el *house* y el *dance*’. Some specified that only the more ‘commercial’ versions of house should be considered ‘*pijas*’. In the following quote, two *màkina* fans link house with pop music, and both of these with ‘*pijos*’ and as unrelated to the violence and fights associated with what they called ‘*techno-màkina*’:

Roger: ¿Y qué más? ¿Hay otros grupos [de alumnos]? No sé, por ejemplo: ¿Hay grupos que les gusta mucho más el *pop* así [del estilo de] Britney Spears y Cristina Aguilera y este tipo?

Alberto: Ése es en realidad los que llamamos los *pijos*.

Juan: Sí.

Alberto: Los que van a Up and Down y esto. Les gusta la música *techno* y todo lo que se une a la música *pop*. (...) Suele asociarse más el *house* a las discotecas *pijas*.

Juan: A las discotecas que van aquí los *pijos*, que es Up and Down y esto, más que nada ponen esto: *house*... Nunca he ido allá.

Roger: Pero, ¿también hay muchos *pijos* que les gusta la música electrónica más en plan *techno*? ¿O no?

Alberto: Sí, pero en las discotecas estas ponen *house* porque lo que es la música *techno-màkina*... *techno*, no, pero lo que es la música *techno-màkina* se asocia más con las peleas e induce más a la violencia que no el *house*.

The quote shows the complexity and ambiguity of the typifications. It is not only that the apparently subtle differences like that between ‘techno’ and ‘*techno-màkina*’ could signify clear distances in youth geographies, but also that typifications like the one identifying ‘mainstream pop’ with ‘*pijos*’ not only referred to generalised advantage but to a stylistic adscription (‘*comercial*’) that was in fact majority at all positions in the hierarchy of generalised advantage. The fact is that, just as in Birmingham, fights and toughness played an important role in the way young people made sense of generalised advantage and their imbrication with musical geographies. In the quote above, we find how ‘*techno-màkina*’ is used as a signifier of toughness, which was what we have called ‘coded talk about class’. In fact, many of the interviewees, when asked about the music that was listened to in the rougher areas of the city, replied that it was the hardest *màkina* music, which points to the fact that this association was part of the stock of shared typical knowledge. For the same reason, those interviewees in the rougher areas, when asked about the music of the more ‘*pijo*’ areas, tended to reply dance, ‘commercial’, pop and house, which were those styles perceived as ‘softer’ and ‘effeminate’ – we will analyse the imbrication of musical geographies with gender and sexuality in the following section. Many interviewees alluded to the homology of the softness of house and ‘*pijos*’ and the hardness of *màkina* and working-class manliness: ‘No, perquè és que,

de la màkina, si posen tot *house* i coses d'aquestes és bastant *pijet*, també. Si posen així *techno*, això és més dur, normalment'. We can thus understand the usage of the word '*pijo*' as a stylistic adscription, as a performance of a 'refined' disposition denying working-class 'frankness', 'roughness' and 'dominant masculinity'.

We are talking about those cases in which someone who liked 'soft' commercial music was seen as posh, like a young man who enjoyed calling his sister and her friends '*pijas*' because they liked Britney Spears and they talked 'girlish'. Two girls said that *pijos* were '*repipis*' and that they could not stand them. Another boy, when asked about classmates who read teenybopper magazines, said 'Sí, les *pijes*', referring to the 'girly study-girls' sitting at the front of the classroom. Let us look at the way these girls seen as '*pijas*' by their classmates in the Periphery School talked about *being pijo*:

Sonia: Yo que sé, pues por ejemplo, en la Mina, no veo yo que se pongan a bailar... no sé, una clásica, ¿no? Porque les gustará más la música de... de *pelaos*...

Roger: La música...

Sonia: Pues sí, la gitana, la... La rumba y eso...

Roger: ¿Porque eso lo ves de *pelaos*?

Sonia: Sí, claro, es más... no sé, es más... más... Sin embargo yo que sé, a lo mejor en barrios así *pijos* yo creo que les gustará más el *pop*, claro. Sí, que se ve más... más normal. O sea, la gente, las que actúan, los cantantes, pues van más bien vestidos, sin embargo, yo que sé... Estopa nunca se pondrá un Versace, yo que sé... O sea, va eso por... También la moda. No, o sea, la...

Roger: De todas maneras, ¿te ves más cerca a ellos que a los de la Mina?

Sonia: Sí, claro.

The quote is illustrative of the complex imbrication between generalised advantage and typified youth cultural differences. Sonia, from a working-class background and perceived as a 'study-girl' by her classmates, identifies not with the working-class style and pride of '*pelaos*' (she talks about '*gitana*' and '*rumba*', but probably also has in mind *màkina*), but with what she sees as *more normal pop music that is liked in the 'pijo' neighbourhoods*. She also stresses that these artists are more *better dressed* than the others. By contrast, those working-class interviewees who rejected what they perceived as '*pijo*' did so in terms of the authenticity and pride that working-class culture – including music – gave them:

Roger: ¿Qué es el Up and Down?

Francisco: El Up and Down es música màkina pero de estilo *pijo*.

Roger: ¿Y cómo es? ¿Es diferente que la màkina o que la *dance*?

Francisco: Sí, porque la màkina nuestra suele ser más de pobre, ¿sabes?

Roger: Cómo, ¿cómo es?

Francisco: Más pobre, música... Pero con más sentimiento, o sea, la rumbita y todo este rollo, más de pobres, gente pobre, pero con más sentimiento. En cambio ellos pues... o sea, siempre mezclada, pues de *pijos*, se suele escuchar *dance* y el rollo este. Más de un amigo mío ha ido al Up and Down a *pegar el palo* [*robar*]...

These are in fact good examples of the importance of the meanings related to generalised advantage not only as ‘essences’ signifying social position, but also as ascriptions to an upwardly mobile disposition or the opposite. Consequently, whereas many interviewees said that several youth styles and places attracted a mixed (*‘pijo’* and *‘not pijo’*) crowd, it is important to realise that a mixed crowd does not guarantee an absence of distinctions of ‘generalised advantage’. An illustration of the subtle but strong persistence of differences within a certain style can be seen in the words of a boy who liked *màkina* and explained that although *‘pijos’* tended to like *màkina*, they were easily identified: ‘Sí. Casi todos los *pijos* van de *pelaos* y son tontos. (...) Se les nota nada más verles’. Another illustration, although in a different direction, is that of a girl who used to hang around with people who liked *màkina* and, after explaining that some of her friends were *‘cholas’*, established an important difference between them and herself: ‘[En] el Up and Down no te puedes comportar de una cierta manera, tienes que ser más *pijita*, más *desto* (...). O sea, yo llegaba a la puerta con dos amigas más y vale, no es que... O sea, son *cholas* ¿vale? Pero no son... O sea, se vestían de *pijas*, y no les dejaron entrar por la forma, por... Porque se ve, ¿sabes?’. Again, we find a subtle line separating ‘being’ and ‘acting’, since even if the important performative aspect of class identity was acknowledged, a deep rigid essence was assumed (‘Porque se ve, ¿sabes?’). As in Birmingham, interviewees talked about ‘uncovered *pijos’*, not only in relation to particular individuals, but whole youth styles like, for instance, skaters. Jose and Dani liked punk music, and when asked about the position of punks in the *cholo-pijo* dimension answered as follows:

Jose: Home de vegades sí que és veritat... Per exemple, si vas... Si ara... Això [que porto] no (...) és *pijo*, però hi ha roba de *skater*, el que és una mica de *skater* (perquè això [que porto] no és *skater*, això és “moda rara” és “moda rara”)...

Dani: Ample, ja està.

Jose: Els *skaters* que sí, que [porten] marques O’Neill, QuickSilver o això. Realment, això pot ser més *pijo* que *lo* altre, perquè per anar vestit et pots haver gastat 30.000 pts. tranquil·lament o més. Et pots haver gastat 15.000 ptas. amb bambes, 10.000 amb pantalons, 10.000 amb jaqueta, una camisa de 5.000 més i...

‘Pijo’ and *‘cholo’*, as we are seeing, signified at one and the same time (essential) social position and also (performed) disposition (middling or middle-class aspiration *versus* working-class pride and authenticity). The differentiation between ‘being’ and ‘acting’ (*‘ser’* and *‘ir de’*) posh and *cholo*, and its inevitable negotiation of meanings, was in fact negotiated in young people’s informal conversations. A young man who liked *màkina* said that ‘Los de *màkina* no suelen ser *pijos’*, and his friend immediately replied that ‘No, no van de *pijos’*. These two girls reflected as follows about their involvement with *màkina* music and *pelao* style:

Susana: Nosotras, vestimos... aunque nos veas así vestidas [normalitas], vamos más bien *del palín*. ¿Sabes eso qué quiere decir? Del *rollo pelado*, ¿vale? Con el Thunderland y toda la hostia esa. Y ya no es por marcar una clase o algo, porque a

mi me gusta esta manera de vestir y quieras que no yo soy *bastota* y todo... Y yo voy mucho *a mi bola* y si *hay que haber* una pelea la va haber, yo no la voy a provocar pero la va a haber. Pero yo ya te digo, la juventud de hoy en día es muy agresiva, pero mucho, te lo digo yo. Y esto en cualquier tipo de grupo juvenil, pero sobretodo en este grupo de los *pelaos*, porque van de algo. Es, como si dijéramos, el rastro de los que fueron *skins*, el polvillo que ha quedado, pero que son unos mierdas, que no somos nada, que no valemos para nada, y que la gente va de que se como el mundo y no...

Roger: ¿Pero a ti te gusta?

Susana: A mi me gusta porque en parte... Mira, si quieres que te diga una cosa, si voy con ellos es porque me siento protegida. ¿Protegido de quién? De gente que es cómo ellos. Es tristísimo pero es cierto. Y quieras que no siempre te mueves en el mismo juego. (...) A mi no me desagrada pero tampoco me gusta.

Ana: Yo es que tampoco me junto con ellos.

Roger: ¿Qué discotecas os gusta?

Anna: Nivel, Chasis, Pont Aeri...

Susana: A mi no, a mi Chasis, X-Què... o sea, lo suyo [lo que le gusta a Anna], es más bien *light*, ¿vale? O sea, que si va a un local en el que *echan* comercial o *house* también le va bien. Pero a mi, lo que más, o sea [que me gusta más] pum, pum, pum, y la... la música esta, la que oímos nosotros, los *pelaos*, cómo si dijéramos, los *tontines*.

Roger: ¿Los *tontines*?

Susana: Sí, los tontos, ¿vale? La música que oímos, nos gusta por el simple hecho que saltas, que te pones más agresivo. Y por eso hay tantos problemas.

Susana's simultaneous involvement and self-mocking is illustrative of the symbolic work young people do when negotiating their stylistic adscriptions. Her words are also a good example of the importance of toughness in the configuration of musical and youth geographies. Another example of the differentiation between being and acting is offered by a young man explaining what he named 'an irony':

Toni: Jo coneixia per exemple una... una ironia, d'un *tio* que abans el coneixia, que quan érem petits el coneixia i era tope de *pijo*. Portava tota la seva indumentària i en tenia cinquanta mil parells de tot tipus i... I no sé, li va picar la vena als quinze anys o així i es va tornar *punk* i [anava] amb la seva cresta, tot *tiradillo*, tot ple de forats, estripades, etc, etc. Així que de *pijo* [ha passat al que et dic]...

Toni thought that his friend's change was 'ironic', that is, not 'normal' or 'expected'. Similarly, a girl said that 'Lo que pasa es que hay los típicos *pijos*, *pijos*, y hay pijos de... *escaqueo*, je, je'. The implicit message of these words is that young people not only rely on the term '*pijo*' to map out their social reality, but believe in a hidden essence that shows in each act of those who 'are' so: 'Pero es que se le nota más a un... A alguien que va de *pijo*, se le nota mucho más, ya, incluso por la forma de andar, se le nota, ¿sabes?'

I stress the polyvalence of the notion '*pijo*', as well as its antagonist '*cholo*' (and similar ones like '*del palo*', '*quillo*' or '*jezna*'⁵⁷), because – as in Birmingham – they are relational concepts, because rather than a 'position', they describe social distance, so someone who in a working-class school could be seen as '*pijo*' could easily be seen as '*cholo*' in an upper-class school. For instance, a young woman from Catalan School, by far the school with less working-class pupils of the three Barcelona's schools, liked *màkina* music, a style that was considered '*cholo*' by many of the interviewees. She was, therefore, seen as such in her school. When this girl went to Illusion, a *màkina* club in Barcelona, however, she felt uncomfortable because she found it '*cholo*' and felt that she was seen as '*pija*' by the others (note the importance of dancing and her bodily experience, which stopped her from having a sensuous experience in the club):

Roger: ¿Y Illusion, por qué no te gustaba?

Sofia: Porque era... O sea, arriba, lo que es la [sala] *pachanguera* se está bien, pero en la de abajo era *to cholo, to cholo*. Que a mi me pone nerviosa esto. Es que no me gustan los *cholos*.

Roger: ¿No? ¿Por qué?

Sofia: No sé, porque de buenas a primeras ya no me... ¿Sabes? Yo que sé, que en el Up and Down también hay *cholos*, a veces, de vez en cuando. Cuando *desto*, pero que no sé, que es diferente. Que allí [en el Illusion] son *to bullas* y...

Roger: ¿No te veían como muy diferente también? Si tú los veías como diferentes, ¿tú allí no cantabas también?

Sofia: Cantaba un poco... ¿no? Vale... Pero es que yo, por mí... Me notaba que cantaba, y... Ahí, ¿sabes? Que... yo que sé, ellos iban así *del palo* y yo bailaba más *del palo pija*, pero... Y yo notaba que ahí...

Another illustration of the 'relational' and 'situational' nature of the terms '*pijo*' and '*cholo*' is provided by interviewees from the Catalan School, who, even if they would obviously be seen as '*pijos*' by the pupils in the other two schools, criticised those who they considered to be *pijos* (in this case those going to a private school in their area): 'I a més que els veus, normalment són gent molt acostumada als diners, molt, molt *pija*. Jo a més, jo... O sigui, no em considero pas *pijo*, però per exemple vaig a entrenar a un club de tennis, i allà tots són de privada, tots són *pijíssims*'.

The 'relational' and 'situational' nature can also be seen in the imbrication of the term '*pijo*' and linguistic differences. In the previous section we have noted that many (mainly working-class) interviewees identified Catalan as synonymous with '*pijo*', and Spanish as synonymous with '*cholo*'. In Barcelona, however, when (mainly middle-class) Catalan-speaking youngsters impersonate 'posh' youngsters, they tend not to use Catalan, but what we might call 'posh Spanish' – while they use 'stylised Spanish' to impersonate a working-class extraction. They see Catalan as connoting middle-class indifference. It is clear, therefore, that the distinction

⁵⁷ There are other similar terms, like '*lolailó*' and '*calorro*', although they were not spontaneously used by the interviewees.

between '*pijo*' and 'not *pijo*' is neither univocal nor easy to establish. Its meaning in each context can only be practically and situationally determined.

The boundaries of '*pijeria*' or 'poshness', as signifiers of generalised advantage in contemporary everyday life, are thus complex and unstable. But this does not imply that generalised advantage is not significant in young people's everyday life. Even if young people often negotiated and performatively transcended their 'objective' position in hierarchies of generalised advantage, they felt that different hierarchical positions implied different expectations. Those who were transcending their 'objective' positions, therefore, were well aware of 'breaking with' what was expected from them. A male interviewee expressed, for instance, the apparent contradiction of a friend of his who, although she was a '*pija*', listened to '*cholo*' music:

Toni: Te les trobes de vegades, te les trobes escoltant coses que, buff! L'altre dia vaig anar a casa d'una amiga i estaven escoltant los Chichos o Camela, o qualsevol història.

Roger: I vas fer la broma?

Toni: Sí.

Roger: I elles si van tornar o què?

Toni: No, no, perquè deien que ara els *hi* agradava i que ho volien escoltar i *punto*. Els *hi* agradava.

Roger: I aquestes són les que van amb els *peladillos* o no?

Toni: No, aquestes, *bueno*... Aquestes en concret van de *pijas*, però els *hi* agrada...

The quote illustrates the symbolic work young people did in relation to the meanings, tastes and objects signifying different positions in youth and social geographies. These arguments are part of young people's everyday discussions about what is '*pijo*' and what is not, related to the discussion about what is 'authentic' and what is not. In conclusion, we have seen that – as in the case of Birmingham – whereas there was not a reflexive discourse about 'social class' or generalised advantage, differences in terms of '*pijeria*' or '*cholería*' did play a crucial role in drawing up youth geographies. The point is that the notions of 'poshness' and '*pijeria*', as well as their associated concepts '*kev*', '*geezee*', '*cholo*' or '*quillo*', are inextricably related to generalised advantage, and play a crucial role in organising youth and musical geographies and the interpersonal hierarchies of popularity. The negotiation of these aspects articulates the way every youngster experiences 'roughness' and 'niceness', 'transgression' and 'respectability', as sources of respect and dignity. This negotiation is not only linked to 'ethnicity' and its related elements analysed in the previous section (since generalised advantage is often 'racialised' or 'ethnified'), but also to gender and sexuality, as we will discuss next.

Note that I am not implying that, depending on young people's position in the hierarchy of generalised advantage, we can determine or predict their taste in music or youth style, but that their position in the hierarchies of generalised advantage is important and is not only negotiated through the typifications analysed in this section, but influences and is present in the way young people

make sense of youth styles, including taste in music. The meanings and cultural practices analysed in this section do not mechanically overlap with the hierarchy of generalised advantage, since they are markedly unstable and complex for many different reasons, from the difference between 'being' and 'acting' to the relational – non-essential – character of the meanings of many of the cultural distinctions. The plurality of styles, as well as meanings attached to these styles, means that the language of generalised advantage is not immediately obvious. Commercial mainstream styles, for instance, can signify both generalised advantage and the opposite, as is the case with many underground styles. Each symbolic form (a brand name, a musical form) can only be read in the context of all the other forms surrounding it, from general taste in music to body language, from talk to clothing). Nevertheless, when taste in music and all the other symbolic practices configuring youth and musical geographies are put together at any given historical moment and social location, young people know and make sense of generalised advantage and its signification – whether as archetypical representations or as an attempt to overcome, transcend, ignore or play with it – for instance through what Bettie (2000: 9) calls 'class passing'⁵⁸. This hierarchy is an important source of emotions like resentment, self-esteem, pride or shame. Therefore, contrary to what most of the youth cultures literature seems to imply, young people experience generalised advantage not only as relevant, intense and full of meaning, but also as connected to youth styles.

Gender and sexuality

We have so far discussed, albeit generally, the articulation of ethnicity and generalised advantage in musical and youth geographies. If truth be told, neither of these could be appropriately understood if we did not include in the equation gender and sexuality: toughness, poshness, *kevnness*, *choloness*, blackness, whiteness and most – if not all – of the terms we have already discussed, incorporate implicit differences and meanings related to the masculine/feminine duality. It is obvious that as we add new structural axes to the analysis of the homologies between, and articulations and imbrications of, different hierarchies in everyday life, the task gets more and more complex, so the reductionism of what will be said must be acknowledged in advance. Nevertheless, without gender and sexuality – as well as its sexist and homophobic articulations – in the analysis, musical and youth geographies cannot be properly understood⁵⁹. I will approach this topic from a very partial and incomplete perspective, which is the distinction between 'tough' and 'soft' or 'nice' connotations of different tastes in music and youth styles and

⁵⁸ She distinguishes between class inherited identity and 'chosen' public identity at school. (Bettie 2000: 10).

⁵⁹ In his sociolinguistic ethnography, Pujolar reached the conclusion that 'Gender identities seemed to be essential to understanding both the workings of youth culture and the role of language in the processes whereby people constructed their identities and ideologies' (2001: 40).

their link to males' and females' taste in music, although some attention will also be paid to the diverse masculine and feminine identities implied in different youth styles and to the male-female interactions verbalised by the interviewees.

We have seen that the relationship between the 'toughness/softness' or 'toughness/niceness' distinction is important for an understanding of the way young people culturally (re)produce youth geographies and their articulation with generalised advantage and ethnicity. In general terms, the fieldwork showed how 'softness' was not a particularly good thing to have, especially among males. The taken-for-granted (dominant) heterosexual masculinities are constructed in opposition to femininity and apparently subordinate masculinities. Nevertheless, the actual definition of softness might differ considerably depending on the location in youth and social geographies, since the dominant expectation of strength and toughness from men can be channelled in different ways. Among what we could call 'traditional' or 'dominant' working-class masculinities⁶⁰, the lack of provocative transgression or the presence of a good, or at least non-problematic, school disposition, was generally identified with a negative 'softness'. By contrast, from the perspective of middle-class masculinities, both a lack of transgression or a good school disposition were not necessarily negative or opposed to virility and strength – although some sort of 'rhetorical provocation' was also important⁶¹ – since other aspects like rationality, responsibility and a long-term career are more central than pride and aggressiveness in the definition of strength⁶². We have the situation, therefore, that those occupying – or identifying with – positions of generalised advantage are seen as powerful and valuable but, at the same time, from the lower positions of generalised advantage, also as 'soft', 'weak', 'cissy' and 'feminine'. Consequently, from lower socioeconomic positions the refined, nice and gentle disposition of higher positions is often despised. The very notion of 'poshness' is a clear illustration of this attitude, since those described as 'posh' are negatively portrayed as assuming their superiority *and* as being ridiculously 'refined' and thus lacking in virility. Those ethnic groups in higher positions in the scales of generalised advantage were also seen as 'soft', as for instance whites in Birmingham and Catalan-speaking youngsters in Barcelona. Generalised advantage, however, probably does not tell the whole story, since racism and particularly ethnic identity must also be taken into account. We have seen how in Birmingham 'black' neighbourhoods and pupils were more typically and inherently associated

⁶⁰ Young & Craig (1997) call this working-class masculinity 'masculinism', understood as the expectation of displays of force, aggression, crudity and excess from men, as well as of derogatory attitudes towards women and gays ('masculinism' is also typified by the literature as 'hegemonic', 'dominant', 'exaggerated' or 'hyper' masculinity). This refers only to what we could call 'dominant' working-class masculinity, what is naturally a reductionist neglect of the plurality of masculinities existing among men, including working-class men. See also Chapman & Rutherford (1996 [1988]), Pattman *et al* (1998), Mac an Ghaill (1996) and Pujolar (2003) for a more specific approach to masculinity.

⁶¹ See Pujolar (2003) for an analysis of this nuance.

⁶² See Connell (1989) for this last idea.

with toughness. It has been argued, for instance, that black masculinities are a collective response in a racist culture and that African Caribbean students positioned themselves as superior to white and Asian students in terms of their sexual attractiveness, style, creativity and hardness.⁶³

This means that in youth geographies, and particularly in those schools with predominantly working-class pupils – all but the Catalan School in the fieldwork – the value attributed to niceness and toughness by dominant hierarchies of generalised advantage is largely inverted. Refinement, niceness and softness become ‘negative’ instead of ‘positive’, and toughness becomes a source of respect instead of stigmatisation. This is not a new cultural manifestation, but an inherent feature of capitalism, where ‘working-class culture’, contrary to the dominant pattern of appreciation, has historically challenged the dominant superiority of ‘expert’ knowledge, giving more value to ‘manual’ over ‘mental’ labour.⁶⁴ And this has primarily been done through the implicit notion of ‘masculinity’ privileging physical toughness and self-confidence. As we add ‘gender’ and ‘sexuality’ to the equation, the picture becomes much more complex, since ‘softness’, attributed to the dominant positions in terms of generalised advantage, is considered part of the subordinate gender and sexualities (female and male homosexuals⁶⁵), and ‘toughness’, apparently a feature of subordinate positions in terms of generalised advantage, part of the dominant gender and sexuality (heterosexual males). This does not mean that women and middle-class men were not aggressive or competitive, but rather that they were so through different means, like indirect verbal aggression (persistent teasing, isolation or spreading malicious rumours⁶⁶).

⁶³ T. Sewell (1997) *Black Masculinities and Schooling: How Black Boys Survive Modern Schooling*, Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books, quoted in Pattman *et al* (1998: 134).

⁶⁴ As stressed by Sennett & Cobb (1993 [1972]) and Willis (1981 [1977]; 2000), and as has been seen in chapters 1 and 2, the working classes need to look for alternative sources of respect and dignity, since the dominant position of ‘expert’ knowledge (mentalism), which is based on the superiority of the ‘mental’ over the ‘manual’, benefits those in the higher positions of the scale of occupations. Whereas Sennett identifies individual adult strategies to overcome the lack of respect of manual, non-expert jobs, Willis emphasises the collective resistance that working-class culture can present to dominant meanings when praising ‘manual’ over ‘mental’ labour. As he puts it, ‘In part, the puzzle of the astonishing longevity of a tough manualised masculinity can be ethnographically imagined in part as the stubborn, blind wisdom of somatic opposition to the omnipresent mentalism of expert control systems, linguistically executed, which cumulatively and irredeemably place unemployed working-class males materially and ideologically at the bottom’ (Willis 2000: 94). Connell (1989) contends that the blue/white collar divide has been replaced by the unskilled/credentialed labour market.

⁶⁵ In the case of female homosexuality, it is often but not always associated with ‘rudeness’, and in any case not as much with what we are calling ‘toughness’. The predominance of homophobic pejoratives goes hand by hand with young people’s relative disdain of this genre of derogation (Thurlow 2001). According to Plummer, ‘Homophobic references by boys become common in early primary school, generally prior to puberty, sexual maturity, and sexual identity formation’ (2001: 22).

⁶⁶ See, for instance, Owens & MacMullin (1995) for an analysis of gender differences in aggression. They differentiate between physical aggression (hit, kick, trip, shove, take things, push, pull), direct verbal aggression (yell, insult, say they are going to hurt them, call them names, tease) and indirect aggression (shut out of the group, become friends with others as revenge, ignore, gossip, tell bad or false stories, plan secretly to bother them, say bad things behind their backs, say to others: let’s not be

In fact, we must bear in mind that the reductionism of identifying a dominant masculinity, and its variations in working- and middle-class contexts, should not allow us to forget that in every context there is a plurality of masculinities and that it is precisely in the interplay between them that we can understand how gender and sexuality are experienced and negotiated in youth geographies..

If we look at the interviewees' taste in music, we see that boys often referred to their tougher taste in relation to their female counterparts in both Barcelona ('A nosotros [los chicos] y así nos suele gustar más la dura, (...) nos gusta más la versión dura...') and Birmingham and among all positions of generalised advantage:

Roger: Do you think that girls and boys have different taste on music?

Azhar: Yeah... they don't like rap. They don't like gangsta tunes.

Tahar: They like Spice Girls and all of that...

Azhar: Yeah...

Tahar: Mostly like men's... romance.

Azhar: Love songs, you know? Yeah, and we like... you know? Powerful songs, with gangsta and so...

We find that 'commercial' and pop music are linked to an 'effeminate', 'soft' taste, as is 'normalcy' and 'commerciality', and all of them are often associated with females and male homosexuals (even though male homosexuals are often thought to make an ironic and underground use of them). The centre of musical geographies, even though it is very popular among both females and males, is thus considered a 'feminine' or 'effeminate' taste. This is particularly true in respect to what was called 'romantic', 'soft' or 'love' music, which was often *persecuted* in terms of 'girly'⁶⁷ – when held by girls – or 'homosexual' – when held by boys. In the case of the 'girly' connotation, one boy explained that boys laughed at girls: 'Quan arriben els Backstreet Boys, les Spice Girls i totes les nenes de la meua classe que no *cagaven*... A l'escola, i tots els nois que les empaitàvem i ens en rèiem i tot això'. In the case of the 'homosexual' connotation, another youngster explained how boys who like Alejandro Sanz, seen by many as singing 'romantic' music, are called '*maricón*': 'Es que normalmente yo no digo esto, [que me gusta Alejandro Sanz] porque dicen, "¡va, *maricón*!". Pero está bien'. In Birmingham, one girl said that 'boys feel that they shouldn't listen to this because it's too *girlie*...', and a friend of hers added 'Yeah, it's like... if I sing an artist... like Britney Spears or that... Which boy is gonna be singing Britney Spears? Even if they like it! They are scared to sing it, they are scared to say it. They are scared, man!' Moreover, in both Birmingham and Barcelona, boys 'accused' several male pop artists of being gay. On a couple of occasions, interviewees declared that girls, in response, also referred to a supposed lesbianism of female singers to make fun of boys' taste for artists such as Christina Aguilera or Britney Spears:

with them, tell their secrets to others, write nasty notes about them, criticise their hair or clothing, try to get others to dislike them (ibid.: 24).

⁶⁷ See Griffin (1982) and McRobbie (1991) for an earlier analysis of femininity in youth styles.

Roger: ¿Y qué más? ¿El *pop* a quien le gusta?

Roxana: A las chicas.

Roger: A las chicas más.

Roxana: Sí, porque los chicos dicen que lo que cantan Backstreet Boys, N'Sync o cosas así, dicen que... A ver, es que no sé que tienen los chicos con la música que es *pop*, como los Backstreet Boys, que como son guapos, todos dicen, sí, que son *maricones*. Y por esto no les gusta el *pop*...

Roger: Pero esto es envidia...

Roxana: Sí, sí, claro.

Roger: Pero también hay *pop* de chicas...

Roxana: Sí, Britney Spears, y a las chicas no les gusta. Les da envidia...

Roger: Ah, por lo mismo...

Roxana: Aha, Britney Spears, Christina Aguilera... Y a las chicas no les gusta, dicen que son lesbianas... A mi me gustan los dos...

A gay interviewee who liked pop music, was described as follows by a classmate of his: 'Probably he is just different, you know? He likes like pop music and stuff... (...) He likes some girls' music... He is like a girl...'. Note that the more archetypically commercial music, boy and girl bands, is in fact put down not only by many boys, but also by quite a lot of girls and even the media. Whereas popular music as a whole has over the years gained a social value and consideration that was lacking a few decades ago, boy and girl bands are still looked down on by almost everyone but their fans. Two hardcore-fans of Backstreet Boys experienced this as follows:

Roger: ¿Y aquí, lo saben que te gusta tanto y esto? Los amigos...

Montse: Sí, algunos sí.

Sofía: Saben que hemos ido a algunos conciertos, que hemos ido a...

Roger: ¿Y no hacen bromas sobre eso también?

Sofía: Envidia.

Montse: Sí, sí: "Déjalo, *maricones*, *maricones* todos". Los tratan como *maricones*.

Roger: ¿Esto las *tías*?

Montse: Sí, sí, todos.

Roger: ¿Y no os da rabia o...?

Montse: Sí, pero...

Sofía: Sí pero ya...

Montse: Ya... ya te acostumbras, te da más rabia, pero después ya...

Sofía: A mi lo que me afecta más son los medios de comunicación cuando empiezan a ponerlas verdes, ¿sabes? Eso ya... me da más rabia.

Other mainstream acts surrounding this commercial 'core', like for instance the more commercial acts of specialised styles like dance, *gitaneo* or rap, were more openly liked by more 'masculine' and 'tough' youngsters – although they could also be liked by 'soft' ones, and were in fact often the object of criticism because of their 'docility', 'commercialism' and lack of authenticity. The closer we get to the non-commercial peripheries, the more we find connotations of strength, virility,

active opposition and transgression traditionally seen as linked to male heterosexuality. Nevertheless, although non-commerciality was equated in interviews with manliness and virility, there were important variations in the way different youth styles, in the practices experienced by the youngsters that embodied them, construed gender and sexual identities. Some styles tended to be more openly sexist and homophobic, like *màkina*, rap or garage⁶⁸, while others were predominantly male but more subtly or softly sexist and homophobic, like rock and punk, and still others overtly, or at least apparently or partially, challenged the dominant sexism and homophobia, like some sorts of dance and alternative pop music⁶⁹. *Màkina*, rap and garage tended in fact to be linked to a 'traditional' or 'dominant' working-class masculinity. In general, young men with a 'tougher' attitude usually liked what was perceived as harder music, either because of the beat ('Normalmente [a los tíos] les gusta más el pum-pum'), the speed ('Fast tunes. I like fast tunes'), the loudness ('What they [*the boys*] do is play loud music. No lyrics, just loud music') or some other aspect signified through adjectives like 'noisy', '*brusca*', '*tralla*', '*diabólica*', '*potent*' or 'radical'. Nevertheless, this association between 'hardness' in music and 'tough' young men, was not always straightforward. Rock, heavy, metal, hardcore, or punk, for instance, were quite 'hard' in musical terms but their fans were only marginally or rhetorically associated with archetypal masculinity, toughness and marked transgression. The interviewees who liked rock and punk music showed a rather 'soft', 'nice' or 'civilised' disposition in comparison to those who liked garage, rap, and *màkina*. This must be related to the fact that these music genres tended to be associated in both cities to a middle-class attitude (slightly '*catalufó*' in Barcelona, '*boffin*' or even 'posh' in Birmingham). This is important because the situation was quite different a few decades ago when rockers, heavies and other 'guitar' genres were predominantly associated with working-class dispositions. In the fieldwork, the impression was that rock, heavy and punk offered the opportunity to many interviewees to present in front of others with a relatively 'hard' image while remaining well-behaved in school and social parameters, that is, as being rhetorically provocative rather than transgressive, or being transgressive but not in terms of, for instance, school disposition and a tough attitude:

⁶⁸ See Young & Craig (1997) for an analysis of the 'hyper-aggressive' and 'hyper-masculine' character of the skinhead subculture in Canada, where they explain the compulsory character of heterosexual masculinity 'articulated in terms of a so-called clean-cut style, a willingness to "prove" oneself physically, an aggressive pursuit of the opposite sex, and open rejection of homosexuality, and chauvinistic attitudes towards all things perceived as "feminine".' (ibid.: 200). Their fieldwork showed strictly segregated gender roles that empowered men and marginalized women..

⁶⁹ I am being highly reductionist here. For a more nuanced analysis of gender and youth styles, from different points of view, see for instance Wulff (1988), McRobbie (1991), Denski & Sholle (1992), Blackman (1996; 1998), Urteaga (1996), Young & Craig (1997), Leonard (1998), Wald (1998), Richard & Kruger (1998), Pujolar (2001), or Berga (2004).

Edward: The people who like rock music are nice people... The other week we went to a death metal... just heavy metal music...

Dave: Massive people, with dyed long hair, tattoos, and piercings everywhere, and you bump into someone and it's like, "Sorry, sorry, sorry". Really polite, nice people, but if you enter like a dance club and you bump into somebody, a fight will come out... It's not particularly pleasant people!

This 'softness' did not mean that females felt more attracted to these styles. On the contrary, many more males than females adhered to them. When girls did participate, their physical display was characterised by a notable androgyny and a secondary or 'complementary' status. In the case of the 'tough' music genres more clearly associated with manliness in its archetypal sense, females did like them and participate in the associated youth styles, but generally with a different implication. See for instance the example of *màkina* music and what we have called the *pelao* style. One interviewee said that '*peladas*' or, as he called them, '*pelonchas*', tended in fact to like some (softer) artists like Camela. A strong *màkina* male fan said that even though *peladas* did not like pop music, 'a nosotros[, a los chicos,] nos gusta más el *hardcore* duro que las chicas que suelen escuchar más... más *dance*, más *rollo* de este'. In terms of physical appearance and gender identity, within *màkina* style there was a marked distinction between male and female dispositions. Far from the apparent androgyny of other styles, in *màkina* males and females established markedly sexualised interactions and identities, although girls' partial participation in the 'toughness' of the style led some interviewees to characterise female '*peladas*' as '*marimachos*': 'No sé, porque que son de otra forma de... También de la ropa, llevan otro tipo de ropa más así... Las chicas van más *marimacho*, uy, uy, uy. Siempre con pantalones, más... yo que sé, no... Con las Alphas, van con otro tipo de ropa'. The truth is that, in the tougher styles like *màkina*, rap and garage, both males and females seemed more homophobic than in other styles. The following example of a *hardcore pelada*, as related by her sister, provides a good illustration: 'Porque a mi hermana eso de los gais y todo eso, mucho asco le da. (...) Por ejemplo, a lo mejor hay una lesbiana al lado, y pobre de ella si está mi hermana al lado, vamos la pega y *to*. Le da mucho asco eso'.

Needless to say, I am drawing a reductionist portrait that must be taken with caution, but the fact is that in youth geographies, and in every youth style, there were different expectations concerning masculine and feminine behaviour and disposition, including taste in music. We also need to bear in mind that even though we are using 'genres' as the basic units to understand the imbrication between musical geographies and masculinity and femininity, within the same music genre there were often distinctions between the harder and the softer versions of it – which in general matched the distinctions between its more commercial (softer) and underground (harder) versions:

Juanma: [Hay] la música comercial, que eso suele ser a las niñas, que les gusta todo esto de Backstreet Boys y todo esto; después a los demás, a los chicos que nos gusta mucho la *màkina*.

Roger: ¿Y hay chicas que les guste la màkina, así alguna canción?

Juanma: Sí. Sí, alguna, pero màkina tipo comercial, canciones de estas famosas, pero màkina-màkina no la escuchan.

Each style, therefore, allowed an important range of dispositions, because even if there was a dominant tendency, important individual and collective variations could be negotiated. The same was true in Birmingham, where several interviewees referred to rap and garage music in terms similar to those used of *màkina* in Barcelona: 'The girls who are *boyish*... they like rap. And the like posh type of girls... snobs... [like pop]'. A girl in another school, said that girls liked r'n'b more than garage, and then added: 'It's like garage but with a feminine touch'. A young man said that whereas 'girls tend to listen to r'n'b more (...), boys listen to the hardcore stuff. With a harder tune'.

Among the styles mentioned by the interviewees as apparently challenging both homophobia and – to a some extent – the central and prominent position of boys, the most significant seemed to be 'fashion' in Barcelona, also called '*cyber*' by some interviewees⁷⁰. Many young people in Barcelona linked what they called 'fashion' style to alternative masculinities and sexualities. The fashion style, linked to what young people called 'house' music, was seen by many as highly sexualised in both a heterosexual and a homosexual sense: '[Esta discoteca es] *fashion*, *pastillero* y tanto te *lías* con un chico como con una chica, no sé'; 'Més que res quan... O sigui, quan m'imagino *house*, *pues* m'imagino la típica *tia bona*, voluptuosa amb la seva *minifalda*, les seves botes, infernals'.

If we analyse the presence of toughness across the different schools, as we have done in the preceding sections, we find important differences in the way it contributes to interpersonal hierarchies. In those schools with predominantly working-class pupils 'toughness' is more important to acquire social dominance and even acceptance, while those with a predominantly middle-class extraction have other ways of channelling the masculine need of showing strength and competition. As in the case of female competition, middle-class cultural relations tend to prioritise symbolic competition that does not generally involve physical retaliation and intimidation. When symbolic violence predominates in a particular school, the way interpersonal hierarchies of popularity are organised differs radically from those schools where 'toughness' is a taken-for-granted primary quality. Naturally, both scenarios are highly reductionist 'ideal types', but useful ones to understand the plural reality of both 'masculinity' and 'femininity', and thus the difficulty of making sense of the articulation of gender and sexuality in youth and musical geographies. The plural reality of 'masculinity' and 'femininity'

⁷⁰ By 'most significant' I refer to the styles expressed by the interviewees, since what Barcelona's interviewees called '*fashion*' is simply a version of what in Birmingham would be the *club* culture around house music, which in spite of its popularity was not mentioned by the interviewees. The partially innovative negotiation of gender and sexuality in *rave* and *club* culture was the object of attention in, for instance, Richard & Krugger (1996). Hodkinson (2002) carried out another analysis of non-hegemonic gender relations and identities, in this case in the goth subculture.

implies that, depending on the context of interaction, we will find important differences in the meaning and value of toughness and niceness. When tough masculinity predominates, alternative *softer* or *nicer* masculinities will be highly invisible and peripheral. When *softer* or *nicer* masculinities predominate, they will have more chances to occupy higher positions in the interpersonal hierarchies of popularity. Thus, in each context there is what Connell (1989: 295) calls a *contest for hegemony between rival versions of masculinity*. Nevertheless, in all of these cases, the 'value' of masculinity will still be defined *against* both femininity and homosexuality.

There is yet another aspect of the imbrication of gender with sexuality and with personal youth hierarchies that must be highlighted: the relationship between hierarchical position and male-female relationships. The idea is that being in a higher position in personal hierarchies in the school is good because it facilitates access to friendship and courtship. Romantic and sexual relationships are, particularly during adolescence, one of the focal interests of young people, and being popular definitely helps in this respect. In general, within the more popular groups of young people males and females have more contact with each other, both in terms of friendship as well as erotic and sexual relations (homosexual relationships tend to be hidden, although they are gradually gaining visibility; when transparent, their 'marginalised' or 'popular' position in personal hierarchies varies considerably depending on each particular case, although it tends to be rather 'peripheral'). The taste in music of those who are popular in the school, therefore, appears to be linked to greater male-female interaction. In the Periphery School, for instance, *màkina* was the music genre of those considered most 'popular':

Roger: Y como ves, no sé... ¿Tu ves bandas con chicos, con chicas, en parejas? ¿Todos, o no?

Sonia: Yo creo que sí. Por ejemplo, los *pelaos*... Yo creo que las chicas, ¿no?, van más con los chicos, ¿sabes? Y sin embargo, los otros son más... Que guardan las distancias, ¿vale? Que son más cortados para algunas cosas... y les da más [*corté*]. Y sin embargo, ellos pues mira, todos se hacen piña, todos son iguales...

A clearly different example is that of rock, heavy and punk music, which in both Birmingham and Barcelona were basically liked by males – and in general not those considered most popular. The style of the youngsters who liked these genres was seen as relatively 'soft' – even though the music was 'hard' – but it did not include women among its fans, so being a rock fan did not help boys to relate to girls. 'Normalment no va un grup [*de ties*] així com nosaltres, que de vegades anem... Som deu, i de vegades a un concert anem sis o set, no? *De ties* normalment et trobes màxim un grupet de tres o així, o la *tia* amb el *novio*...'. In Birmingham, another young man made a similar point: 'No... mmm... there's not many girls that I know that are into rock music. A lot of the girls do seem to be into pop or dance music. There's not so many [*female*] rockers'. Two male heavy music fans in Barcelona remarked that when they wanted to meet girls at night, they did not go to the heavy bars they liked, but to clubs with dance music: 'A veure,

nosaltres... si sortim per anar a buscar *ties*, anem a les discoteques, perquè... jo què sé, si anem als bars que anem sempre o així, l'has *cagat!*'

The importance of the relationship between high positions in interpersonal hierarchies (popularity) and higher intersexual contact is seen in Hollywood films about high-school, but tends to be overlooked in youth cultures literature. The way different tastes in music, or youth styles, are being adopted by youngsters in different positions in interpersonal hierarchies is important in understanding the cultural production of musical geographies. Erotic and love relationships are both an incentive for, and a consequence of, being popular.

In conclusion, we have seen – however superficially – throughout different examples the centrality of the articulation, in youth and musical geographies, of gender and sexual differences and interpersonal hierarchies, generalised advantage and ethnicity. Alongside 'ethnicity' – understood in a broad sense – gender and sexuality were the social categories that young people were happy to associate with different tastes in music. Even though some interviewees claimed that boys and girls liked the same music, most of them clearly distinguished between different styles, and constantly linked different styles to different connotations in terms of gender and sexual orientation. Moreover, the way 'masculinity' and 'femininity' were experienced is directly related to hierarchies of generalised advantage and ethnicity. All these aspects were articulated with each other, as well as with time and space – aspects that we will analyse in the following sections.

Time, age and generation

In order to discuss the articulation of social connotations in the organisation of musical and youth geographies, we have so far analysed the importance of ethnicity (including 'immigration', linguistic difference, religion and national identities), generalised advantage and gender. Just as we have argued that they cannot be appropriately understood unless they are related to each other, since, as noted by Bettie, 'class as a cultural identity cannot be uncoupled from one's gendered and racialised self' (2000: 29), and as the same author reminds us, nor can they be separated from 'how these categories are historically reconstructed and changing' (ibid.: 29).

Since our social and biographical experience is always understood within particular time co-ordinates, time is always imbricated with musical geographies, as well as with interpersonal hierarchies and typified youth styles. Music marks the passage of time, both historical and biographical, as well as the tension between tradition and modernity. Fashions, trends and fads structure our perception of historical and generational change. Each music trend that faded out in the past is like a month of a calendar that is thrown away as time goes by. Biographically, the expected taste in music at different stages of life is also important in structuring young people's experience of their pathways through adolescence and youth. And all these related aspects have an important impact on youth hierarchies, where being 'modern', 'old fashioned', 'childish' or 'mature', can all be important elements

of the impression young people make on others and therefore on their location in youth personal hierarchies and typified youth styles.

If we look at time and historical change, we will rapidly see how music plays an important role in structuring our historical and generational awareness. Listening to certain songs and sounds immediately transport us to different historical moments. Each time has its own musical soundscape, and the popular music that every generation listens to during adolescence will identify them for the rest of their lives, ritually and sensuously marking their time and generation. The logic of popular music submits it to a continuous innovation – the ‘circuit of change’, as we have called it in Chapter 5 – and different music sounds characterise the soundtrack of every generation from that of its predecessors, and also of every age group from the others. As one interviewee said: ‘A ver los jóvenes, los jóvenes escuchan música diferente de los mayores, eso ya lo sabemos todo el mundo’.

Music marks different generations, and popular music is known to have a history. Young people know that Elvis Presley and the Beatles are part of the distant past, and that there is some connection or genealogy between what they like and these distant, legendary predecessors. What is in between, however, is a blurred web of bands, artists and genres that only some young people are able to map out with precision. For the majority, it is an opaque map of genealogical connections, which is only experienced as centrally relevant by some of those who have an ‘anti-commercial’ disposition. The following quote illustrates the opacity of these genealogical connections even for these two young men who presented themselves as punk fans – that is, a style that is rooted in a 70s music movement – but did not know of the ‘Ramones’, the American band often portrayed – alongside the Sex Pistols – as the first punk band:

Roger: I *punk* més antic com Sex Pistols [l’escolteu]?

Jose: Sí, sí que m’agrada.

Roger: Escoltes? Tens cintes?

Jose: Sí, en tinc algunes. Home, tinc sobretot més *punk* nou, però tinc un parell de CDs recopilatoris, doncs de música antiga, on hi ha Sex Pistols, i també està aquesta que treuen ara de l’anunci [que surt a la televisió] dels Ramones, que diuen [mocking] “Los inventores del *punk*!” Sí! Ha, ha [as meaning that he will not be cheated]. Sí, sí. Sí que m’agrada en general [el *punk* antic]...

Roger: Perquè no són els inventors del *punk* [els Ramones]?

Jose: Ni a la de tres! Ha, ha! A més, espanyols i inventors del *punk*!

Dani: No.

Roger: Espanyols?

Jose: Sí, el presenten [així a l’anunci], un grup espanyol com a inventors del *punk*...

Dani: Pioners, potser...

Jose: Sí, a veure, és dels primers grups espanyols de *punk*, però vull dir, el *punk*...

In the case of Asians in Birmingham and Moroccans in Barcelona, genealogies were often not blurred but absent, as is clearly illustrated by several of them who did not know anything about The Beatles or the Rolling Stones. Western popular

music genealogies are a (taken-for-granted) stock of social knowledge, and those who had recently entered Western youth geographies just did not have it.

In spite of the genealogical origins, what was important was generally 'modern' music, and the music that best signified 'modernity' was chart and dance music – including, depending on the schools, r'n'b, rap, garage, *màkina* and other forms of electronic music. The 'modernity' of dance music can be easily grasped in quotes like these: '[I like dance,] kind of modern music really'; '[me gusta] el *techno*, el *house*, el *progressive*, no sé la música de esta así moderna, el *dance*...'. An illustration of the modern connotation of chart music is offered by a young woman who after liking her parents' music, said that a couple of years ago started to 'get into more modern stuff'. When describing her parent's taste in music, she remarked its time connotations: 'My mum likes the modern style, she doesn't like any other style. My dad is into the fifties! Radio music of his time'. Two girls in Barcelona described a classmate as '*rarito*' because he liked 'músicos no muy conocidos (...), músicos antiguos, viejos, cosas así'. Indeed, liking styles different from chart and dance music was often seen as liking 'old music', an idea that was shared by some of the interviewees who liked rock: '[La música que més em desagrada és] tot *lo* modern que hi ha'. However, rock fans sometimes made a distinction between their 'parents' stuff', like Beatles, Led Zeppeling or other 60s and 70s bands, and contemporary rock and punk bands.

Here it is important to understand that each music style has its speed of innovation, as we have seen in Chapter 5 when analysing the circuit of change of popular music, that is, its distinct way of articulating 'newness'. The speed of innovation of blues music or Catalan rock, for instance, cannot be compared to that of dance and chart music. Rock interviewees would find meaningless words like those of the following pop fan: 'hace dos o tres años, a mi también me gustaban. Pero ya pasó, la época. (...) Eran nuevos y todo el mundo... Y ahora ya han pasado de moda, ya nadie los escucha...'. Rock, punk and heavy fans had their own notion of 'newness' and 'modernity', and experienced a different relationship with the past. For them, genealogies were important, and the past, far from being synonymous with 'old-fashioned', tended to carry an inherent 'authenticity'. This combination of attention to new bands and respect for the past can be seen in the following definition of a radio show by a young man who likes heavy music: 'Allà *pues* et posen tot *lo* nou, *lo* que vindrà. T'expliquen tot, et posen música... També de vegades fan: "Avui farem dels anys setanta als vuitanta no sé què...". Les dècades... depèn. Però expliquen tot *lo* que vindrà...'. The importance of 'what's next' for these heavy music fans makes it clear that whereas 'chart' music generally signifies *what's going on right now*, for many it also means its dissolution, since the 'authentic' barometer of 'newness' would be located in the cutting-edge underground. When it becomes popular, it means that it has 'gone commercial', and is thus no longer new or 'authentic'. This means that 'chart' music can signify what interviewees called 'getting with the flow' or 'getting nowadays songs', and it does this throughout the world, but cutting-edge and underground newness is for some the 'really authentic' mark of modernity, which does not imply knowing

what's going on in the commercial media but rather 'being in-the-know', 'ahead of the times', in the underground. From this point of view, you can be up to date through the mainstream media, but the real hallmark of modernity is only available through the underground and the street.

Particularly in Birmingham, as we have already seen, there was the feeling that every two or three years a new music style would take over from the old as the 'popular music to be into'. Many interviewees said in different ways what this girl expressed in just nine words: 'Yeah, jungle came out first, and then garage after'. In Barcelona, the wheel of fads and trends seemed to be a little bit slower. *Màkina*, as has already been noted, had been around since the mid-90s, and there was no such thing as a generalised 'what will be next' expectation⁷¹.

The truth is that as more and more decades of pop music and their fans, artists and musical forms pass into the history of contemporary popular music, and as genres of popular music diversify and pile up on the shelves of music stores, the articulation of time becomes more and more complex. The coexistence of 'modern' commercial popular music and 'cutting-edge', 'ground-breaking' experimental underground, in combination with 60s, 70s and 80s revivals, as well as with underground contemporary developments of old styles like punk, rock or rap music, and even the co-presence of westernised versions of the traditional music of ethnic minorities like bhangra or raï, implies the coexistence of very different timings and historical awareness.

Closely related to the articulation of music and our perception of time, historical change and generational awareness, there is the relationship between music and the social structuration of age. Musical geographies and youth hierarchies are not free from the importance of fine age divisions among young people. In sharp contrast with the experience of age a few centuries ago, when not only children but all ages mixed much more than nowadays, and when many people just did not know their exact age⁷², contemporary Western experience of age is based on precise divisions that separate children and young people in fine layers of one-year cohorts, the years of school grades. State regulation, which distributes pupils in different grades depending on their year of birth, has the consequence of differentiating them in terms of age, so one or two years distance can easily mark a distinct experience in terms of development. Music, as part of the youth experience, is embedded in this reality. As distinct from what will often happen later in life, during adolescence, being considered younger is seen as negative, for instance through adjectives like 'childish' or 'immature'. Mixing with pupils or friends who are two or three years younger can be seen as a stigma, while mixing with those who are two or three years older can be seen as a valuable experience. Three years can be an insuperable barrier, as this sixteen-year-old girl implies when recalling the crowd in a pub she had

⁷¹ At the time of finishing this PhD, it seems as if hip hop and rap music have some chance of replacing *màkina* as an important collective sound, but it is not clear whether it will last as long as *màkina* has.

⁷² See Ariés (1962) for an analysis into the historical construction of childhood.

visited: 'Entonces entramos, y cuando empecé a ver que habían crías, o sea, ¡pero crías de trece años!' In contrast with traditional festivals, where all ages mixed without any problem, the segregation of age groups in modern life is the norm⁷³.

As we have already seen in the preceding chapter, some musical forms are also related to different levels of 'maturity' and 'childishness' – maturity being an important asset in the struggle for respect in youth social space, though clearly distinguished from the (negative) adulthood. In Chapter 6, when we analysed the association between maturity, specialisation and diversification in the process of growing up through musical geographies, we saw that the more obviously 'commercial' music is associated with early adolescence. Chart music, and particularly boy and girl bands, is often stigmatised (particularly) after early adolescence, when it becomes associated with a 'childish' attitude. A 16-year-old fan of the Spice Girls was seen as 'childish' and 'laughable' by most interviewees, and even those who claimed to like them, often acknowledged that they did not admit it to their friends. In both Birmingham and Barcelona, many interviewees with different tastes in music repeated this association between pop music and younger ages; 'No, ahora no... A la gente de mi edad no nos gusta...'; 'Los "40 Principales" hace tres o cuatro años la escuchaba yo'; 'Most people in year 7... [12 years old] They like pop music. And if you get older they like speed garage and jungle...'; 'Some of the younger ones probably like Steps and stuff like that... People like us like proper music...'. In Barcelona, non-English artists like Laura Pausini were also mentioned as liked at younger ages: 'Sí. Cuando era más pequeña oía. (...) Pero ahora ya no mucho'. As we have stressed in Chapter 6, growing up was associated in general terms to a more diversified taste in music, whether within commercial music or in opposition to it. The fact that different ages are accompanied by different (musical) expectations is the same as saying that taste in music is structured in terms of age⁷⁴.

Within non-commercial tastes different sounds were often also linked to different age groups. Bands with amusing lyrics, for instance, were usually seen as suiting early adolescents. Another example is that of *màkina* and house music in Barcelona: several interviewees described house as the logical – for those who had grown up – follow-up of *màkina*.

Roger: ¿Y crees que el ambiente en *house* y el ambiente en *màkina* se diferencia?

Marta: Hombre, es diferente. El de *màkina*... Siempre suele haber problemas, por una cosa o por otra...

Roger: Por *hòstias*...

⁷³ In this sense, Barcelona's annual festival, *Festes de la Mercè*, although it tries to reproduce traditional village fetes, is modern in terms of the segregation of the audiences, just the opposite of the surviving *Festes de Gràcia* and *Festes de Sants*, old villages now absorbed into Barcelona as neighbourhoods, which still have intergenerational character.

⁷⁴ The structuration of taste in music in terms of age has been considerably modified in recent decades, in that popular music is no longer restricted to young people, because children have been incorporated into it, and also because it is now as legitimate for adults as it is for youngsters (Peterson & Kern 1996), but the differences persist in more subtle ways.

Marta: Siempre. En cambio, en una discoteca de *house* o *dance* no, porque la gente ya... Quieras o no es más grande, y *suda* ya de todo...

Roger: Es porque es más grande que no hay problemas...

Marta: Más que nada. Aunque también a los mayores les gusta la *màkina* pero que... para salir por la noche ya no van a un sitio de *màkina*, van a un sitio de *house* o *dance*...

Roger: O sea la *màkina* es mucho más joven que el *house*...

Marta: Si.

Roger: Y la misma gente que le gusta la *màkina* cuando se hace mayor tiende a...

Marta: Sí, porque es que todos mis amigos antes siempre X-que [*a màkina club*] y esto, y ahora que ya tiene veinte y pico pues se van al Desigual, a la Florida...

There is no doubt, therefore, that young people, when entering musical and youth geographies, need to learn their connotations in terms of historical, generational and biographical – or developmental – time. Making sense of one's own maturity and one's relationship to 'modern' time and other generations' music will be part of the process of growing up and identity-making. These meanings, moreover, are imbricated in interpersonal and typified hierarchies, since they take on different values depending on the context of interaction and the position in the co-ordinates of typified youth styles.

Space, place, locality, globality, and cosmopolitanism

If time is one of the axes along which young people organise their social and biographical experience, and evaluate other youngsters, space is necessarily the other. We all build our knowledge from the point of view of our *hic et nunc*, our here and now, and even though when we 'enter' a piece of music, the aesthetic experience transcends somewhat our spatial, social and temporal location, since it is inherently other, it is also embedded in it. Musical forms have important spatial meanings attached to them, and their articulation with typified styles and interpersonal hierarchies is central in order to understand musical and youth geographies. As I have already discussed in Chapter 1 and 2, a few notes of oriental, African, 'country' or 'flamenco' music will immediately evoke in our minds different places. Similarly, in a certain city, we might easily relate different sounds to different neighbourhoods. The notions of 'soundscape' (Smith 1994) and 'soundtracks' (Connell & Gibson 2004 [2003]) have been used to try to capture this spatial aspect of music⁷⁵.

In the first part of this thesis I have also mentioned the recent incorporation of the variable of 'space' in social sciences other than geography, modifying the situation where time was considered, albeit unreflexively, the basic variable to under-

⁷⁵ See Jackson's (1989) arguments around the concept of 'maps of meaning' for a discussion of the importance of the notion of 'landscape', understood as a text, as a unit concept in geography's attempt to solve the society and space debate. Connell & Gibson point out that 'As early as the 1920s, music, and sound more generally, were considered part of an early 'landscape tradition' within regional geography' (2004 [2003]: 11)

stand social processes. The conception of different societies as being more or less 'advanced' in an imagined line of 'development', which was the result of primarily internal change, has been modified by the 'globalisation' paradigm, which focuses instead on the interrelations and competition between different nations and places at every moment in time. In this context, the fact is that popular music offers a privileged field to reflect upon the interrelation between globality and locality, and the way we make sense of this tension through (commodified) symbolic forms. To understand how musical geographies articulate the spatial dimension, and how it is imbricated with other hierarchies, we must understand that locality, place and globality are inextricably related to the construction of what we call 'cosmopolitanism' and 'parochialism', as well as the time difference between 'modern' and 'backward' that we have just analysed. This link between 'cosmopolitanism' and 'modernity' is the result of its ideological construction as breaking through into the future, as being the source, or the centre, of cutting-edge trends that will be spread to the less cosmopolitan – more parochial – peripheries. This structuration of space is naturally not neutral in terms of power: as in the case of time, we are talking about a struggle for respect and recognition⁷⁶.

Space is more important in popular music that we tend to imagine⁷⁷. It is not only that songs, bands, genres and even 'sounds' are often thought of in geographical terms, or that places are linked to particular sounds, but also that popular music is thought of in terms of a US-UK cosmopolitan centre and their 'peripheries'. Music and place are two closely related concepts, since musical forms and styles are often experienced as authentic in terms of their 'roots' and 'origins'⁷⁸, bearing with them geographical connotations. Country music and America, salsa and Latin American countries, flamenco and Spain, or the Beatles and Liverpool. Some music, however, is seen as spatially neutral, as part of the globalised world of (Western) 'modern popular music'. In contrast with the highly localised 'traditional' or popular 'folk' music, contemporary mainstream popular music generally appears as spatially vague. The international dominance of American and British popular music is naturalised – assumed to be 'natural' – to the point of often being invisible and considered 'neutral'. Just as Paris, from the times of Absolutism, was the 'natural' centre of fashion and, in bohemian times, the

⁷⁶ See Skrbis, Kendall & Woodward (2004) for a critical assessment of the recent interest in 'cosmopolitanism' within the social sciences. My use of the term is value-neutral, with the only intention of capturing the experience of young people, not its ethical and normative implications.

⁷⁷ Nevertheless, there are many recent contributions to this issue. See for instance the recent overview of the link between music and space offered by Connell and Gibson's *Sound Tracks. Popular Music, Identity and Place* (2004 [2003]) or Bennett's in-depth ethnography in *Popular Music and Youth Culture: Music, Identity and Place* (2000). More than a decade ago, Cohen (1991, 1993), advocated the construction of the concept of locality through music (and particularly music-making practices), using the concept 'to refer to a sense of community or affinity that is linked to notions of place and to the social construction of spatial boundaries' (Cohen 1993: 129). The recent relative success of the notion of 'scene' as a substitute for subculture, in fact, is partially due to its spatial sensitivity.

⁷⁸ See Connell & Gibson (2004 [2003]) for a development of this.

Mecca of Art, popular music has its centre in London, New York and Los Angeles. The cognitive maps of young people locate the United States and the United Kingdom as the cosmopolitan centres and the rest of the world in concentric circles of parochialism, where Western countries, and particularly Australia, France, Germany and Sweden occupy the closest rings and third world countries the furthest ones. Moreover, each country tends to have its own 'cosmopolitan' centres in its bigger urban concentrations and then circles of parochialism that end in the smaller rural or peripheral places.

These distinctions between cosmopolitan centres and parochial peripheries can be seen as a specific symbolic hierarchy, which is difficult to separate from both the political economy of music analysed in Chapter 5 and the post-colonial ethnic or linguistic differences. An interesting element of this symbolic hierarchy is that what is seen as 'black' (Afro-American and Afro-Caribbean) culture, subordinate in relation to white culture in Western countries, is an important, and perhaps the main source of innovation in the 'cosmopolitan centres'. The fact is that the symbolic hierarchy implicit in the cosmopolitan-parochial divide produces a strong idea of 'authenticity' that makes it more difficult for peripheral artists to be 'credible' in the arena of contemporary popular music except in the arena of so-called 'world music'. In most non-English-speaking countries, for instance, it is not – and in some cases it has never been – easy to achieve linguistic normality in local pop and rock scenes. Interviewees in Barcelona repeatedly referred to the peripheral position in popular music with expressions like 'Sol passar que quan la música es posa de moda allà a Anglaterra, arriba aquí'; 'Sí, és que Anglaterra és com si diguéssim una mica el centre'; or '[Ese grupo que van] con pantalones aquí muy anchos y eso... que siempre les gusta la música esa... que en Estados Unidos hay mucha, que llaman...[rap]'.

Sometimes the relationship between a 'cosmopolitan' centre and 'parochial' peripheries is not overtly stated, and must be read as underlying the words or practices of the interviewees. Moreover, a cosmopolitan – as well as a parochial – disposition took very varied forms. In Barcelona, for instance, cosmopolitanism could be attributed to those who listened to music coming from the centre or to those liking so-called world music. One boy, for instance, said that he did not like Catalan or Spanish bands, and when asked for the reason, answered as follows: 'No sé, mira, sempre m'han agradat els cantants d'altres països'. In Barcelona, the association of cosmopolitanism with American and British music was perfectly illustrated by the legendary trips to London to know 'what's going on right now'. A good example of this is the case of two cultural entrepreneurs in Barcelona who started their career by bringing new releases from London and selling them to specialised record shops and clubs. The trips to London have always been seen as a revealing experience, and even if they might be less relevant in the era of the Internet, the aura of the metropolis is still present in one way or another. Just as Barcelona is the big 'metropolis' in Catalonia, and is seen by those living in smaller towns as the trend-setter and the site of diversity, in Barcelona both

London and New York are seen as being many *steps forward*. These words of a young man who had recently been in London are clear enough:

Alan: Sí, sí, sí, havia gent... Però Londres... jo què sé... Si tu vas per aquí, pel carrer, vas amb una cresta i no és que tothom et miri, però, *bueno*, la gent s'hi fixa. A Londres ja pots anar com vulguis, que la gent ho troba normal. O sigui, tu pots anar al metro amb un *tio* amb una cresta i al costat un *tio* amb *smoking* i no passa res...

Note that we are not only talking about music, but about typified youth styles and fashion in general. In all these terrains, the feeling of being a periphery can easily lead to a feeling of inferiority. Barcelona – and Catalonia in general – *imagines* itself to be more ‘European’ than the rest of Spain. Without judging whether this is true or an ideological construction, it does seem to have affected the ‘openness’ to new trends in popular music. Barcelona is seen, for instance, alongside Valencia and Ibiza, as the door through which new trends in electronic music enter Spain. Nevertheless, whereas this impetus to be aware of what’s going on in the ‘centre’ might be regarded as cosmopolitan, it can also be the result of an inverted type of parochialism: a straightforward cultural dependency that systematically dismisses local creativity. Two different musicians who had DJed in Barcelona said how amazed they were at the knowledge that some people in the city had about British dance scenes, which went much further than that of those who lived there. At the same time, this coexisted with many young people, particularly *màkina* fans, who were basically ignorant of international trends in dance music:

Roger: ¿Y *disc jockeys* ingleses o americanos o así se escuchan aquí? ¿O no?

Rosa: Hay uno que se llama... No me acuerdo como se llama. Estuvo en “El que més trenca”, ¿cómo se llama?

Eli: No me acuerdo yo.

Rosa: El que pincha [*she la-la-las*] el del muñeco de Levis...

Roger: Ah! ¿un francés?

Rosa: Sí, sí, el francés este, es que nunca me acuerdo como se llama.

Eli: Que se llamase, ¿Fred?, no.

Rosa: No sé como se llama.

Eli: No me acuerdo.

Rosa: Es que, es que aquí se escucha gente de aquí.

Eli: El [*Xavi*] Metralla también me gustaba a mi.

Rosa: El DJ Escudero también es buenísimo... El Pastis & Buenri, son, *superpromocionales*.

This dependency on the centre can also be found in England, with the peripheral position of Birmingham in relation to London. Interviewees in Birmingham saw London as ahead of their city in musical terms: ‘[Birmingham is] following London. Yeah’ or ‘[Birmingham is] nothing in comparison to London’. There were, however, a couple of exceptions. In one, two girls said that London was the same as Birmingham, but just bigger, and in the other, a boy said that Birmingham was the centre and London was following it. In general, however, the

impression was that their city had a peripheral status in relation to London, which implied not only a spatial but also a temporal subordination:

Noorjha: And [I] went to London, and it was a whole really different world there. It's like everybody likes soul, r'n'b, dance, hip hop, garage. So I (...) started to like that kind of music, and my dress sense changed as well. When I came back to Birmingham, everyone was a bit behind the times, it was like in the past, and it was a boring summer, a bit boring.

There was more discussion of the relationship between the UK and the US⁷⁹, even though the dominant impression was that the US was ahead: 'You follow like the Americans sometimes. (...) It's like... America likes garage first... coming from America to Birmingham. And the same with hip hop'. An illustration of both the importance of the US and the invisibility of the European peripheries from the perspective of Birmingham is the following quote:

Joel: I think it's more countries following countries, than cities...

Roger: And which countries....?

Joel: I mean... America is always there at the top, and then everyone is looking up to America following what they do. But I think Britain is going across to America a bit more and bringing their kind of music and then there's a lot more British bands than before. But yes, it's definitely America.

Roger: And Britain will be second, or will be with Germany or the rest of Europe?

Joel: I don't really know, because I don't really know what goes on in Europe. I know there's a few Europe rock bands that come over to the mainstream rock. Those German ones... I don't know many others [*laughs*].

From the perspective of Birmingham, Barcelona, Catalonia and Spain were practically invisible, and interviewees in the three Birmingham schools had a very vague image of them. As with commercial music in relation to the underground, where the 'centre' is more visible than the peripheries, the cosmopolitan centre is also more visible whereas the peripheries remain unseen. In Barcelona, trend-setters made an effort to be in touch with 'what was going on' in the UK and the US. By contrast, for Birmingham, Spain was like a black hole in terms of musical and youth styles. A good example of this was the case of a group of boys in Birmingham who, when asked about the music liked by young people in Spain, answered Caribbean music, calypso, reggae and ragga. In general, the interviewees assumed that young people in Spain would listen to the same music as they did in Birmingham ('I don't really know... Probably... I think most people like pop and dance and garage...'), but they would probably be a little bit out of date ('I reckon it's a little behind the times, if you know what I mean'). At the same

⁷⁹ Chambers said 'That state of mind which was 'America' for many British youngsters in the 1950s bore two unmistakable imprints: Hollywood film and popular music' (1985: 32). Since then, the 'cultural gravity of pop' (to use an expression of Chamber's), has moved several times from one side of the Atlantic to the other.

time, they guessed that American and English pop music was combined with a higher presence of what was referred to as 'Latin' music ('And a bit of Latin music as well. Ricky Martin and stuff like that...'; 'Latin, Latin, Latin sort'; 'Ricky Martin kind of stuff'). This reference to 'Latin' music is important because it illustrates how American and English music was seen as the 'centre' of popular music, while all other sounds, particularly if they had non-English lyrics, were to some extent 'ethnified' or 'folklorised'. Just as nobody thinks of McDonald's as serving 'ethnic' food, nobody thought of American and English popular music as 'ethnically' marked but rather as neutral, overlooking the clear cultural power relations it articulated. One boy combined his 'ethnified' image of music in Spain with his assumption that English and American music was dominant there: '[I guess that in Spain they listen to] Classical guitar, that's all really [*joking*]. No, not really. (...) I imagine that they listen to English music... Because I thought in other countries they listen to English music and American music... usually...'. The following girl even assumed that because chart music was now a mixture of different genres, including 'Latin' music, in Spain young people might listen to the same music as they did in the United Kingdom:

Roger: And which music do you think that people listen in Spain?

July: I think they listen to the dance music that is on the charts... Because the charts is a mixture now, it has everything.

Susan: It has r'n'b, garage...

July: R'n'b, garage...

Roger: In Spain they listen more to chart music than here, then?

July: I don't really know about Spain... I wonder... sometimes I wonder if Spaniards have their single hits, their own charts... Whereas here we have people from around the whole world... in the charts. Mostly from America.

Roger: What's your guess?

July: My guess is that it's just the same in Spain, that the Spanish do have singers like England and America in their charts, but I don't know if the Spanish have their own singers...

Susan: There's that, what's his name? Iglesias...

July: Enrique, yeah.

Susan: He never used to sing over here.

July: He did only in Spanish, like Ricky Martin.

Susan: Yeah. If they keep in Spanish we never know.

They are aware that if Enrique Iglesias and Ricky Martin had not sung in English, they would never have known about them, and at the same time they assumed that in Spain people listen to the same music as they do. Indeed, 'American' and 'English' music was assumed to be popular everywhere, but other sounds were supposed to be popular only in the countries of origin. Among 'ethnified' sounds, however, it is useful to distinguish between those who belonged to the field of pop and chart music (Enrique Iglesias and Ricky Martin in Birmingham) and those who generally did not make the charts even when combined with pop sounds, and were thus restricted to the field of traditional or folk music (general

Irish, Welsh, Scottish, Asian, Indian, Pakistani, Moroccan, Arab, or Flamenco music). Even when they were part of mainstream popular music, ‘ethnified’ sounds – with the obvious exception of ‘black music’ – were not considered part of ‘universal’ (English) popular music, but were seen as exotic sounds.

Special mention must be made of the role played by so-called ‘world music’ in organising ‘exoticism’ and the ‘fetishisation of place and ethnicity’⁸⁰. In the fieldwork, when ‘difference’ was appreciated it was generally in ‘exotic’ terms. Two female interviewees in Birmingham claimed to like ‘Latin’ music (and salsa dancing) very much, and another one in Barcelona said that she liked ‘Indian’ music. In general, though, even when appreciated, it was related with ‘being backward’. It is in this sense that the ‘cosmopolitanism’ of popular music could in fact be an inverted parochialism, where local or just ‘different’ music was not given a chance. An Eastern European boy living in Barcelona, explained how in his home country all popular music was in English, and ‘only old people’ listened to local music. This implicit ‘superiority’ or ‘aheadness’ of (universal) US and UK popular music could be clearly appreciated in the words – already quoted in this Chapter – of a girl who, when asked about whether she knew the music that Asian people listened to, said that ‘for our type of group [of friends], we like Steps, and if we don’t have any Asian people, it’s difficult to teach them’. She assumed that Asians *needed to be taught*, that is, that their ‘musical culture’ was ‘inferior’. Another variation of this same idea was present in a previous quote where one male interviewee explained that ‘trendy’ – and therefore popular – Asians liked pop music, and the others traditional Asian music.

It is obvious here that we are dealing with a complex imbrication of connotations of time, place and ethnicity, but also of interpersonal popularity and typified youth styles. It is also obvious that considering all these elements together we can understand how they are articulated. The point is that the judgements and mutual appreciations carried out in interpersonal hierarchies were imbued with meanings that had to do with youth stylistic differentiations, and also with the way young people made sense of time, space, gender, generalised advantage and ethnicity. All these elements were articulated in a way that made them impossible to unravel. They were experienced at once in the thread of everyday life, including young people’s involvement in music. It would thus be absurd to deny the intermingling of musical and social geographies. Music, when appropriated in everyday life, acquires meanings that transcend music.

⁸⁰ See Connell & Gibson (2004 [2003]: 144–59) for a more detailed discussion of world music. World music flourished from the 1980s as a construction of peripheral authenticity. In general, non-Western performers represent national and regional traditions (more than any other form of popular music), but invariably absorb a range of stylistic influences from the West. The definition of world music, not a musical genre but a marketing category, ‘depends on the social, political and demographic position of certain minority groups in a particular country’ (ibid.: 153). The example of Enrique Iglesias shifting from ‘world music’ to ‘pop/rock’ as he began to sing in English, shown in Chapter 5, is illustrative enough, as is the shifting labelling of Asian sounds in the UK as ‘world music’, ‘dance’ or ‘pop’.

We have seen, however, that whereas this connection between music and social meanings shows certain regularities in different locations, it cannot be regarded as univocal, since it always depends on the context of interaction. The notion of 'imbrication' enables us to consider the actual articulation between different hierarchical elements and, at the same time, to analytically differentiate the distinct layers of generality, from face-to-face personal interactions to broad typified social structures. It is useful, therefore, to identify spaces of autonomy in the cultural production of meaning. For instance, although musical and youth geographies have to some extent their own logic, producing their own distances and proximities, they are strongly influenced by, and contribute to the social production of, broader social geographies.

The analytical description of the different levels of hierarchies in musical and youth geographies has been necessarily reductionist. The aim was not in fact to provide a subtle in-depth analysis of them, but just to show the main co-ordinates operating in young people's everyday experience of them, as well as the imbricated character of them all. The danger of reductionism is no doubt that readers assume that musical and youth geographies have a strongly organised, reified and clear-cut existence out there. The next chapter will focus on the way young people experience, negotiate, conform to, or resist, the musical and youth topographies we have just analysed. Before doing that, however, we will discuss the way the imbrication of hierarchies is carried out through a process of homologies.

The imbrication through homologies

As I said at the beginning of this chapter, even if at times certain hierarchies are more salient than others, and in spite of their relative autonomy, they are somewhat connected and imbricated, although we are only partially aware of this connection. The assumption underlying the notion of imbrication according to which in our everyday life we make sense of, and experience, the 'pressures' of objectivated social hierarchies all at the same time, does not imply that we are reflexively aware of them. On the contrary, we often make sense and experience the 'pressures' of objectivated social hierarchies in a very opaque fashion, just taking them for granted in the continuous thread of our everyday life. The way we make sense of our social relations tends not to be systematic, and just as we do not learn a language through memorising the definitions in the dictionary, we do not learn social hierarchies through clear-cut and reflexive linguistic typifications of them, but rather *practically and sensuously making sense of them* in our everyday lives. For instance, we do not learn hierarchies as separate entities where our location in the hierarchy of generalised advantage is autonomous from our ethnic or gender identification, or from our lifestyle and location in interpersonal hierarchies. Without generally being aware of it, we work out our location in different hierarchies through our everyday experience with symbolic forms and practices related to each other in a complex set of 'homologies'.

The notion of 'homology', like those of 'articulation' and 'imbrication', is useful to conceptualise structural connections avoiding both determinism and complete

fluidity. We have briefly referred to it in Chapter 1, when I have said that homologies must be understood as variable judgements rather than ‘rules’, but in the end they restrict the ‘objective possibilities’ of these correspondences. As happens with the notion of imbrication, the very origin of the term as an alternative to deterministic and reductionist ways of conceptualising the link between structural or material and cultural aspects of social life has made it, as used by social scientists and cultural critics, an imprecise and somewhat tricky concept⁸¹.

By ‘homologies’ I will understand the correspondences, through meaning-making, between social location and symbolic forms and practices. Different symbolic forms and practices, and different locations across social hierarchies, become *homologically interconnected* through a continuous process of social comparison and collective negotiation of meanings. This use of the concept is indebted to both Willis’ interest in the dialectical relationship between human subjectivity and symbolic forms (1978; 2000) and Bourdieu’s focus on the correspondence between the structures of oppositions of different fields and spaces (Bourdieu 1988 [1979]; Bourdieu & Wacquant 1994 [1992]).

Bourdieu uses ‘homology’ as a concept to define, in the light of the autonomy of different fields, their functional and structural connections to the structure of oppositions of what he calls ‘social space’. Each field – in this case what I call youth social space – has its own logic of domination, of positions and oppositions, but each location in a particular field of positions and oppositions presents homologies with broader social groups, positions and oppositions, in social space. For instance, *màkina* and garage styles distribute honour and influence among their followers in a way that is very different to the way the hierarchy of generalised advantage does so. They are in this way autonomous. However, this does not mean that *màkina* and garage are disconnected from general social space, since the position in the field of youth styles has correspondences with the position in general social space. We have seen many examples, albeit reductionist, of the general articulations of ‘social’ meanings in musical and youth geographies. For instance, a strong involvement and prestige in *màkina* or garage music or style is, thanks to its tough and working-class connotations, inversely evaluated, or even stigmatised, in the hierarchy of generalised advantage – regardless of the fact that DJs, promoters or drug dealers can convert their social and cultural capital in the field of *màkina* or garage music into economic capital, that is, money, which will then be valued by the hierarchy of generalised advantage. *Màkina* and garage music, therefore, are homologically related to low positions in the hierarchy of generalised advantage – the opposite of indie music – as well as to a Spanish-speaking position (*màkina*) and black ethnicity (garage), or to a tough masculinity. By homologies I do not understand a ‘necessary’ correspondence – statistically, we know that there are many *màkina* and garage followers that do not match the

⁸¹ The current use of the term is indebted to the way it was used in the 1970s by authors like Bourdieu (1988 [1979]), Willis (1978) and Hebdige (1996 [1979]), although each of them understood it in quite a different way. My use of the term does not mimetically follow any one of them.

general homology – but rather an objectivated, institutionalised meaning that needs to be negotiated, since it is part of our shared world of meaning that enables communication.

Young people make sense of the homological positions through signifying forms and practices – including youth styles and tastes – which in their turn are homologically related to each other. In Bourdieu's terms, we would say that practices, or those goods associated with different classes in the different fields of practice, are organised in accordance with the 'homologous' structures of oppositions (1988 [1979]: 175). In his framework of analysis, what connects types of consumers and products through a *sense of the homologies* is 'taste' (ibid.: 230). General youth styles and tastes indeed mediate the somewhat institutionalised meanings constituting the main points of reference of homologies, which are actualised through young people's interaction with symbolic forms and practices. Within the field of youth styles, for instance, music, clothes, haircuts, language, nightlife, and many other aspects are homologically connected to each other through broad styles – not subcultures. In the *mākina* style, the music genres *mākina*, hardcore and progressive, the clothing brand names *Alpha*, *Pitbull*, *Rottweiler*, and *Kill Off*, the clubs *Pont Aeri*, *Chasis* or *Scorpio*, and short hair, a tough stance, stylised Spanish and consumption of pills are all homologically related to each other, since they jointly become signifiers of what is typified as a *mākina* or *pelao* style, in its turn homologous to the general social positions we have detailed above. Some of these signifiers clearly signify proximity to a *mākina style* position – although one of them in isolation signifies something different from many of them displayed simultaneously. Others, however, are markedly polysemic, so we can only interpret them in the light of their accompanying symbolic forms and practices. A tough stance and the consumption of ecstasy, for instance, are not exclusive to the *mākina* style, so they are only homologically related to it when accompanied by most of the other elements listed above. Together with other symbolic forms and practices they might signify something completely different. It is in this sense that homologies do not imply 'rules' but rather variable judgements, a sort of practical grammar of social meaning.

And it is in this sense that I incorporate Willis's distinct use of the term 'homology' about the relationship between human subjectivity and external symbolic forms. Although this thesis does not share his interest in 'how far, in their structure and content, particular items parallel and reflect the structure, style, typical concerns, attitudes and feelings of the social group' (1978: 191), I do share his definition of the 'objective possibilities' of symbolic forms as historically built through a process of 'integral circuiting'. From this point of view, every artefact, object or institution – for example, *mākina* music – in order to have an homological relation, 'must help to support, return and substantiate particular kinds of social identity and the practice and application of particular kinds of sensibility – conscious and unconscious, voluntary and automatic' (ibid.: 191). It is through the act of social engagement with a cultural item, as Willis points out, that particular meanings are activated and brought out, so the objective

possibilities of a cultural item are not fixed but ‘changeable and responsive to human and social agency as well as vice versa’ (ibid.: 202)⁸². The history of the uses of a cultural item, its integral circuiting, is what makes up its ‘objective possibilities’ at a particular moment. Once socially delimited (institutionalised), a cultural item has its ‘objective possibilities’ of importance, value and meaning. If alternative, ‘resistant’ or ‘innovative’ uses are made of it, they will either become part of the homologies or fade away and disappear⁸³.

The constant comparison and mutual adjustment of meanings leading to their homological relations – both in terms of the homology between symbolic forms, as well as between them and social positions in different fields – narrows down, at every moment in time, the possible objective meanings of cultural items, that is, their homologies with socially engaged subjectivities. *Màkina* music, to keep to the same example, could have a wide range of meanings depending on how it was consumed (as a way of life or just as the music to dance to when occasionally going out, as part of a ‘*cholo*’ identity or as a partying identity, as a means of making friends or of publicly displaying a ‘*facha*’ orientation), but, in Barcelona and at that particular moment in time, there were certain limits to the possible meanings: it could not mean ‘posh’, ‘effeminate’, ‘anti-Spanish’ or ‘arty’. These were beyond its ‘objective possibilities’, so if someone related to it in this sense, this ‘resistant’ or ‘innovative’ use would have to be institutionalised, at least among a particular group of people, to become part of the homologies. The truth is that the complex pattern of homologies constitute the rules of meaning-making through the combination of symbolic forms and signifying practices, allowing us to make sense of and distinguish amongst the myriad signifiers surrounding us. And these patterns of meaning are collectively produced and objectified, but also permanently contested, provisional and conditional.

When I say that they are the result of the ongoing comparison and relational (collective, social) negotiation of meanings, I refer to the fact that since young people are constantly attempting to make sense of their surrounding reality, they are reflexively and unreflexively evaluating, comparing and making sense of symbolic forms and practices. By doing so, they are culturally producing the homologies between them. The subtle relationships between hairstyle, dress, music, body language, talk, political dispositions and a tough attitude, as well as sex, ethnicity and generalised advantage, just to name a few, are linguistically and sensuously experienced in a basically practical, unsystematic way. This means that it is carried out in different ways, like for instance discussions about each other’s

⁸² Within cultural studies, Hebdige considered that the notion, as used by Willis, was too inflexible, and proposed to talk instead of ‘signifying practices’ in order to stress the potential polysemy in spectacular youth styles (1996 [1979]: 117). Willis’s response is that his diachronic approach stressing concrete historical practice ‘is better placed to trace the creative dynamics of cultural creativity’ (2000: 128).

⁸³ Frith does not seem to take into account this dialectical relationship between subjectivities and symbolic forms when he criticises the homological argument because it focuses on how symbolic forms (pieces of music, texts) ‘reflect’ popular values and not how they ‘produce’ them (1996: 269-70).

taste, as when friends talk about their different tastes in music, dress or talk. Or also through an implicit negotiation of tastes without necessarily explicitly typifying them, but just practically, silently taking them for granted – examples of this are the avoidance of personal relations with distant positions in youth hierarchies or the use of racialised typifications of generalised advantage, of which young people are not necessarily aware, and their implicit simplification, essentialisation and barbarisation of the ‘other’. Practical meanings can also be sensuously negotiated through the pleasures of going out, laughing, dressing, dancing or listening to songs. The sensuous experience of pleasure is fundamental in the anchorage of meanings and homologies.

Therefore, as we have seen throughout this chapter, musical forms incorporate meanings that are homologically related to both other symbolic forms and practices *and to* location in social hierarchies, signifying imbricated social meanings that are embedded in the everyday social experience of young people. These meanings are not ‘essential’ features of musical forms, but historical cultural productions in constant negotiation. In the case of popular music, what is particularly striking is the way that the same musical forms modify their homological relations with other symbolic forms and practices alongside the cycle of fashion and the constant entry of new generations of youngsters. At the same time, there are core homologies which have a considerable durability and are transmitted from generation to generation without major changes, particularly with regard to the homologies between locations in different social structural hierarchies (gender, sexuality, generalised advantage, ethnicity). The subtle combination of fluidity, change and durability in the negotiation of homologies is thus of central interest, because the same locally produced homologies pass from generation to generation, and also because there are some homologies that are present throughout Western societies. A good example of this is the homology between masculinity, toughness and class position. It might be the case that these regularities are the result of globalisation and circulation of meanings, but also that they are the result of a deep logic of capitalism in conditioning the meanings around the articulation of gender and class, or class and the mental-manual distinction.

In conclusion, the analysis of the imbrication of hierarchies through homologies allows us to analyse youth social space so that we identify its objectivated and institutionalised character, and also its changing reality through a dynamic cultural production in a simultaneous process of bottom-up and top-down innovation. This and the previous chapters have painted a reductionist canvas of the institutionalised musical and youth geographies, but in the following one we will pay attention to some of the nuances of the dynamic processes of their negotiation in young people’s biographies.

8. NEGOTIATING THE SEARCH FOR RESPECT

The preceding two chapters have sketched those shared meanings constituting musical and youth social geographies, paying special attention to the imbrication of hierarchies in youth social space. The attention has been focused on the typifications of musical and social distances and proximities through which interviewees made sense of their musical and social experience. Because these meanings are neither monolithic nor static, but part of a fairly dynamic, plural and complex web of typified and personal knowledge helping young people to both map out their social reality and make sense of their own biographies and identities, the translation of them into a sociological account is far from easy. Social reality is an opaque web of meanings and hierarchies which are at the same time both 'objectified' (*existing out there*) and 'in-the-making' (*malleable*) – we have anticipated it when we described the 'experienced musical geographies' in Chapter 6.

What has been done up to now, therefore, is a reductionist and tentative portrait of the general set of 'objectified' meanings – as they were expressed by the interviewees – faced and interiorised by young people, which 'homologically' linked taste in music and different levels of imbricated social hierarchies *at a given moment in time*. Analysing it through the accounts of some interviewees obviously leaves open the epistemological question of whether such accounts refer to a shared and institutionalised reality – which I illustrate by the metaphorical expression 'existing out there' – or to the specific perception of just some of the interviewees or even to my own prejudiced interpretation of them (*my own story about young people's stories*). There were in fact a minority of interviewees who either denied, or were unaware of, such geographies. I could have used other quotes – albeit minority ones – to show the non-existence of the imbrication between taste in music and social hierarchies. In other words, it is necessary to acknowledge the difficulty of elucidating the extent to which the identified hierarchies are imposed on individuals as an objective reality. What has been done in the previous pages must thus not be understood as an accurate description of the exact way in which musical and social hierarchies 'exist', but as a clumsy attempt to draw a broad picture or an illustration of the existence and articulation of them. We have shown how young people try to make sense of these musical and social distances and proximities through typified – and also somewhat sensuous – knowledge.

Although the account of the musical and social geographies I have carried out is – because of its reductionism – an analytical fiction, the reality it tries to capture is 'objective' in the sense of being 'out there', 'objectified', experienced as 'real' by young people. The distinctions I have outlined go some way to configuring the 'symbolic markers' or 'landmarks' of some of the main coordinates of their musical and social world. It is within these 'reference points' that they trace and negotiate their biographies, their respective 'normalities' through which they communicate and experience their being together in the different networks of personal relations.

Now we will show how young people, at the same time that they experience the 'objectivity' of those inherited meanings and pressures through social control mechanisms, also negotiate and do symbolic work on them. Through this analysis, we will simultaneously focus on the 'objectivity' and the 'malleability' of musical geographies and social hierarchies: we will see that individual pathways are neither completely open nor fully determined. This means that we will now leave the previous static representation aside and turn our attention to young people's dynamic negotiation of their personal experience of – and pathways through – the *externally existing* geographies. Since we have focused on the *hierarchical* character of youth geographies, we will look at young people's experience of them in terms of their search for respect and self-confidence, so it will be through the analysis of the search for an acceptable level of social dominance that we will identify their simultaneous *objectified* and *dynamic* character. That is, the dialectical character of social reality.

Even though an individual's relationship with music can be very personal, since a meaningful musical experience can transcend everyday life and constitute a circumscribed sphere of meaning, in this thesis we are interested in its imbrication with different social hierarchies. Young people's taste in music has practical implications in their everyday social interactions, since it is part of their public presentation vis-à-vis others. Finding one's position in youth geographies is about finding an 'acceptable' location in terms of respect, which we might call a positive 'face'. It has a lot to do with power and recognition, acceptance and respect, in that if an acceptable level of social dominance is not achieved, this can result in low self-esteem, isolation, mockery and even stigmatisation or physical aggression.

In this search for respect, therefore, those surrounding us preconfigure the rules of the game of taste in music, since when young people deviate from what is expected, they become acutely aware of the social control mechanisms policing them. However, these social control mechanisms are not fully effective in determining young people's pathways because, on the one hand, young people do not always conform to what is expected of them (they often resist and negotiate social norms) and, on the other hand, the plurality of normative expectations in youth geographies puts young people in a situation where they *need to chose* among different possibilities, since there is no unique norm to be followed. The question is not necessarily about conforming or resisting a given norm, but about which norm one decides to conform to and which to resist. Put in other words, every location in youth social space *not only has its own normalcies, each of them with its distinct norms and expectations, as well as its social control mechanisms enforcing them, but also implies its opposition to other normalcies*. We will first analyse how young people trace their pathways through musical geographies and youth hierarchies and, secondly, reflect on the dynamics of cultural production in local contexts, including the complex social distribution of different institutionalised or objective knowledge and expectations among the young population and how all this can help us to think about the link between cultural production and power in youth social space.

Pathways through youth social space

The starting point for this research is that taste in music is not a merely private aspect of our lives because it is not 'socially neutral'. Musical experience does not only consist in establishing a meaningful or aesthetic relationship with a musical form, but also in presenting ourselves in front of others, in managing the impression we have on them, how we maintain our 'face'. The point is that taste in music does not merely signify 'personal preference' but some kind of 'social value'. Depending on the context of interaction, different tastes in music will signify different things with different values, and will thus be subject to positive or negative evaluations and reactions. In this section I will show many examples of how individuals, depending on their taste in music, in the context of their location in social hierarchies, are subject to different external pressures or, in sociological terms, mechanisms of 'social control' – as we have described them in Chapter 2 – challenging their search for respect. The existence of these 'social control' mechanisms will illustrate and make visible the 'objectivity' of youth geographies. At the same time, we will also see how young people put a considerable amount of symbolic work into negotiating them during their pathways through youth social space.

For young people, in fact, learning to negotiate their taste (in music) – like many other practices and dispositions – in given social contexts is a crucial aspect of the process of growing up and building a positive identity and self-esteem. Young people's musical biographies provide information that is very relevant to an understanding of their experience of youth social space and, therefore, their identities. Taste in music is just one aspect of their process of positioning themselves within social geographies. If we know a youngster's taste in music and how it has changed during his or her youth, we will have very useful information for understanding his or her identity.

In modern life, the transition from childhood to adolescence and youth – as part of the transition from childhood to adulthood – is a crucial time in an individual's biography. This transition is not strictly ritualised in a clear-cut and automatic manner¹. Institutionalised reality does not deterministically channel the pathways every young person is expected to follow. On the contrary, a lot of work is required on the part of individuals, since they have to take a personal stance among the diverse set of meanings around youth social space. In their transit through youth, to be sure, individuals experience a considerable amount of pressure. At the same time that they face the expectation of good academic performance – felt with varying intensity depending on their surrounding significant others – they experience the urge to acquire social value among their

¹ See Northcote (2006) for an analysis of nightclubbing as a 'quasi rite of passage' from childhood to adulthood, where he argues that instead of formal initiation ceremonies, advanced industrial societies organise the achievement of adult status through a variety of status-marking events occurring during the transitional period, like for instance age of sexual consent, ability to marry, a driver's licence, political voting and legal alcohol consumption. Because none of them is definitive, young adults have culturally produced quasi rites of passage in leisure-based activities.

peers – ‘social value’ being defined differently depending on the particular context of interaction with the group of friends, the school, the neighbourhood and so on. To obtain this social value they need to play their cards as best they can, given a particular context of interaction, to gain as much respect as possible or, at least, enough respect to live a comfortable daily life (to avoid being teased, beaten-up or marginalised). As we have already seen in the preceding chapter, one of these cards is taste in music, used by young people to negotiate their place in youth hierarchies, a task which requires an important amount of symbolic work upon – and negotiation of – the complexity of meanings it has in youth geographies. It is not that one musical form has a certain value in all social interactions, but rather that different musical forms signify different social meanings and have different values in different contexts of interaction – and different structural positions. Young people constantly negotiate, individually and collectively, the way they make sense of, and position themselves in, music and youth geographies. This complexity makes it difficult to represent the imbricated web of meanings in youth geographies (this is the reason the two preceding chapters are nothing more than a reductionist attempt to do so). There is no single set of cultural meanings – a ‘culture’ – but a mix of meanings and structural positions that build up different ‘normalcies’, different ‘expectations’, depending on each position.

One way of making sense – sociologically – of this complexity is through the identification of social control mechanisms: those who surround us have expectations about how we should behave in given situations, and when we do not match these expectations, they activate social control mechanisms. In young people’s everyday lives, the limits of youth taste in every actual location are experienced to a great extent through these mechanisms, ranging from simple teasing to physical violence and marginalization. Jokes, ‘wind-ups’ and ‘mockery’ are not innocent exchanges, but part of what Back (1996: 74–78) identifies as ‘negotiated alteration of meaning’ marking out boundaries, hierarchies and sometimes being the origin of open conflict. Although teasing can be a way on enhancing social bonds through the indirect expression of affection, shared laughter or the positive message that individuals are close enough to tease, as well as of allowing individuals to negotiate and learn about their social identities, it is clear that it also has many damaging consequences (Keltner *et al* 1998: 1232). Jokes and wind-ups in relation to taste in music are common and show the extent to which the imbrication between musical geographies and social hierarchies really exist ‘out there’. Moments of social control allow us to see the borders of different territories across youth geographies and their imbrication with social hierarchies. The plurality of positions in youth geographies implies that what is praised and cherished in one context, is mocked and even forbidden in others. However, this does not imply that it is impossible to grasp musical and social geographies: identifying the social control mechanisms in different contexts can help us to register the existence of the different positions constituting these geographies.

Here we will focus only on certain social control mechanisms, basically jokes and direct verbal and physical aggression. It is not my intention to cover all forms

of social control, nor to typify them, since this would require a more focused and deeper ethnographic research. The aim is just to show, through some examples, the practical importance of musical geographies and their imbrication with social hierarchies. We will thus not consider other more complex social control mechanisms like rumours, marginalization or labelling, nor other spectacular and indeed curious ones like the one explained by a female interviewee in Barcelona who witnessed, when queuing in order to get a ticket for a Backstreet Boys' concert, an attack from Take That fans who – claiming that the Backstreet Boys had copied Take That – tried to steal the tickets to stop people attending the concert.

Social control mechanisms are naturally only part of the picture. Many aspects of institutionalised – external – social reality, particularly in its normative aspects, are often 'taken for granted' – we do not even dare to think that they could be otherwise. A successful socialization in a given social milieu means that 'external' norms are generally 'internalised' and thus experienced as 'natural', 'taken for granted'. In general terms, it is only when we 'deviate' from a social norm in a given context of interaction, or when we are simultaneously subject to two contradictory social norms, that we become aware of these norms, since it is then that we experience the mechanisms of social control that enforce them. In fact, the most effective mechanism of social control is one which is not perceived as such. Once we have internalised expectations about how we should behave, if we do not match these expectations, we feel guilt or shame. Guilt is a deeply internalised feeling, which, although it has a social origin, is personally felt even when nobody else is aware of our *misbehaviour*. By contrast, shame needs the gaze of others, at least in imagined terms. Both guilt and shame are powerful pressures that push us to behave as expected by others, but pressures that are applied *from within*.

Identifying external social control mechanisms will thus point to the 'objectivity' and 'externality' of youth hierarchies from the point of view of young people's *experience*. Since the 'reality' of musical and social geographies does not exist if it is not daily performed by the individuals sustaining it, to complete the picture we will need to identify the *dynamic character of individual pathways through them*, as well as the *elements of individual and collective creativity in relation to this 'objectified' reality* – which, since it is plural and diverse, does not *determine* but rather *channels* young people's pathways through youth social space. On the one hand, when children are growing up, they face and experience these geographies as 'being out there', as an 'objective' reality that they need to 'learn' and take into account if they are to have meaningful interactions with other individuals, if they are to communicate, live together with them. On the other hand, it is equally true that these geographies are experienced as opaque, diverse and open ended. Every group and every individual needs to culturally produce a particular version of them. Young people and groups face these objectivated meanings as the rough material through which they make sense of their social reality, and in this very process these objectivated meanings are automatically transformed. We must definitely take this idea into account if we are to understand the process of cultural production.

Biographical narratives allow us to grasp the diverse and changing ways in which musical forms are appropriated in particular situational and relational realities. It is through young people's negotiation of their biographies in relation to existing meanings, in their search for respect within their process of 'maturing' and 'growing up', that we will analyse social control mechanisms, identifying their *personal and collective* play and (partial) reflexivity implied in the experience of musical geographies and youth hierarchies. We will see how individuals, in tracing their own pathways through the objectified geographies, culturally re-produce them – simultaneously maintaining and transforming them. The notion of 'pathways'² allows us to grasp, amidst the plurality of meanings, positions and oppositions, the existence of normatively organised paths channelling young people's experience throughout their youth. Different tastes in music, for instance, imply different sets of expectations and shared typified and sensuous knowledge that give young people a framework to make sense of their position in, and their trajectory through, youth social space. This implies that every position in youth social space has its own expectations and channelled pathways, or possible pathways, organising young people's trajectories. For instance, those who like boy and girl bands are expected to listen to 'Top of the pops' or '*Los 40 Principales*', dress according to fashion, be against cultural snobbery and modify their taste in music when they are around 16 years old. *Mākina* fans, on the other hand, are expected to go to *mākina* clubs, buy or tape compilation albums, have a tough disposition, be against class distinction and, at least in some milieus, shift to house music when they are around 20 or 25 years old.

The objective possibilities, that is, the availability of 'feasible' pathways faced by individuals, are socially structured, since different physical and social locations will determine the dominant available pathways. Depending on the inherited and acquired network of personal relations – which have been analysed in Chapter 4 – where individuals are located, they face different meanings and expectations. Nevertheless, individuals and groups of friends are neither directly nor deterministically inscribed in a particular network of personal relations – only the family network of personal relations is to a great extent preconfigured – so they need to choose, whether reflexively or not, among the various ones that are available. Because of this, their own reflexive work upon their surrounding objectivated meanings, personal idiosyncrasies, friendship choices and chance always play an important role. Personal accident can thus have a strong impact on their biographies, even leading to a *break with existing or dominant expectations* in their previous networks of personal relations. Any individual trajectory is the

² Ruth Finnegan (1989) suggests in her study of amateur music-making in Milton Keynes that individual pathways could be considered a 'structuring force' like social class, gender or ethnicity. She highlights the neglect with which such aspects have been treated by social sciences in the past. My use of the notion is directly indebted to hers, although since I will use it in relation to consumption instead of music-making, I will understand it with a broader sense including more fluid and diffuse affiliations through scattered networks of direct personal relations and commodified practices and artefacts..

result of many influences, and it would be naturally misleading to look at youth geographies as a ‘totally determining’ force. Musical and social geographies trace the basic rules of the playground and the main pathways organising young people’s trajectories, but daily life opens up spaces for individual and collective negotiation and creativity, as we have already seen in many of the examples in the preceding chapter. It is true that social control is powerful, most of all because it is usually not perceived as such, but it is equally true that it must not be seen as an electrified fence. Especially when dealing with music (a non-fixed symbolic form able to raise unexpected and powerful aesthetic experiences), individual trajectories must be taken into account. Moreover, young people often conform to external norms without internalising them, that is, without strategically managing what they publicly disclose – and not only with regard to taste in music, but also to their sexual, class, linguistic and ethnic identity.

In our understanding of individual pathways, we will consider commodities and other cultural forms – commodities themselves being cultural forms – as materials through which young people bring into play their symbolic work. They project an important part of their meaning-making onto commodities, or to put it differently, a great deal of our meaning-making is mediated by commodities. And music is one of these commodities. In everyday life, commodities and the meanings they mediate are used expressively, strategically and instrumentally to obtain sensuous pleasure and well-being, from both the aesthetic experience and the signifying value of presenting ourselves in front of others. When young people talk about – and deal with – the codes signifying different locations in social geographies, inherited through a given tradition of meaning, they are negotiating their location in youth social space *and also* culturally producing the co-ordinates of such geographies and the implicit expectations of each location. We could list many aspects or examples of this symbolic work: talking about other young people and different styles of dress, music or going out; using different words, metaphors and typifications to describe social distances and proximities; carrying out different practices and having different experiences in schools, streets, nightlife facilities, and the like; consuming different media representations; and identifying with, or opposing, different symbolic markers or representatives of a category in the neighbourhood. Symbolic work upon musical forms is carried out through the sensuous enjoyment of listening to music and dancing, but also through talk about music. The following is an illustration of the negotiation of the stock of typical and personal knowledge between four Afro-Caribbean interviewees:

Janet: What do you call them... punks? The people that got skateboards and everything... [*some laugh a little bit*]. They listen to like...

Beth: People who... to be a skateboarder you need to listen to heavy rock.

Lyla: It's the white... that's what they are... They don't really know about... like: “The hip hop? What's that?”. They don't wanna be like us... Basically, they're not gonna like...

Beth: [*Protests*]

Lyla: No, it's not true, [*what about*] Aaron?

Aaron: Yeah.

Lyla: Only one, only one that I can tell it's true... that like our kind of music. But James and Richard ...they don't know! They don't like it!

Beth: That's a bag of rubbish what you are talking about! I'm talking to them, you don't talk to them: how would you know?

Lyla: No. I don't think. Anyway. [Start arguing both at the same time; the others laugh]

Roger: Then skateboards like heavy rock?

Lyla: Like beat based [music]... you know? *Rocky-punky* or whatever you wanna call it... Do you know what I mean? And then some people like soul or classical. And then some people like the garage or reggae or whatever, you know? Everyone like their own individual music, you know? [*they start arguing again*]

Every conversation about music, every time a young person goes to a bar, a club or a record shop, every act of listening to music in the bedroom, every party with music, and every decision about the next music bar or club to go to, is in itself a cultural negotiation like the one in this quote. And all these activities as a whole include both linguistic and sensuous symbolic work, which does not take place in a vacuum, since meaning-making is always circumscribed within a previous tradition of prejudices, of previous meanings attached to forms and to social hierarchies in which it is embedded, and for this reason it is often subject to social control. Indeed, when someone transgresses the scope of possible meanings (objective possibilities) in a given context they need to negotiate either the misunderstandings this will generate or the social control it will provoke. It is in this sense that the form, and the creativity upon it, is always socially embedded: it is a 'sociosymbolic' form. Nevertheless, through these forms, individuals can play with – and negotiate – meanings, both personal and social. An individual that feels uncomfortable with his or her own attributes, or with the negative reaction it raises, can play with what is shown to others, concealing some information, trying to manipulate some meanings, maybe adopting alternative forms.

It is clear that young people's negotiation of their taste in music not only refers to their search for respect, but also to their search for expressive meaning and sensuous pleasure, both in their private space, independent of the reaction of others, and also when interacting with them. Take the example of a girl from the Philippines who started to like Westlife back in her home country because it was very popular, and at the time of the fieldwork used it to refresh her memories of her motherland: 'Entonces, cuando vine aquí cada vez que lo escucho, pues recuerdo Filipinas, por eso me gusta'. The meaning she attaches to listening to Westlife is in this sense personal, and we could all bring out many meanings we attach to music which are not related to our presentation vis-à-vis others. It is also important to bear in mind that the symbolic work on traditions of meaning within youth geographies often only take music as a secondary element, like the female interviewee in Birmingham who, as we have seen, claimed to be more into 'fashion' than into 'music', or the other one in Barcelona who claimed never to have talked about music with her friends: 'Hablamos de *tíos* y ya está [*laughs*]'. Indeed,

symbolic work on music ranged from those who showed a strong commitment to music ('I can't live without music') to those that just used it occasionally, like an Asian girl who answered the question about the importance of music as follows: 'No that... I just listen to it basically when I'm a bit bored. Like when I haven't got anything to do. (...) Sometimes for exams it makes me remember as well, because I've got a particular kind of music when studying, when I go back to the music I can remember what I read'. All these youngsters, even when, as often happened, they kept their taste in music hidden from their friends and schoolmates, projected an impression on others through *not having* a particular taste in music.

Most interviewees, nevertheless, showed a considerable interest in music, and verbalised many aspects of the symbolic work they carried out to build up their preferences. Many of them explained the steps through which they got strongly interested in particular music genres or musicians. After hearing them on the radio or through friends, parents, siblings or schoolmates, if they valued what they heard positively ('liking it'), they tended to actively look for it on the radio, in record shops or through friends and tape-recordings ('And I thought, "Oh, that's really good", so I started to listen and trying to get my hands on some of that stuff...'). The more committed listeners also bought magazines and went to live concerts or DJ sessions. What I intend to show in the following pages is that underlying this simple process, and particularly the crucial moment of 'liking it' and sticking to this judgement, there are many social aspects that play a central role. Behind these reflexive and unreflexive choices, there is complex symbolic work influencing these pathways through musical and social geographies, since young people need to make sense of, and adjust to, a broader set of meanings and homologies implied in, and mobilised by, their musical choices.

One practical way of looking at this symbolic work is through the ways in which young people 'resist', 'conform' or 'negotiate' objectivated meanings *and their* social control mechanisms. Even though the exact meaning of these concepts is not analytically clear, as I have pointed out in Chapter 2, they will allow us to look at the malleability of musical and youth geographies without forgetting their objectified character. Rather than understanding 'resisting' and 'conforming' in a simplistic and even normative way, I will focus instead on the fact that because young people's resistance to adult and dominant expectations tends to be 'collective', once it is institutionalised it imposes conformity on those sharing its meanings and practices. What is 'resistant' to certain norms can be 'conformist' to others. In many youth contexts, in fact, conforming to adult expectations needs a good deal of symbolic resistance to other youngsters' beliefs: being a '*boffin*' requires a good deal of resistance to the pressure not to take school grades seriously. When the transgression of conventions has been raised to a new convention, in the sense that is even the dominant underlying value of many advertisements, it is clear that it becomes difficult to discern whether any apparent transgression is 'conformist' or 'resistant'. At the same time, however, there are broad class, ethnic or gender oppositions and resistances that must not be overlooked.

The focused on spectacular subculture's collective resistance to 'dominant culture' of the classical cultural studies approach to youth cultures (Hall & Jefferson 1998 [1975]), left aside the fact that within youth geographies 'resistant' subcultures can become 'dominant', or particular contexts of interaction, and thus require 'resistance' from those youngsters who do not feel comfortable with them. It is thus clear that both 'resistance' and 'conformity' are situational and relational concepts, and that we should look at them rather with a paradoxical view that takes into account young people's simultaneous observance of, and resistance to, different normative pressures, in a process of 'negotiation' inherent to their social experience when tracing their pathways to adulthood. The notion of 'negotiation' can be useful, and has been used, to overcome the problems of empirically defining the precise meaning of 'resistance' and 'conformity'.

A very illustrative example of the paradoxical character of resistance and conformity is that of a boy in the Periphery School who *pretended* to have gone to popular *màkina* clubs outside Barcelona like Scorpia, well-known for its roughness and inaccessibility to most 16-years-olds. It shows how some individuals, in order to negotiate their position in youth geographies, feel compelled to *pretend* they go to such places even if they are not allowed by their parents, or do not dare to go, or are just not allowed in:

Antonio: Sí. Siempre van allí y hablan de los DJs que había... Yo muchas veces no me lo creo, ¿no? Pero...

Manuel: ¿Hablan de...?

Antonio: No, de que han ido a Scorpia y...

Manuel: Y a lo mejor es mentira. No han ido a ningún lado.

Antonio: Uno de mi clase dice que ha ido a Scorpia, y digo: "¿Dónde está Scorpia?" Y dice: "En Barcelona" Y digo: "Pero si está en Igualada, idiota."

The boy who is *pretending* to have been to Scorpia is *conforming* to the expectation of being a committed *màkina* fan, *transgressive* of adult expectations and thus *resistant* to dominant and parental culture, and at the same time *conforming* to his parents' expectations of staying away from the club. The simultaneous observance of different normative pressures, or the confluence of different expectations in one particular individual, is not the only difficulty. Another problem is the imbrication of meanings and the homological relation between various symbolic forms, and between social locations and symbolic forms, which in its turn is not static but markedly dynamic. The way young people make sense of this magma of related meanings is not a systematic and reflexive awareness and decision-making process. Like everybody else, they have remarkable lacunae in their knowledge of social reality, since they make sense of it through the typifications that appear as useful in their everyday experience, but do not have systematic knowledge of either social geographies or the imbrication of social hierarchies. We have the situation where, for instance, different tastes in music, as part of broader youth styles, are homologically related to a particular organization of gender (the masculinities and femininities implied in different

styles differ considerably from each other) or popularity hierarchies (a particular taste in music can be an asset or an impediment for coolness). A girl, when entering youth geographies, may adopt one of these youth styles because a school friend has already adopted it, or because she listens to a couple of songs on TV and feels attracted to them. She might have chosen to adopt the radically different style of another friend she hangs around with in the street, or another style broadcast on TV, which could coincidentally be the style adopted by her sister. Depending on this choice, she might enter a different pathway conditioning the people and places she frequents, as well as the meanings and expectations to which she will be supposed to conform like, for instance, what it means to be 'feminine' (in that particular context). In other words, if she had entered a different 'normalcy', her perception of not only femininity, but also musical and social hierarchies – as well as her location within them – would have been notably affected. When she started to like the music, she might not have considered aspects such as gender or popularity, but her choice can have *unintended* consequences in these areas.

Spheres of negotiation in personal relations

In order to analyse the individual pathways through the simultaneous normative pressures of objectivated geographies as they are experienced by every individual, I will differentiate young people's negotiation of expectations and social control mechanisms in different spheres. Each of these spheres, as we will see, implies different types of social control, and thus different types of negotiation and symbolic work.

In Chapter 4, when analysing the *carriers of musical traditions*, I focused on the main networks of personal relations where meanings around music are learnt, experienced and negotiated: the home, the school, the street and other 'alternative' networks. The goal of that classification was to stress the social organization and circulation of meanings and knowledge through different networks of personal relations. The rest of that chapter focused on the role of commodified 'mediascapes', artefacts, places and events, as well as genre categories, in mediating and actualising musical traditions. Now, instead of differentiating the main networks of personal relations, the classification of the distinct spheres of negotiation will be based on the type of negotiation of meanings and practices, as well as the sort of expectations and means of social control involved in each sphere. So, instead of differentiating between family, school, street and 'alternative' networks of personal relations, the classification will distinguish three 'spheres of negotiation'. One is that of parents, teachers and adults, another that of best friends and cliques, and the third that of other more distant personal relations with other young people in the school, the street or any other network of personal relations. Since what will be said is to a great extent redundant with what has been analysed in Chapter 4, I will try to do not repeat what has already been shown.

To start with, we must not overlook – as we have seen when analysing the importance of the 'home' and the 'school' as sources of personal relations – the

normative pressure of parents and, to a lesser extent, teachers and other adults. We have described adolescence as a transition from childhood to youth, a moment in which individuals, in their search for personal autonomy and self identity, try to challenge their parents' strong influence. Even though during adolescence parents' opinions tend to be seen with relative reluctance, if not direct opposition, they remain the point of reference, or the starting point, from which – or against which – taste in music and pathways through youth hierarchies are built. This was particularly obvious in the case of Asians and Moroccans, who in general felt a stronger pressure from their parents to stay away from 'westernised' youth geographies. Several interviewees of these origins explained that they could listen to the music they liked only when their parents were not at home, or using walkmans as a private, secret or at best tolerated musical space. The negotiation of the family cultural background was central to many Asian and Moroccan interviewees in both cities, like the boy in the following example: 'In our religion it's not right to listen to songs. But we are not that religious, that's why we listen to songs. For us... young generations... we don't take it that serious, but the old generations, they take it seriously'.

Although the need to negotiate the simultaneous normative pressure of parents and young friends was felt with heightened intensity by Asians and Moroccans, it was also important for most youngsters, not so much with regard to taste in music, but more in other aspects of their cultural practices like going out or doing school work. The two main dividing lines young people used to set themselves apart from parental taste in music were 'newness' and 'loudness', the latter being more confrontational than the former. On many occasions, however, interviewees' parents *just did not have* a defined taste in music. In general, as long as children did not bother their parents when they shared the same space, the parents did not have any problem with them because of their taste in music. Parents tended to take as 'natural' (expected) that their sons and daughters liked music that they themselves disliked. Even when mocking or complaining about their children's taste in music, this was rarely done in serious ways.

Even though most interviewees tended to reject their parents' music and, most of all, to like genres which were heavily disliked by their parents, many of them did not follow this pattern – some did share their parents' taste and others deviated from it by just liking some 'modern *stuff*' of the same music genres ('I might like some of the music my mum likes, 'cause she likes some of the music I like, but I don't like some of the old classic tunes that she listens to...'). In several cases, they liked different musicians or music genres that were nevertheless perceived as part of the same musical tradition, as in the case of several interviewees who liked what we have called 'black music', '*flamenco*', rock music or commercial pop. These examples that did not dismiss or oppose parents' taste show the importance, in young people's pathways through musical geographies, of this intergenerational influence (we must recall that in contrast to what happened a few decades ago, when adolescents and parents had completely different tastes in popular music, the interviewees' parents had been adolescents during the 70s, and

had thus been fully socialised in the pop music of that time, some of which is still relevant, at least as a meaningful root, of contemporary pop music). The following illustrative quote, from a 'mixed race' boy in the Dual School, shows how, in order to understand young people's negotiation of their position in musical geographies, we often need to understand their relationship with their parents' taste:

Roger: When did you start listening to music?

Alan: I've listened to it all my life. Sometimes I don't want to listen to it, 'cause like... my mum and dad are very... My mum and dad are like... very musical.

Roger: Which music are they into?

Alan: Mum's into reggae, she loves Bob Marley. And my dad's into like... my dad's into like... [*laughing*] that sort of country and Western sort of music. He likes Bob Dylan as well, and Neil Young and stuff like that. And I think if I didn't have... If I didn't grow up listening to the two, I don't think I'd be where I'm now, because... I think the side... the *rocky* side I got from my dad, and the sort of *rhythmy*, reggae drum beat I got from my mum. You put the two together and you get me, so...

The same combination of 'mum and dad' music preferences was shown by another 'mixed race' boy in the same school. Another interviewee who liked rock music, when talking about how he first got interested in it, reasoned that 'It's usually what your parents have that you listen to... It's the first thing you'll hear. And then, when you get to school, you'll find other people, that's why they're my friends and things like that'. It seems clear, therefore, that even if it is true that most young people develop a taste in music which is largely opposed to – or independent of – that of their parents, there are many others who in fact negotiate their parents' taste. To understand many youngsters' taste in music we must know how it relates to their parents' musical preferences. A vivid example of this is the following reflection of a girl in the Mixed School:

Noorjha: OK, when I was about 7, I listened mainly to... I've always liked Michael Jackson, big fan of Michael Jackson, always, always. With mum and dad. Besides that, I used to listen to my dad's music which was Queen, I used to listen to my mum's music which was reggae, I used to listen to all, like... Michael Jackson mainly, and it used to be like a big variety really. My dad liked rock music. But then when my dad left, I think because of missing him, I wanted to sort of remember, and then I started going and listening to rock music, and I did actually like rock music, and dressed like that with Dr. Marten's.

Apart from parents, other adults like relatives, family friends, teachers, youth workers, or others that could become 'significant' at any moment, were potentially influential in one way or another. As we have seen when analysing the importance of the school in 'carrying' music traditions, some of the music teachers in the different schools were indeed very influential in broadening or channelling young people's taste in music, to the extent that when the survey was filled in, a few pupils in the Inner City School asked whether, in the open question about the

three musicians they liked most, they could just write down ‘what we do in the music class’. In the Dual School in Birmingham, two different interviewees also talked about the importance of the music teacher in helping them to discover new musicians and genres. Both teachers, in fact, deemed relevant their responsibility in broadening their pupils’ taste in music. Another example is the role teachers played in policing racist interactions. One girl in Birmingham put it as follows: ‘Yeah, if anyone is in trouble then someone gets suspended or something... It’s not taken lightly’. In Barcelona, the same situation was described by two boys from Pakistan, in this case in relation to the negotiation of the music that had to be played in a school bus trip of the Inner City School:

Bilba: Mira cuando vamos a una excursión, tenemos discusión entre todos los alumnos, y ellos quieren poner una música y nosotros otra y... (...) Las chicas quieren los Backstreet Boys, ¿no? Y los chicos màkina y todo eso, y los pakistaníes esta música, los marroquíes su música, y luego... Luego al final quedamos: “Primero esta, después esta y luego esta”.

Roger: Un orden y... ¿Y, hay unos que tienen más peso? No sé, en mi escuela por ejemplo había dos, unos que, unos que se metían más con nosotros, luego había unos que iban más con chicas, unos no sé qué...

Bilba: No, no, los profesores... Aquí los profesores lo arreglan todo, no. ¡Son más buenos los profes!

Nevertheless, in spite of the sometimes important role of parents and other adults, it is clear that the tradition of meanings of musical geographies arrives mainly through other young people. Parents sometimes have an important influence on actual taste, but young people will in any case need to negotiate with their peers an acceptable level of respect towards their taste. This lead us to the second sphere in which symbolic work and negotiation of meanings and pathways is carried out, that of ‘friendship’. When the attachment to parents decreases during adolescence, young people discover youth geographies through the common experience with their close friends (and similar-age relatives), and it is here that the basic negotiation of one’s choices is made. It is from the point of view of talk with friends that youth social space is understood. And among the closest friends, particularly if they form a clique or a close network of personal relations, there will be a negotiation of dominant meanings and normative limits which, when well established, will need to be observed. Resistance to conform to them can lead to the breaking up of the group. This is the case explained by these two girls in relation to their negotiation of the focus activities of the group:

Sara: Sí, però unes van sempre al mateix lloc i a nosaltres no ens agrada, i ens movem...

Ana: És que tot va començar [que ens vam distanciar] perquè, aquest carrer [on anàvem], doncs hi ha un lloc que ens podem *sentar* i sempre estan allà, i nosaltres no volem estar...

Sara: Nosaltres vam començar *separant-se*, i vam començar un dia a [aquest centre comercial], un altre dia aquí, un altre allà, un altre dia anar a prendre *algo*...

The group tends to collectively negotiate its norms, including its presentation in front of others and its position in youth geographies in terms of taste in music, dress code or leisure activities, and if different members do not reach an agreement, or a minority of them do not want to conform to the general norm, tension might appear and, as in the case above, end in the division of the group. Nevertheless, the importance of taste in music differs from group to group. For some, it is a crucial focus activity, whereas for others it is a relatively private sphere for each member of the group. In general, groups of friends tend to have a very similar taste in music, with only marginal variations among different members. An exception to this rule is shown in the following quote

Roger: Amb els amics aquests que vas que quedes per les tardes els agrada una música diferent?

Manuel: A un li agrada (aquest ja té dinou anys) els Beatles només i passa quasi de la música. A l'agradar-li els Beatles *pues* no.

Roger: O sigui que no és gaire important la música.

Manuel: No. I a l'altre li agrada Pastis and Buenri i els DJs...

Roger: La música *màkina*.

Manuel: Sí, *màkina*. Queen i això no... li agrada però... I li vaig descobrir aquest, a ell també li agradava la música així *heavy*...

Roger: Sou tres amics que aneu...

Manuel: N'hi ha un altre. I a aquest li agrada tot, veus? Està bé... També són cançons que no... que no em criden. A ell li agraden els Backstreet Boys i coses d'aquestes...

In general, however, homogeneity is strong, and when differences are marked, they tend to be kept private to avoid tension. Sometimes, when music is an important focus activity of the group, musical differences can even lead to separation, as in the example shown above about other focus activities. In the Catalan School, two interviewees in the 'punk' group were at the time of the interview tired of spending too much time talking about music within the group:

Jose: No, però de fet, entre nosaltres sí que... I de vegades em cansa tant, que sempre parlem de música, que al final dius, "*Vale*, m'agrada la música, a mi també m'agrada, però parlem d'una altra cosa, si us plau".

Dani: És que al final arriba a un fanatisme, amb aquests nois és com un fanatisme... per la música.

Jose: Sí, és molt, molt.

The fact is that choosing one's friends is a crucial decision in negotiating one's position in, and perspective of, youth geographies, since on the one hand, position in social hierarchies is collectively negotiated, and on the other hand, closest friends are the central means by which meaning and knowledge is culturally produced. Friendship is often the main concern of young people, the basis upon which they build their pathways through youth geographies, and its strong bonds

and intimacy makes it central in the face-to-face production of meaning. When friendship affiliations are diverse, the perspective in relation to youth social space is also diverse. One mixed-race interviewee, for instance, found it difficult to adjust to the existing geographies, and did not conform to either 'black' or 'white' typifications. 'This is why I'm different', he claimed. Those interviewees who did not completely conform to existing geographies and had idiosyncratic friendships 'felt' their *in-betweenness*: 'I've got friends of both sides really'. The group of closest friends is generally where taste in music is negotiated. Those interviewees who had changed their group of friends are particularly aware of this. The following quote is from a girl in the Catalan School who, having liked *màkina* music, *saw that this was not her place*, as she pointed out from her current perspective (she had recently changed her group of friends):

Montse: (...) [P]ues ya vino también Spice Girls [talking in a low voice, not very happy to acknowledge it], pero duró poquísimo, ¡eh! (...) Sí, sí. mmm, *house* también me gustó, también hubo una vez que me gustaba la *màkina*, pero no...

Roger: Pero no...

Montse: No.

Roger: ¿Cómo fue?

Montse: No sé, pues amigos te decían: "Mira, te dejo esta cinta" y te la escuchabas, ¿vale? Escuchaba, pero luego noté que no era mi sitio.

Roger: Y a los amigos ¿más o menos los amigos también?

Montse: No, los dejé cuando cambié de Instituto, y luego ya, pues me metí en un ambiente, ya, en el que estoy ahora.

Roger: Y entonces la *màkina* ¿por qué no te gustaba? Por la música sólo, también porque era *cholo*...

Montse: No, porque sí, era *chola*.

She related her dismissal of *màkina* with the fact that it was '*chola*', and naturalised it in terms of '*vi que no era mi sitio*', although we also see that her transition from primary to secondary school, and the subsequent change of friends, probably had an important causal influence. The quote shows the importance of friendship in negotiating one's taste in music, as well as the importance of negotiation one's friendships in conditioning one's position in youth geographies. Groups of friends always develop normative pressures, but they can be of very different kinds in relation to both *what is valued* and *how it is policed*. As has already been noted, some groups put taste in music at the stylistic and even moral centre, whereas others consider it as a private matter for each individual. Some groups are identified with transgression and others with good academic performance, some value focus activities like sport, computers or hanging around and others just build their affinity on a 'caring' relational style or a similar sense of humour. There is also great variation in communicative styles and ways in which group norms are policed. The relevance of competitive mockery through constant wind-ups, subtle and indirect competition or supportive interactions vary enormously from group to group. Social control is carried out in different ways

depending on the communicative style, but because of the very definition of friendship, cooperation must prevail at least at the reflexive level. This means that hierarchies are to be developed as 'natural', since even if some friends become more ascendant over the others in defining normative limits and, in our case, taste in music, this must be experienced by the others as natural, not imposed. If we look closely at friendship relations, however, we will find countless moments of social control: dismissals, wind-ups or mockery of one's taste, corrections to one's typifications or value judgements about youth geographies or any other aspect of social reality, subtle competitive interactions in relation to any focus activity, to name just a few, are everyday moments in which young people negotiate their search for respect among their peers. Take, for instance, the example of an African girl in Birmingham: She liked Asian music, not precisely the music *expected* from a non-Asian youngster, and when asked whether she felt different because of this, answered the following: 'Yeah, I think so 'cause... my friends... sometimes I listen to Asian music, right? And they say: [*with a mocking tone*] "Oh, you are listening to this crap music" or something like that, but I just like it'. The negative reaction from her friends ('you are listening to this crap music') made explicit her deviation from what was expected, and she was thus marked as 'different'. Social control made sure she was aware of her 'deviant' taste in relation to the surrounding expectations. In this case, it did not change her taste in music, at least up to that moment, but it is not difficult to imagine that it put pressure on her. She expressed it when later in the interview said: 'Sometimes I'm too embarrassed to listen to [this music I've just told you] 'cause they don't like it, right? Yeah'.

Best friends tend thus to become relevant significant others with a crucial role in defining one's identity. When parents stop being the centre of young people's everyday life, adolescent friendships become very relevant in the search for identity. Think, for instance, of the symbolic work needed in the 'decision' of whether a new song is good or not. Young people, when faced with a new song, have to react to it. Even in the case of their favourite bands and music genres, they do not automatically like all new songs. Every new symbolic form has to be judged and evaluated. Interviewees often said things like 'me ha decepcionado mucho el del Alejandro Sanz, por ejemplo. (...) No, lo veo demasiado... para poner a la venta, demasiado... Que no me gusta, me gustaba más el otro', which makes explicit the ongoing discriminating process in relation to musical forms, even among committed fans of a particular musician. Each of these judgements implied a considerable amount of symbolic work, both individual and collective, since each judgement was not as easy as spontaneously reacting to the sounds but a complex comparison and negotiation of one's taste with that of others. Young people often have the perception that there is some sort of 'objective' or 'good' judgement in their context of interaction, and by deviating from it they can jeopardise their face. Best friends thus play a crucial role in developing one's judgement. Some youngsters would be more spontaneous in judging music than others, whether because of their stronger musical disposition, their autonomy from other opinions, their self-confidence or their level of social dominance. One interviewee who had

just explained that he was heavily influenced by a friend, added the following: ‘When I listen to music, sometimes I can tell straight away, “Oh, it’s really good”, but sometimes I can hear “Oh, that’s awful”, but then, if you listen to it, actually it’s not that bad, so it changes really...’. He felt insecure when making musical judgements, and thus appreciated his friend with a more (from his point of view) consistent taste in music.

Nevertheless, the importance of friends does not mean that individuals will necessarily follow their friends along the pathways through youth geographies. On the contrary, as was seen in the fieldwork, changing friends was common among the interviewees, as in the following example:

Roger: Música que te gusta...

Jesús: Pues tipo Offspring... ese es el grupo que más me gusta. Luego hay música màkina que también me gusta pero eso ya no... Si hay que escuchar se escucha, pero... (...)

Roger: ¿Antes te gustaba más?

Jesús: Sí, pero ahora ya no... Tengo pero no la escucho...

Roger: Vale. ¿Y Offspring?

Jesús: Sí, lo estoy escuchando mucho ahora.

Roger: ¿Y cuando te empezó a gustar?

Jesús: Pues hace 2 o 3 meses fue la primera vez que lo escuché y... me ha gustado mucho y me he empezado a comprar CDs.

Roger: ¿Sí? ¿En dos o tres meses?

Jesús: Sí, me he *comprao tos* los que destacan...

Roger: ¿Y cómo fue que empezaste... que te empezó a gustar Offspring?

Jesús: Pues fui a casa de un amigo que es...

Roger: ¿Es de aquí el instituto?

Jesús: No, es digamos *heavy*, pero luego está así toda la música... Y me empezó a enseñar *toas* las cintas que tenía y me empezó a gustar y fue: “Pues esta me la grabas, esta también...”. (...)

Roger: Y cuando empezaste a escuchar música, hace tres años, con la màkina, ¿fue de golpe?

Jesús: Sí, fue de golpe, sí. O sea, empezar a escuchar, pero luego en clase, en el cole, que es cuando entré (...), pues ya *to el mundo*: “Música màkina, música màkina”, y me empecé... la escuché y [dije]: “Pues no está mal”. Lo que [pasa es q ue] ahora la escucho y... no me...

Roger: ¿Y qué recuerdas de música que hayas escuchado...?

Jesús: ¿Que haya escuchado antes? Pues la verdad es que de todo... Como ahora no, o sea, Offspring antes nunca había escuchado, y antes de la màkina puede ser de todo un poco, lo que estaría de moda hace cuatro o cinco años...

The example makes it clear that in general, musical choices are not merely individual, but conditioned by a network of personal relations. Whereas Jesús previously liked ‘lo que estaría de moda’ or what ‘*to el mundo*’ listened to, which was at that time *màkina* music, he had recently been introduced by a friend to a taste that was peripheral in his school. Negotiation of one’s location in youth social space tends to be carried out collectively, with friends. It is through talking

and doing things with one's friends that one negotiates one's position in the coordinates of musical geographies and youth hierarchies. It is with friends that young people make sense of youth geographies. When Jesús refers to 'lo que estaría de moda hace cuatro o cinco años', it is obvious that he is pointing to the power of mainstream media in defining what is 'trendy', but this power is subordinated to the actual acceptance of what is broadcast by other individuals with whom he has face-to-face contact.

We are shifting here to the third and final sphere. Taste in music is not only developed in relation to adults and close friends, but also *in relation to other youngsters' taste in music*, since it is through comparison and social interaction with 'others' that we know 'our' place in social space. As well as parents and best friends, personal relations with other young people at school, the street, going out, and any other network of personal relations are thus also highly relevant in negotiating individual pathways through musical and youth geographies. It is in these interactions where an awareness of a wider social space is developed and negotiated. One thing is to enjoy some music with your friends, and to be respected by them, and a very different one to negotiate your search for respect in front of other youngsters, including the negotiation of how your taste in music relates to 'others' in terms of distances and proximities, positions and oppositions. If best friends are crucial in making sense of youth social space, other personal relations are central in establishing young people's standpoint *in relation to others*. It is when they compare their taste and attitudes to those of others that young people become aware of their relative position. It is when individuals and groups negotiate their search for respect in front of others that young people acquire their full 'social' identity. This process is not static, but carried out along pathways that follow some regular patterns.

As has been pointed out in Chapter 6, many of the interviewees declared that the first music they liked as adolescents was 'chart' or 'commercial' music, and attributed this to reasons like 'it was fashionable' or 'es lo que estaba de moda'. Their perception of what was 'going on' at that time, not only in the mainstream media but also at school and other social milieus, was what pushed them to listen to and like it. The point is that for many interviewees, conforming to what was 'going on' was perceived as normative, that is, unavoidable, marking out an imagined 'trend' of taste in music that everybody had to follow. Many interviewees tended to accommodate to what was perceived as 'the flow out there', particularly during their early adolescence. Generalised perception, in each school, of 'what's going on' and 'what's outdated' can be a powerful mechanism of channelling taste in music. In their search for social acceptance and an acceptable degree of social dominance, many young people experience a changing trend as something one has to adjust to, as is shown by the following example:

Antonio: Yo pienso que me compré eso [Backstreet Boys] porque se lo compraba toda la gente, ¿sabes? Y tengo también la colección de las Spice Girls, ésa de quinientas fotos...

Roger: (...) ¿Pero luego dejó de gustarte?

Antonio: Sí.

Roger: ¿Por qué?

Antonio: Porque como ya se empezaban a... La gente ya decía...

Manuel: A perder.

Roger: ¿Qué decían?

Antonio: ¡Que eran una mierda! ¡Que ya no hacían nada! ¡Que no sé qué era...!

This general disposition towards 'current' music is a general means of culturally producing musical geographies. The perception of 'what's going on' configures an imagined 'generalised other' that marks out the 'centre' of taste in music and prevents many young people from venturing into 'strange' or 'out of fashion' sounds. The laughs with which many interviewees would answer a question about the Beatles, seen as 'outdated' and 'ridiculous', are a clear sign of the social prejudices any young person would need to overcome if he or she is to like them. If young people do not conform to this generalised and institutionalised knowledge 'out there', they can easily become the object of direct social control: 'Si estoy escuchando una música y me gusta a mí, me dicen: "Esto es del año pasado, ¿qué escuchas esto? ¿Dónde vas con esto?"'. Not following the expectations of commercial and popular taste in music, and particularly if it is done individually, will be seen as an eccentricity and probably establish a social distance to other youngsters. This is the case of a boy who dared to like Phil Collins: 'Yeah, I mean, there's a kid in this school who likes Phil Collins. I couldn't believe that [*we both laugh*], 14-year-old kid and likes Phil Collins. It's just mad!'. If the individual is independent enough or, most likely, if he or she acquires this 'alternative' taste because of the importance of some significant other like a friend or a group of friends, or a particular relative, the challenge to general expectations can become not only 'bearable', but even 'enjoyable', as a sign of distinction from the 'dumb mass'. This is the appeal behind what we have termed an 'anti-commercial disposition'.

Nevertheless, we must not automatically see those young people with an anti-commercial taste as being more 'independent' or not following expectations – that is, as being 'resistant'. On the contrary, they generally follow (conform to) an alternative expectation held by a minority of young people during early adolescence, but becoming more common as they grow up. Indeed, once young people 'mature' or leave behind early adolescence, normative expectations push them to stop liking the more obviously commercial music. The most general pattern of youth taste (an initial socialization into parents' music – even though many interviewees said that they had never liked it – followed by a shift to the more commercial music seen in the media and at school and then the gradual specialisation, within commercial music or in opposition to it, associated with 'maturity') was experienced as a personal pathway, but was in fact strongly regulated: the more strictly commercial taste was associated with early adolescence, after which it was expected to be replaced by a more diversified – sometimes 'anti-commercial' – taste. We have already seen in the previous chapters different moments of social control that illustrate the existence of these implicit expectations. Young people are aware, with more or less detail, of the

limits of what is 'acceptable' in any given milieu, since jokes and comments from schoolmates make them clear. This is not to say that they necessarily conform. On the contrary, they can negotiate them in many ways, as for instance by hiding their real taste. In the following example of a girl who used to like the Backstreet Boys but does not like them anymore, we find both negotiation of her taste through lying and a final conforming to expectations:

Patricia: Hombre, a lo mejor alguna vez has dicho "¿pero cómo puedes escuchar eso?", cuando a lo mejor antes lo escuchabas. Por ejemplo, yo a lo mejor alguna vez he podido decir que no escuchaba los Backstreet Boys cuando lo escuchaba, pero porque mira...

Roger: ¿Y cuando te lo decían a ti cuando te gustaban? Esto de "¿Cómo que escuchabas los Backstreet Boys?"

Patricia: No, a lo mejor en primero de ESO o así los típicos niños que iban a clase te decían "¿Cómo puedes escuchar eso? No sé qué".

The general development from a more commercial to a specialised taste in music was not homogeneous, and depended on the influence of different networks of personal relations. Some, for instance, acquired an anti-commercial disposition from the very beginning, either from parents, brothers, cousins or friends, in the school or in the street, so they never liked commercial or very popular music. By contrast, others never fully abandoned a very commercial orientation. The following quote provides an illustration of how some interviewees developed a sense of maturity without dismissing commercial music. In this case, these two girls did it by tracing a trajectory of diversification *within* commercial taste:

Roger: OK. You started with Abba, how it changed?

Susan: It's changed...

Roger: When? When do you remember?

Susan: I was about 10 or 11, I started to get into more modern stuff.

July: Yeah, the same as me.

Susan: I still listen to the old songs...

July: Yeah...

Roger: And you?

July: When I was 12 I was into Backstreet Boys and all that. And then changed to... I don't know... I thought any song was good...

Roger: (...) And when did you change from Backstreet to more r'n'b?

July: Mmmm... I changed to r'n'b when I was about 14, because I started listening to it more... a station... Galaxy, all the r'n'b... really into that.

Susan: I like that song... "Mr Hanky the Christmas Poo" [*in a funny way*]

Roger: What's this?

Susan: Do you know South Park?

July: Oh, yeah! Oh, yeah! [*they laugh*].

The point is that even if there was considerable scope for personal and collective negotiation in relation to one's pathway, it was also true that different choices were not neutral. There were some clear 'existing meanings' with which every

young individual had to negotiate. The importance of these patterns, well established in young people's typical knowledge, was that they implied forms of social control and competition that could become obstacles in the search for respect. The interviews provide, as we have already seen, many examples of the moments of social control mentioned above: jokes, wind-ups, mockery and even physical aggression, at school or in the street, reflect mutual marking out of different positions. To a great extent, it is through these moments that the 'value' of different musical forms, as well as the social meanings they signify, are made visible and negotiated. If we take the example of jokes, wind-ups and teasing, for instance, we find many interviewees who recollected moments when this occurred: "Eres tonto", me dicen "¿Pero cómo puedes escuchar eso [*hip hop*], no sé qué?"; 'La Loles que dice "¿Cómo podéis ir al Style [*a club*]?"'; 'Hombre a veces, nos hacemos unas bromitas... (...) Aquello de "¡Qué escuchas esto!", pero en broma... (...) Yo qué se, por ejemplo hay otra a la que le gusta mucho Britney Spears [*laughing*] y yo le digo un poco "*pija*", pero de broma'. Even though such jokes are often made in a friendly way ('es más porque sé que le molestan, para hacerle la puñeta un poco [*laughs*]'), they open up a game where the face of both might be brought into question and thus need to be (playfully) defended. Importantly, some youngsters experience these occasions with discomfort and even pain. The limit between amicable and hostile jokes is not always clear, so innocent wind-ups may sometimes end in open conflict. The important point is that in the process, the coordinates of musical and youth geographies are delineated and made explicit, objectivated. In some cases, these jokes, wind-ups and teasings have very practical consequences: producing actual social distances or antagonism, or creating one soundscape or another in a given social context (a party, a youth club, a coach, a bedroom or any other space): 'Bueno... una amiga... que le gusta mucho también el *gitanero* y cosas así. Cada vez que lo pone le digo: "¡Quita eso!"; y ella me dice: "Calla.'

Particularly when all these playful negotiations and exchanges come not from friends but from other schoolmates or acquaintances, they can easily be perceived as direct or implicit aggressions and challenges to one's position and face. Even though some of the interviewees – particularly in the Catalan School and the Periphery School – denied any 'serious' exchange of jokes and verbal aggression ('No hi ha aquí un extremisme de "vinga, ara ens barallarem per la música"') others – particularly in the Inner City School in Barcelona, and the Mixed, Dual and White schools in Birmingham – did point to it as a potential or actual 'problem', whether this was in relation to taste in music or not:

Kiran: Yeah, it gets really difficult when people start teasing you. And now when somebody else teases somebody else, then... because I know how the person feels if he's being teased, because I've been in that place myself. So if you've already been...

Some interviewees who were not teased, as we have seen when analysing the personal hierarchies, were sensitive to the suffering it could generate, and pointed out that even if those who teased others said it was like a joke, in fact some people got hurt as a result of it. This was clearer in the case of physical aggression, a

more visible mechanism of social control that we have said seemed unevenly present in the six schools. Even though we must not automatically assume that physical violence is a more effective means of social control, it is obvious that it is important in controlling public display in a given environment. Particularly in the three Birmingham schools and in the Inner City School in Barcelona, the threat of fights or physical aggression was something that could be felt in the air. They were unusual events, but not rare enough to be ignored by the interviewees. Samanta, a girl who had recently started at the Inner City School, explained how the risk of being subject to physical or verbal aggression intimidated her when she first moved to the neighbourhood. When she first arrived, she had to learn how to deal with physical and direct verbal aggression, and by the time of the interview had already gained a reputation for being tough when defending her ground. In the Dual School, another female interviewee explained a radically different strategy in dealing with direct verbal aggression:

Sarah: Yeah. There's aggressive people in here and probably also some rude people as well.

Roger: And do they bother you or you just have to be careful and it's all right?

Sarah: Sometimes they come and speak to you. You just have to ignore them...really... It's just the way it is really...

To understand the negotiation of these harder types of competition for social dominance and respect, we must remember what we have seen in the preceding chapter, that is, that besides individual strategies, group solidarity was important to mark out your territory and avoid being intimidated. One interviewee put it as follows: 'Well, because the group of friends I hang around with is so big, if a *kev* came over and started picking on one of us, we'd just have a go at him and tell him to get lost or whatever...'. Another interviewee, talking about his tough schoolmates, said that 'They are really small, but they have really big friends'. When someone from the inner group, or someone with whom one had close loyalties, was mocked or attacked, often collective strategies to restore 'respect' were activated.

Personal pathways are in any case impossible to predict. It is clear that there are some patterns that limit the pressures young people experience in one or another direction, and because of this we have been able to appreciate what we call 'objectivated geographies'. At the same time, however, individual variations are also important, particularly in a period of life that, as one interviewee put it, 'you just like... because you get all these changes, you [are] growing up and all that, I think your genes like change your... outlook on everything. (...) So... I think, that's you growing up, you just keep changing into these different phases and music...'. Indeed, several of the interviewees showed curious combinations of tastes in music. One interviewee, for instance, used to like Pimpinela and Extromoduro, after which he got interested in *màkina* and *gitaneo*; another one first liked punk and then moved to *màkina*; and yet another one used to like rock before getting into jungle and garage. In Birmingham, three Afro-Caribbean boys

liked both 'black' (r'n'b, garage, hip hop) and also dance and classical music. One girl in the Catalan School had apparently contradictory tastes: although she liked pop music she also enjoyed hardcore electronic music, not to dance but to listen to it. She expressed the contradiction by saying '*es muy raro esto*':

Sofia: Me gusta, sabes, es muy raro esto, porque me gusta para no bailarla, escucharla. *Es tope* de raro, me pongo la radio y así, sabes, pero cuando llego a mi casa y quiero dormirme, antes de dormirme siempre me pongo un poco de *hardcore* porque es *tope* de tu tu tu tu tu...'

Nevertheless, this unpredictability must not deter us from identifying normative expectations channelling young people's pathways. As stated above, these pathways were not traced in a vacuum where different musical forms were socially 'neutral'. On the contrary, there were strongly 'objectified' meanings which, when not observed, raised immediate social control mechanisms. We will now turn to the analysis of the enforcement and policing of those meanings related to the imbrication of social hierarchies of gender, ethnicity and generalised advantage with everyday interpersonal hierarchies. This will clearly show the 'objectified' character of the expectations around these aspects, as well as their articulation in taste in music (which to some extent *signifies* them, as has been analysed in the preceding chapter) through 'homological' relations.

Imbrication and social control mechanisms

Attention will now be paid to the way imbricated hierarchies were experienced through homologies between musical and other symbolic forms *and* between musical forms and social locations. In the latter case, we will look for moments of social control policing taste in music in terms of its social connotations. Take, for instance, the case of gender and sexuality analysed in the previous chapter. As we have seen, if young people did not conform to the expectations of both 'masculinity' and 'femininity' in each context of interaction, several social control mechanisms were activated by both males and females. These expectations included taste in music. In young people's typified knowledge, what we have called 'commercial' music is homologically related to 'fashion' and to early adolescence and an 'effeminate' taste – although combined with an indisputably tough stance, this last homology could be inhibited. And this affected how sensuous meanings around feminine and masculine pleasures were organised. In their networks of personal relations, girls often felt a stronger pressure to be interested in fashion than boys. An example is offered by an Asian girl who explained that her female friends were interested in brand names and fashion to try to impress the boys, and then added: 'But I'm not interested in all this [*laughs*]. And then my friend says that I'm boring, and that I'm this and that'. In this case, she did not feel obliged to accommodate to the expectations, and did not hesitate to answer her friends with a clear 'This is the way I am, if you don't want to be my friend then go', but it is obvious that negotiating the pressure of expectations like this one is not always

easy for young people, particularly girls – since ‘fashion’ was regarded as central to femininity, whereas although boys were partially incorporated into it, for them it was still on an optional basis.

We have seen who in both Birmingham and Barcelona boys – and some girls as well – often dismissed the teeny-bop musicians many girls liked as ‘*maricones*’ or ‘homosexual’, which highlights the importance and taken-for-grantedness of compulsory heterosexuality³. Because of this, those boys who did like teeny-bop artists tended to keep it to themselves. Two girls laughed at a male friend who always dismissed the Backstreet Boys as ‘gays’ but had all their records in his computer. The other style that was the object of teasing in terms of sexual orientation, although only in the Catalan School, was ‘house’ and ‘techno’, understood as part of a ‘*fashion*’ style, which was regarded as sexually ambiguous (‘*És més per la forma de ballar també i les pintes*’).

The example of gender and sexual orientation shows how young people identified clear pathways of particular typified categories of young people. Through personal relations at school, in the street or in other social sites where they came into contact with other young people, interviewees developed their typical knowledge about what was expected for each age, and these expectations implied a particular articulation, through homologies, both between taste in music and other elements of youth styles, and also between all of them and the imbricated social hierarchies. In the following example, a few white boys explain their typification of girls’ trajectories in relation to taste in music:

Mark: Yeah, but all girls generally listen to the same, the same kind of music, but I don't know...

Roger: And which type of music is this?

Mark: Garage, hip hop.

Roger: The girls?

Mark: Yeah. No...Most of the... Some of...

Rod: Yeah. The majority of girls.

Mark: Just the young girls, like... you know? Some stuff... In years 7 and 9, they probably like boy bands, in year 9, they might like r'n'b, like different from everybody else who listen to rock or something, and then year 10 they will probably...

Rod: Go their own way.

Mark: Go their own way, and either they stay with pop, or go to hip hop. That's how it works.

Roger: But now all of them...

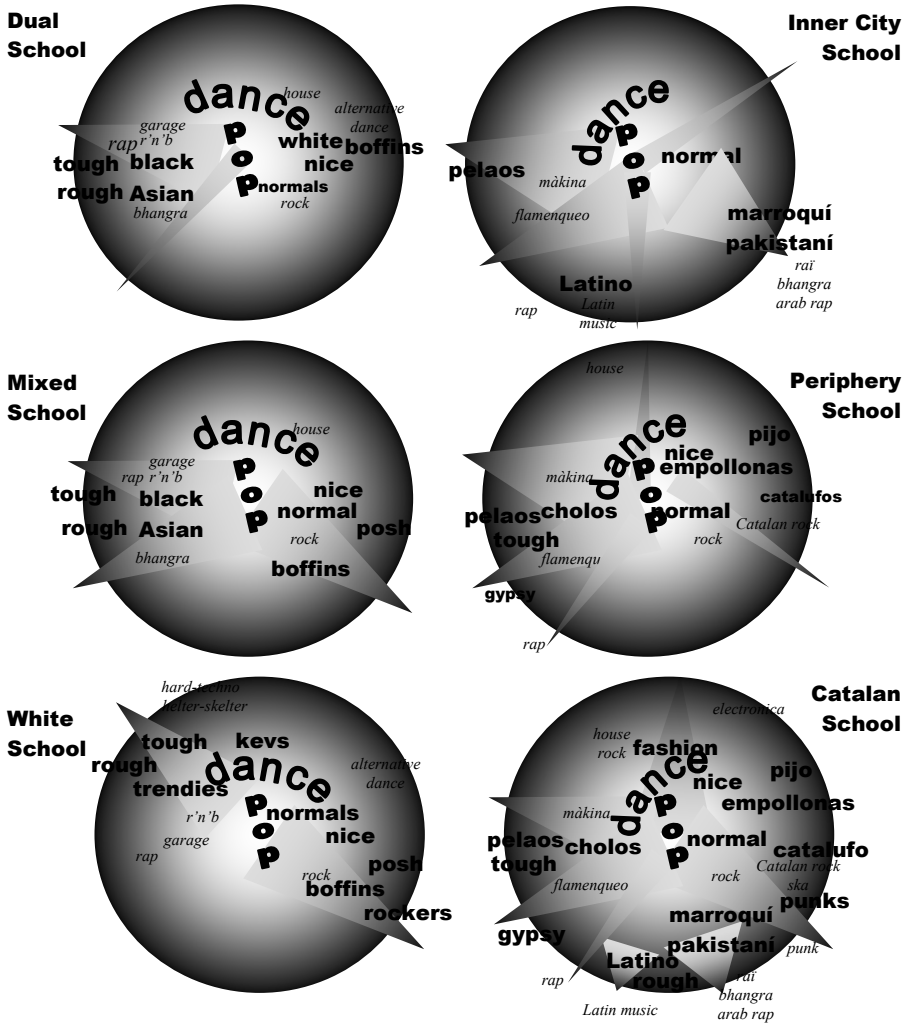
Mark: When they are mature they don't need boy bands of that sort... teenage magazine... That's probably how it works, when they grow a little bit...

Rod: Their own way.

Mark: Yeah, they go their own way. They realise...

³ I take the notion from Griffin's early analysis (1982) of it among working-class girls.

Figure 8.1 Graphic representation of the main imbricated geographies in the six schools



Mark' last remark – ‘they realise’ – shows the symbolic violence he exercised upon what he regarded as feminine (commercial) taste. These typifications were the result of young people’s attempts to make sense of their surrounding reality, and could be homologically related to other practices and symbolic forms like going out, clothes and many others. Girls and boys often regarded each other’s taste in music with contempt. Boys saw girls as having a ‘soft’, ‘effeminate’ taste that was not good (we have already seen in the preceding chapter that pop music – particularly boy and girl bands – was considered effeminate). This typification was constantly enforced through teasing and wind-ups. One male Asian interviewee in

Birmingham, for instance, teased his male friend by telling me that he liked the Spice Girls, and then started to laugh. Importantly, the use of gender and sexual orientation connotations was part of, and difficult to differentiate from, internal musical, cultural and social distinctions. One girl in the White School said that she had to defend herself against the rockers' accusation of being 'cheesy'. In Barcelona, one male interviewee dismissed pop as the music liked by 'las tontitas' or 'las pardillas'. In both cases, there is an implicit rather than explicit mobilization of gender connotations. In other cases, the distinction and even opposition between girls and boys was marked. A white interviewee explained, for instance, that girls and boys did not go out together, and with a tough attitude added: 'We take the piss out of them. We don't actually hang around very much'.

The existence of an assumed pathway was also often expressed in relation to ethnic, national and linguistic identities, as we have seen when analysing this type of imbricated hierarchies. A good example is the typified pattern of taste in music of Afro-Caribbean youngsters, which included an early socialisation in the reggae music of their parents, and then the successive waves of fads that kept 'coming in': ragga, jungle, hip-hop, garage and, particularly in the case of girls, r'n'b. As we have seen in the preceding chapter, this was the expected pathway of what was seen as 'black culture'. The following quote provides a good example of what was repeatedly explained by many – and not only Afro-Caribbean – interviewees:

Roger: Since you were a child and you remember first listening to music, could you try to tell me what music have you liked and how it has changed...? Like a history of it...

Spartaca: Well... My mum told me that when she was having me... when she was pregnant with me, she used to listen to a lot of reggae music. And when I used to go to sleep in my cot she used to put it on like... keep my brain going, so she just put the music on, and it was reggae, reggae, when I was younger. Then as I grew up it was soul and r'n'b...

Roger: Do you remember when you changed, or when you started...?

Spartaca: Mmm... just going through... the years... It was a bit of r'n'b music when I was younger, but then it started to get more... 'cause my mum started to go out of the reggae music. And then she went into the r'n'b. But I still like reggae and ragga music.

Roger: You still listen to it...

Spartaca: Yeah. And then I started to like garage music when I came to this school. Because that's when it started to come out... and jungle music...

Roger: Jungle and garage at the same time?

Spartaca: Yeah...

Roger: Or first jungle and then garage?

Spartaca: Yeah, jungle came out first, and then garage after...

Expectations in relation to 'ethnic' or 'immigrant' boundaries are a good example of particularly harsh social control mechanisms, since as we have seen, simple jokes or wind-ups often ended in more serious conflict. Let us analyse, for

instance, the following situation explained by a Latin American girl in the Inner City School:

Roxana: Ya, un amigo me dice... que yo estaba escuchando salsa, con una peruana, que también le gusta, y lo estaba escuchando y dice: “¿Cómo les puede gustar esta música?” Y nosotras le volvimos a mirar, y le dijimos: [with *agressiveness*] “¿Y a ti cómo te puede gustar el *techno*?” Y nos pusimos allí, y él: “Porque es mejor el *techno*, y los jóvenes de nuestra edad escuchamos el *techno*”. Y nosotras: “Pues aquí en tu país, porque en nuestro país se escucha más la salsa”.

They were friends, but their discussion about taste in music rapidly led to a verbally aggressive exchange of reproaches that marked social distance when Roxana’s friend talked about an implicit ‘we’ that excluded her: ‘nowadays young people’ (‘los jóvenes de ahora’) do not include Roxana because she has a different taste in music. Roxana immediately understood the aggression in terms of her ‘immigrant’ condition, and replied in national terms (‘aquí en tu país, porque en nuestro país se escucha más la salsa’). The result of this dialogue about taste in music is a clear marking out of different national origins and identities. We have already seen in the previous chapter that, with the exception of ‘black’ music in Birmingham, those sounds which were considered non-white were generally rejected, dismissed or just ignored by the majority. So it is not surprising that in the Inner City School, for example, any music that was perceived as ‘immigrant’ received social control.

Samanta: Pero con los que más se suelen meter es con música de otros países.

Roger: Y con la de aquí, con música de aquí, nada, ¿no dicen nada?

Esther: No. Por ejemplo, ella [que es de aquí] si está escuchando música de la India, le vienen a decir “¿Cómo te puede gustar la música de allí?”

Samanta: Sí, eso sí que me lo han dicho, ¿ves? Que cómo me puede gustar la música de la India.

In contrast to middle-class attraction to exotic sounds, best exemplified through the ‘world music’ category, this negative disposition towards ‘foreign’ sounds was part of one of the main arenas of social control: ethnic and immigrant typifications. In this field, the search for respect was often experienced in reflexive terms, particularly in those schools with a high diversity of pupils where the fine continuum from joking and teasing to physical aggression was expressed by many interviewees. Amicable ‘racist’ remarks were often neither intended nor taken as ‘really racist’: ‘No, [cuando le llamo *‘paki*’ no se cabrea] porque él es mi amigo, y no lo digo con fobia... (...) El día de mi cumpleaños me regaló un disco, una cinta con música de su país, pero era mezcla, de Christina Aguilera y música de allí, y quedaba bien...’. The moment when teasing is perceived not as a sign of intimacy but as an aggression is not easy to identify. In the collective interviews, during the fieldwork, for instance, young people often laughed at other people’s taste in music without challenging their face. Since jokes tended to be made in a clearly

respectful manner, this only rarely resulted in a loss of complicity. In these playful interactions, however, youngsters could also be hurt, and in some cases some interviewees felt intimidated and stopped expressing their opinions. With regard to *amicable racist remarks*, it was found that in the school young people established subtle distinctions between 'really' racist remarks and 'playful' ones. The line between play and aggression, moreover, was sometimes crossed, not always willingly, and this could lead, even when the conflict had nothing to do with any ethnic, racist or immigrant condition, to a heightened confrontation in terms of ethnic or immigrant identifications (when fighting, racist insults were used).

A lot of symbolic work was carried out in order to identify the 'real' racists, who were then negatively valued – in a constant adjustment, or at least tension, between 'typified' and 'personal' knowledge. As we have said in the preceding chapter, for instance, the only two girls that showed open racism in the Inner City School in Barcelona, were directly criticised by two other female interviewees because they thought they hurted a classmate from Pakistan ('Al pakistaní que lo tienen en clase martirizado...'; 'Lo tienen fatal, le llaman "paki" que hueles mal, que no sé qué.. ¡Y luego les dices a ellas!'). As we have explained, when such aggressions took place in the schools, collective solidarity, between immigrants or ethnic minority groups and immigrants of the same country or cultural background, was an important means of negotiating one's position in social hierarchies, and thus perceived as strong and intimidating. When, as we have seen, in schools with considerable ethnic diversity white people often started at the bottom of interpersonal hierarchies and had to gain the respect of their schoolmates, open and direct racism was not easy to display, since those who were seen being racist were punished, either by losing their peers' respect or by being the object of physical aggression. From the point of view of white interviewees in those schools, if you were white, in order to be respected (by the Afro-Caribbean pupils) you first had to respect them. They put forward an example: if 'they' ask you for a pound for the bus fare, they will give it back to you, and from then on, respect you – they and their friends may even protect you if you are in any trouble. From these white boys' perspective, this was how respect worked out: you have to be 'all right', and if you are 'all right', you've got it. In similar terms, in the White School an interviewee explained how racism aimed at blacks or Asians was policed not only by those groups affected, but also by the majority of (white) pupils:

Michael: No. Well, there was an incident, about... 8 months ago... Where someone made a racist remark and everyone just like... everyone chased it... And I think actually beat him up... And not just black people... it wasn't just black people, but white people and everyone was chasing on him... It wasn't good, but he shouldn't have been racist from the start.

Another sphere where social control in ethnic terms could be identified was that of inter-ethnic romantic relationships. Those who were, or had friends, in this situation were well aware of the difficulty, as we have already seen in the

preceding chapter. The important point of racism is that receiving only one racist remark every week can be enough to intimidate and produce strong resentment. It is not strange, therefore, that young people invested a considerable amount of symbolic work negotiating what was acceptable and what was not acceptable.

In this game of respect and social dominance, music was not neutral, but just another signifier that could be used or negotiated. The two white boys in the Mixed School mentioned above referred to the fact that ‘they’ (white) liked ‘their’ (black) music as a further ‘sign’ of respect, whereas the fact that these white boys liked rock more than drum’n’bass or garage was mentioned by a black girl in their class to minimise the closeness between them and Afro-Caribbeans. What interviewees called ‘black music’ was just one aspect of a whole attitude displayed by most Afro-Caribbeans, which implied a tough, *cool* stance that some understood as a protection against generalised racism in English society, like the following Afro-Caribbean girl: ‘Em... black people, they tend to... (...) to like... keep themselves to themselves... do you know what I mean? And they don't like people messing about... (...) It's just like they have a... that somebody's gonna say something...’. In the Inner City School, the relationship between music and the importance of respect between different ethnic groups was also present:

Roger: Vale. Y no os mezcláis mucho con los árabes, ¿no?

Juanma: Sí nos mezclamos.

Roger: ¿Sí?

Juanma: Sí.

Roger: ¿Pero en la música, no?

Juanma: No, a cada uno le gusta la suya y no... no nos metemos con la suya y ellos no se meten con la nuestra.

Roger: Como un pacto de no agresión.

Juanma: Sí.

Roger: Porque eso es muy fácil, en la música es muy fácil: “¡Vaya mierda! No sé qué...” ¿No hay...? ¿A parte de en broma no hay...?

Juanma: A lo mejor en broma, sí: “¡Vaya mierda de música!” Pero ellos escuchan la suya, ellos la entenderán, es su idioma... Nosotros escuchamos la música nuestra. A lo mejor a ellos también les gusta la nuestra, pero no sé, se decantan más por la suya.

So far we have seen the negotiation of gender and ethnic boundaries as separate matters, although they can also be related. Dominant ethnicities or linguistic practices (white and standard English in Birmingham; nationals, particularly either Catalan speakers or users of a standard or a posh Spanish accent, in Barcelona), were often considered ‘effeminate’ in those schools with pupils in social positions of generalised disadvantage. When we add the negotiation of ‘generalised advantage’, the equation gets even more complex. Whereas ‘gender’ and ‘ethnicity’ are visible and explicit variables in youth social space, generalised advantage is much more opaque. Social origin in terms of socioeconomic position tends to be implicit rather than explicit in young people’s interactions. In the previous chapter, when we analysed the importance of

typifications such as 'posh', '*keɪ*', '*pijo*', 'rough' or '*cholo*', we saw how young people often *played down* or *dissimulated* their social origin. Youth styles in fact offer young people the possibility of stressing or downplaying a given 'class identity' – as well as their 'gender' or 'ethnic' identities, but with the added factor that 'class' identity is not marked in any biological visible sense like sex or a phenotypical feature, but in the embodied signifying practices. As has already been pointed out, apart from a couple of exceptions, interviewees did not talk about generalised advantage, even when they were directly asked about the relationship between taste in music and 'class', 'money' or 'social position', in terms other than the diffuse and general epithets mentioned above. Some even understood the term 'class' as referring to the levels of popularity in the school or to wearing or not wearing brand names and designer labels. Among those who used terms like 'posh' or '*pijo*', as we have seen, some talked about isolated posh classmates who listened to classical music; others identified as posh those who liked 'guitar' music and yet others typified as posh those who liked house and commercial music. At the same time, depending on the context, others saw all these styles, with the exception of classical music, as a clear sign of a 'common' taste.

Both the polysemy of these signifiers and the importance of 'passing' make the issue of generalised advantage a difficult one to capture in a systematised sociological account. Although in the interviews young people did not recall many moments of social control directly related to generalised advantage, there were a few of them, from the stigma of those who *could not afford* brand names to the scrutinising of 'posh' youngsters *passing* as common, or from the automatic labelling of white pupils as 'posh' until they demonstrated the opposite, to the uncomfortable experience of 'working class' pupils when socialising in a predominantly middle-class environment. Nevertheless, I would argue that the unclear, polysemic and implicit presence of typifications concerning generalised advantage must not lead us to confusedly conclude that these hierarchies were not relevant in musical and youth geographies. On the contrary, the strong dislike mobilised in the interviews through terms like 'posh', '*pijo*', '*cholo*', '*keɪ*' and others illustrate their active influence in configuring youth social space. My interpretation is that the hierarchies of generalised advantage are imbricated in subtle and complex ways across meanings which deal with ethnicity, masculinity, toughness, anti-school dispositions, snobbery and the role of conspicuous consumption in youth social space (the preceding chapter has analysed both the role of 'toughness' and 'roughness' in signifying generalised advantage, and what has been called 'racialising' of it).

Gender, sexuality, ethnicity and generalised advantage are indeed not separate but intertwined structuring factors. They are inextricably interlinked. For instance, 'poshness' is perceived as more 'effeminate' and 'white', while 'black' men are typified as *hypermasculine*, working class and rough. When facing this objectivated knowledge, young people tracing their pathways need to negotiate and play with them. A middle-class white man in Birmingham, for instance, can reinforce or play down his 'posh', 'effeminate' (refined) and 'white' image, depending on whether he chooses 'chart' or underground-rap music or on whether he speaks

standard English or either an Afro-Caribbean or a *brummie* accent. The complexity of the imbrication of different hierarchies, as well as their signification through often subtle and situated homologues, is definitely high, which deserves close ethnographic research to seriously decipher it⁴.

We can take the example of the more 'commercial' or 'chart' music. Because of its closeness to 'normalcy' – what we have called 'the centre' – this often becomes a space of socioeconomic *imagined neutrality* in terms of generalised advantage, since it does not tend to adopt the toughness and roughness of the more disadvantaged neighbourhoods, nor the snobbery of culturally dominant social groups. This means that whereas on the one hand 'commercial' music tends to be linked to brand names and fashion, and thus to consumer culture in its more hierarchical sense, on the other hand it is seen as popular and inclusive, in the sense that it does not require any other form of cultural capital than listening to the charts and wearing the right clothes. Nevertheless, although it occupies the centre, and can be useful in making a neutral impression on others, it also connotes a more 'white' and 'feminine' stance, generally playing down typifications of roughness, toughness or any sort of radical transgression. This is naturally a broad generalisation, since its popularity guarantees that in many contexts of interaction, chart music can be linked to these radical transgressions as well. We have described, for instance, the association made by the 'rockers' in the White School between 'chart' music and '*kevs*' (in the other schools, an important dissonance has been identified between interviewees' anti-commercial discourses and their actual – partially commercial – musical consumption preferences, although more in-depth information would be needed to develop this further).

Summing up what has been said in this chapter, it is clear that the complexity of the imbrication of hierarchies and their articulation in musical geographies makes symbolic work inescapable for young people tracing their pathways through their transition to youth and adulthood. The importance of competition for social dominance, on the one hand, and social control mechanisms, on the other, is that they mark out the social distances resulting from the different positions in musical geographies and youth hierarchies. If taste in music is only rarely a merely private experience, this is because music is for young people a symbol of togetherness, so they like to share the music they enjoy with their friends, and make clear the (social) distance in relation to other youngsters. Music, as well as other practices like dress, talk and going out, is an important signifier of this game of positions and oppositions. An open hostility to one's taste in music, therefore, is easily seen as a mark of social distance – if not direct confrontation. The implementation of different mechanisms of social control shows the relevance of conflictive interactions where social and cultural boundaries and hierarchies were negotiated and enforced.

⁴ Willis' *Learning to Labour* (1981 [1977]) and Pujolar's *Gender, Heteroglossia and Power* (2001) are good examples of ethnographic approaches to young people in Birmingham and Barcelona deciphering this articulation of structural elements.

The fact that we are focusing on competitive and hierarchical interactions – which were more visible because of their spectacularity – must not make us forget that many young people identified important spaces of cooperation and horizontal relations. Respect can be understood in competitive or cooperative terms. In front of those who tease and hassle other schoolmates, some believe that respect should be given to everyone:

Samanta: [A veces le dicen] “¿Pero cómo escuchas esto, esta mierda?”.

Esther: (...) Sí porque cuando ellos me dicen [esto, yo] digo: “Tranquilo, porque a ti te gusta la música otra y si te lo digo yo... ¿a qué te molesta?” ¿No? Tu, si no quieres escuchar música, nadie te obliga a escucharlo, porque si no te gusta, hay que aceptar de todo, ¿no?”

This co-operative, horizontal and inclusive view on taste in music seemed rather minority in both Birmingham and Barcelona (even when not directly teasing others because of their taste, apparently ‘innocent’ jokes or at least private laughs were made). In Birmingham, a female interviewee who was sometimes told that the music she liked was ‘crap’, said ‘that in music you just don’t have to tell people that their music is crap...’. Another female interviewee also declared that ‘These days people don’t respect other people’s taste’, and a friend of hers added that ‘People don’t have respect for each other’. These claims of a need for general respect, however, were not accompanied with mechanisms of social control to enforce them outside their small group of friends. At the most, they were accompanied by inner-group strategies to defend their face when attacked, as in the following example:

Mia: No. We can be singing in the dinner queue and somebody will tell us to shut up. And we’ll keep singing.

Tania: It’s like we were singing and it starts raining, and she goes “Are you making it rain?”, and we go, “Yeah!” [*all laugh loud*]

Mel: We don’t care!

Tania: Walking down the road, you can be in the shop, you can be doing anything...

Mia: The best thing is when they play music... in the shops they play music sometimes, and when we hear it we sing to it.

Mel: And people look at us.

Tania: People give you funny looks, but we don’t care.

This quote is a good illustration of the importance of symbolic work in negotiating one’s position in youth hierarchies. Mia, Tania and Mel are teased because of their singing, but they ‘don’t care’ because they have culturally produced, collectively, a social space where they feel secure and respected. What I have tried to illustrate in this section is that this symbolic work and collective cultural production of spaces of respect takes place within the ‘objective’ coordinates of general social hierarchies, which in their turn are imbricated with interpersonal hierarchies and typified youth styles, and all of them homologically

related to musical geographies. This means that young people's symbolic work and tracing of individual and collective pathways, however creative, is always embedded in – and thus needs to manage – the existing expectations, that is, the impression they make on others, and the way others treat and typify them.

Symbolic work and negotiation of meanings

The importance of existing patterns of biographies linked to different social positions, as well as of social control mechanisms to enforce them, must not lead us to believe that young people just mechanically reproduce institutionalised channels. On the contrary, when making sense of musical geographies and youth hierarchies, young people transform them. We have reiterated several times the plural, creative and open-ended result of individuals' pathways. We have seen many examples of individuals' negotiation of the actual meanings of different locations in youth geographies. Many youngsters who liked certain styles, for instance, tended to reject general typified knowledge about them. This was the case of Susana in the Catalan School, who liked *màkina* music and did not like the image of *màkina* fans as irrationally tough (we have already seen, in Chapter 7, her protests in relation to the link between *màkina* fans and being '*facha*')

Maria: Però [la Susana] va amb gent que va de *chulilla*...

Susana: No clar.

Roger: Però vas amb gent que és una mica així, que ho sembla.

Susana: Sí, sí. Però, vull dir, per fora semblen molt així, molt... que sembla que t'hagis d'apropar i ja t'hagin de robar, allà... I doncs no, no és així. I *vale*, i que ho fan molts, però són grups molt determinats.

Maria: Ho fan més que res per *respectar-se*.

Susana: Sí.

Maria: Perquè diguin: "Mira aquí estic jo i m'heu de respectar", saps? En canvi, és que...

Susana: En canvi si estàs dins del grup, o siguis, hi ha molt bon *rotllo* i... I no marginen a la gent, tampoc. No sé... (...)

Even though she acknowledged the importance of toughness among *màkina* fans, she underlined the good atmosphere within *màkina* cliques, and claimed that irrational toughness was not the norm. The same resistance to 'external' typical knowledge could be found in almost every youth style. There was a continuous negotiation between different – and often opposed – 'definitions of the situation', where young people contrasted typical knowledge of different styles with their direct personal relations with friends and acquaintances. Typical knowledge was thus always being made and liable to be modified in the case of particular people. Any labelling process and typification was by definition contested, in that different sectors of youngsters made sense of them in diverse ways. A good example of this is offered by those who liked boy bands: since their taste in music was the most heavily criticised, their resistance to dominant meanings, policed through social

control mechanisms like continuous mockery and social labelling, was particularly acute, as we have seen in the preceding chapter.

Montse: Me da mucha rabia, más que nada la gente, cuando hacen un reportaje en la tele y te ponen “la edad del pavo” y hay personas de sesenta años que están ahí que parecen *masocas* [haciendo cola], que tú... O sea, yo me hice amiga de una de allí, que estuvieron un montón de horas esperando, que tenían treinta y pico de años. Pero [eran] un grupo, ¿sabes? Y que estaban histéricas igual que yo o más, ¿sabes? “La edad del pavo”, [dicen que es, pero] no. Y mi madre, porque empecé tope de... hace cinco años, [me decía:] “Se te pasará pronto, se te pasará pronto”. Pues ahora ya tengo 16 años y sigo igual, ¿sabes? Que me imagino que un día llegará que se me pase todo esto pero que...

From this point of view, teeny-bop culture does not appear as ‘passive’, as it is usually regarded, but as requiring a considerable amount of resistant symbolic work. Boy band fans are generally depicted as dumb individuals prepared to like any *prefabricated* song which is advertised with enough intensity, but the reality is not as simple as that. For instance, many boy and girl band fans did not accept all the songs that were released, but discriminated among them, even among the songs of those artists they most liked. We can appreciate how boy band fans had their own grounded aesthetics and criteria to judge music:

Susan: I think there's too many groups now.

July: I think there's too many groups. And most of the people coming and singing they don't know... Most of them can't even sing... They get nowhere! Westlife...

Susan: They still have good songs. They copy other people.

July: That's the problem. They said: ‘We won't copy anybody’, and they copied two songs and that's it. They had to copy.

Susan: I like B*Witched as well.

July: She is all right but...

Susan: I'd still buy it to listen to it.

July: But at first I thought: “Another cheesy Irish band trying to be like Boyzone”. And then I didn't take much notice until the second number one. That was good! I'll get that.

The tension between typified knowledge and personal experience with others meant that young people had to do considerable symbolic work to reconcile them in the production and re-production of musical geographies and youth hierarchies. Jaume and Toni had previously identified *màkina* music as ‘lo *més cholo*’, but when directly asked about the possibility of ‘*pijos*’ liking *màkina* replied as follows:

Jaume: No, però el fet que escolti màkina pot ser o un *pijo* o un *pelat*, o un... O un pobre de mala mort, sí.

Roger: Aleshores els *pijos* també escolten màkina?

Jaume: Sí.

Toni: Sí, també.

Roger: I que són? Gent que van amb *pelats* o és que...?

Toni: Més que res que hi ha gent... Jo conec gent que no és *pelada* i li agrada la màkina.

Roger: I va a discoteques màkina?

Toni: I va a discoteques màkina.

Roger: Al Chasis i...

Toni: Chasis, Pont Aeri, el que sigui...

Roger: Sí? I no són *pelats*, ni són...

Toni: Sí que els *hi* agrada potser una miqueta l'estètica però ells no hi van tot i així.

Roger: Però l'estètica, sí vesteixen una miqueta.

Toni: No, no, no. Ni tan sols vesteixen, però hi van.

They (typically) made sense of *màkina* as '*chola*', but at the same time they (personally) knew some youngsters who liked *màkina* without being '*pelados*', so they denied or at least challenged the absolutist determinism of their typification of *màkina* as being completely '*chola*'. In fact, music styles were polysemic, since they could signify, when embodied in a particular youngster, multiple meanings depending on how they were used and in which contexts. We have already seen in the previous chapter the subtle symbolic work underlying the distinction between 'being' and 'acting'. Musical forms were one more 'sign' of the language of homologies of youth geographies, and general typified knowledge could be modified in actual appropriations by young people, not only because existing typified knowledge could be modified in the light of new personal knowledge, but also because the opacity of musical and youth geographies implied that young people's typifications necessarily differed from each other. A very good example of the opacity of musical and youth geographies is offered by one interviewee in Barcelona who, contradicting the generalised typified knowledge about *màkina* music, identified it with Catalan-speaking youngsters because most *màkina* DJs happened to speak Catalan and Flaix FM was all in Catalan. Contrary to the general impression among most interviewees, he denied that *màkina* music had anything to do with a more marked anti-Catalan or racist disposition.

In youth social space, the richness of the play with symbolic forms and their meanings implies that the exact meaning of the same symbolic form can be very different depending on its exact context. Homological relations between different symbolic forms, and between them and social locations, are situated and relational, so they can only be understood in the light of each particular case. Their 'objective possibilities' are always in the making, in an endless integral circuiting produced by human creative meaning-making. Look, for instance, at the example of language. In Barcelona, different uses of Catalan, Spanish and their different forms (stylised Spanish, Spanish slang, Catalan standard, non-standard Catalan, posh Spanish, etc.) could have countless meanings depending on the way they were used and combined. As was carefully examined by Pujolar (2001), a single speaker can unreflexively mix many uses in a single conversation to communicate toughness, intimacy, good humour, sympathy, social position, and many other things. The same amount of symbolic work can be found in Birmingham in

relation to different uses of English – including working-class and Caribbean dialects – and Asian languages – like Punjabi, Bengali, Urdu and others. In its more basic and obvious manifestations, for instance, one white male interviewee laughed at the fact that many white DJs and MCs in drum'n'bass and garage pirate radio stations, in spite of *sounding* black were 'white as fuck. They try to sound... I mean... they just try to sound black man. Because they reckon it's *cool*. Similarly, but in relation to taste in music, two black boys explained that whereas gangsta rap was the 'main thing', it had gone more mainstream at the time of the interview, and related it to the presence of white people: 'Like white people are more into it'. When asked whether Afro-Caribbean and white followers of gansta rap mixed, they pointed out with some contempt that white people 'feel like if they listen to hip hop... that every black person they see are their friends'. Two other white males commented that one white boy liked 'black music' and 'pretended' to be friends with Afro-Caribbean pupils, playing basketball with them. And another two white boys claimed that since they liked garage music, they were friends with Afro-Caribbeans in their school. They explained that music was just one aspect among others like 'going to the same places and doing the same kind of things':

Mark: You get those Asians and black people... There's a minority of white people in the school. You've got to have noticed that, just looking around. And that affects some people... like... That affects some people's view of music and some people don't... And... in a way, if you don't like their kind of music, then they don't like you, in a way, but...

Rod: But, we really like their music, so, we get along with them.

Mark: A lot of people, if they don't like... Not just "you don't like our music", but it's like "if you do listen to that, and you do the same kind of things"... Do you know what I mean?

Roger: Then, people who like rock don't get along well with them?

Mark: Not really, but if you listen to that kind of music you go to the same places, and you do the same kind of things. If you listen to rock you go to different places and do different things, so yes.

Rod: Yes.

We do not need to interpret these practices and dispositions as conscious, or fully conscious, to appreciate how young people made sense, negotiated and established fine distinctions in relation to different practices that homologically related musical forms and linguistic and ethnic typifications. The fine distinctions meant that what in one context, or from one perspective, was seen as valuable and authentic, in another context, or from another point of view, could be seen as dismissible and phoney. Symbolic forms do not automatically signify a particular meaning, but do so in their actual situated and relational use in the hands of young people. Like words, which can signify different meanings depending on the speech act, musical forms had to be read in their performative context of interaction. Some youngsters who liked rap music and displayed a 'tough attitude' because they perceived it as a good way of obtaining respect among their peers, were not

credible and did not succeed in the attempt. In these cases, their lack of credibility could become a problem. So it seems clear that the broad geographies described in the preceding chapter were only the main co-ordinates, the raw material, used by young people to make sense of their pathways and their social reality, but that the on-going negotiation of their limits culturally produced a much more subtle, ambivalent and ambiguous reality.

The complex interplay between musical geographies and different social hierarchies make personal positioning problematic. Young people are always working upon the exact meaning and practice of 'respect', 'value' and 'authenticity' in their everyday interactions. Trying to make sense of how musical geographies and youth hierarchies work is not always easy. When interviewees referred to the 'unfairness' of the racist attitudes, or the ruthless mockery of some of their classmates, they were resisting those competitive practices that they perceived 'out there'. Young people took stances, individually or collectively, and then needed to defend them in front of others. Let us see an example around the 'coolness' or 'uncoolness' of being in the music class and playing an instrument. The rockers in the White School knew that they were seen as 'uncool' because of it, but collectively negotiated this position by typifying the rest of schoolmates as 'immature':

David: Mmmm, going through... mmm... (...) I think it's fair to say that the majority are not as mature... [*with concerned condescendence*]

Dave: Yeah... yeah... definitely [*with gravity*]

Roger: But you mean age or attitude?

David: No, not age... They are the same age as us, but they are not as mature...

Dave: Attitude, really, yeah. They think that it's *uncool* to play an instrument. They say: "Why are you playing music?" "Why don't you just leave it to like Oasis and things like that?"

Edward: One comes to me... He's never actually listened to my band, but he came and said: "Your band is crap". And it's better to just not listen to it.

Dave: It's when you go to different gigs, you get shirts, and we wear one of Terror Vision, and he comes and he laughs, and I was supposed to be offended [*all laugh*].

Although they could be seen as the 'conformist' pupils of the school, they were in some sense 'resisting' the dominant culture in the playground. Like every young person who did a considerable amount of school work, who took the school seriously or simply got good grades, they had to negotiate the impression they made on others to avoid being labelled '*boffins*', or at least to avoid losing self-confidence because of being labelled as such. One Asian boy who said that studying was important, when asked whether he was one of the study boys his friends had identified a few minutes before, quickly denied it: 'No, no, I like to have my fun as well. I do my studies and have fun. Whereas there's people that study-study-study...'. In this case, the negotiation was not collective (like the rockers in the White School saying: 'they are not as mature as us') but individual ('I have my fun as well'). Spartaca, an Afro-Caribbean girl, provides yet another example of the

complexity of making sense of the limits of 'boffinness'. In the following quote, she reflects on the existence of a hidden logic that decides whether those who get good grades end up being identified as *boffins* or not:

Spartaca: Yeah, [the *boffins* are] the people out there [in that room], who are playing on their guitar, listen to Oasis and...

Roger: They are the *boffins*?

Spartaca: Yeah. That's what they call them. I think it's good to be smart, though, because you can get far.

Roger: But most people don't think so.

Spartaca: I think they think it's good to be smart, but they still call them *boffins* for some reason... 'cause they are in my class as well. Because I'm in top as well, but people don't call me *boffin*, because the way... I don't go out of my way to seem really *brainy*, even though I am... But they go... and smart.

It is clear that if we look at young people's positioning in detail, we will find the on-going fine and subtle symbolic work they do in making sense, typifying and sensuously using music symbolic forms in the context of youth hierarchies. This symbolic work was not a mechanical assimilation of external patterns of judgement, but a dialogue between personal and collective circumstances, inherited traditions of meaning and constantly renewed musical symbolic forms and traditions of meaning. This dialogue will be better conceptualised as dilemmatic and full of tensions to be solved rather than as an automatic and mechanical reproduction of objectified meanings.

Local contexts of cultural production

Socially situated symbolic work and on-going negotiation of meanings and social control mechanisms, combined with the diverse social composition of the schools, implied that every local context of interaction had its own idiosyncrasies. If we take the schools as localised spaces of interaction, we find differences in the confluence of normative expectations and their means of social control. The combination of particular individuals and groups in every local context of interaction made an impact on actual geographies, so it produced a distinctive social and cultural reality. Take, for instance, the differences in popularity of different music genres across schools, as well as the particular arrangement of groups and (hierarchical) personal relations. Even though there were significant regularities, as shown in the previous chapters, each context of interaction produced its own version of musical and youth geographies and its own balance of social control mechanisms. To understand this, attention will be paid to the differences in the way musical taste and social hierarchies were combined in interpersonal hierarchies in the six schools.

We will analyse this local variability – in the context of general regularities – through the example of the opposition between pop music and other music genres. As seen above, nearly all interviewees in the Mixed and Dual schools agreed that most Afro-Caribbean youngsters did not like 'pop' but liked what was called 'black

music'. In both schools, with a significant proportion of Afro-Caribbean pupils, Afro-Caribbean youngsters who did not adjust to these expectations were seen as an 'exception', a 'deviation' from the general norm. This is illustrated by the surprise with which a white female interviewee explained the following situation: 'Because we brought Britney Spears, and this black girl said, "Yes, I like that song". And [I said] "Really? Ohh!" [*highly surprised*]'. This 'objectivity' of the connection between being Afro-Caribbean and not liking 'pop' but 'black' music was made more obvious by a black girl who did like pop music:

Macy: Most black people in the school don't like pop.

Roger: And white people like pop?

Macy: Yes.

Roger: Then you are strange because you are black and like a little bit of pop...

Macy: Yes. (...)

Roger: Are your friends white and black?

Macy: All black...

Roger: And then you have a hard time because you like pop?

Macy: I don't tell them.

To avoid social control, she just kept part of her taste in music private, as did the boy quoted above who liked Alejandro Sanz. Otherwise, they knew that they would have to deal with – at least – jokes and criticism. Besides being mocked or teased by friends or schoolmates because of a particular taste in music, in certain contexts of interaction a few young people mentioned the possibility of being the object of physical social control, not so much from schoolmates but from anonymous neighbours. A white girl, for instance, referred to her neighbourhood, Handsworth – overwhelmingly Afro-Caribbean and Asian and well-known because of the 1981 and 1985 riots – as having its particular rules in terms of musical soundscape: 'I don't think you drive through Handsworth playing Steps, because the car will get smashed [*laugh*]'. The 'roughness' of Handsworth made the commercial and soft music of Steps an unthinkable possibility. In this case, publicly showing this taste, from her point of view, would not only lead to jokes but to the possibility of the car 'getting smashed'. Even if her sentence was made in figurative and exaggerated terms, it is illustrative enough of her feeling about the neighbourhood expectations.

In her school (the Dual School) she and her friends also knew that their 'pop' taste was dismissed by the majority of pupils, which did not happen, for instance, in the White School. On the contrary, in the White School pop music was part of the 'dominant' taste, called 'trendy' or '*kev*' by the rockers, alongside dance music – which was opposed to rock music, whereas in the other two Birmingham schools pop music was opposed to garage, rap and 'black' music in general. As well as these different co-ordinates and articulation between taste in music and interpersonal hierarchies, there was also a different organization of social control mechanisms.

In the White School, for instance, physical violence was used as a means of social control basically by the '*kevs*' (who according to the rockers identified with

pop and dance music), whereas in the Mixed and Dual schools it was basically used by Afro-Caribbean pupils (who liked garage and rap music). The use of physical violence conditioned interpersonal relations in the school. The rockers in the White School, for example, did not feel comfortable with what they called ‘*kevs*’ or ‘trendies’ because they were treated by them with hostility. One of the rockers put it as follows: ‘It seems that people see it as a bad thing [to like rock and heavy metal], that you are stupid, you are old or something like that. If you are walking to school and all those people listening to dance music and they ask “What are you listening to?” and then they say “That’s crap!”. Another one explained the situation as follows: ‘It’s usually... They say it and act as if it’s really funny, like, “Oh, you like rock music, don’t you?”, and then start laughing; so yeah, this sort, some kind of joke. But it isn’t funny’. The point is that even though this hostility did not normally threaten their physical integrity (‘Sometimes it’s a bit tiring if it happens every day... It doesn’t really bother me...’), they felt that it might:

Roger: And the trendies don’t like rock at all? Do they make fun about it?

Joel: Oh, yeah, they make fun of the way we dress, you know? What we are like... We tend to wear big baggy trousers, we don’t wear labels... the chains...

Roger: And it’s just innocent jokes, just making fun, or...

Joel: Oh, yeah. Sometimes... there can be a bit of pushing involved... harsh language. But I’ve never been in a fight from it. I know a few people that have...

Roger: Here in the school?

Joel: Yeah, here in the school.

The hostility to ‘guitar’ music – ‘rock’, ‘heavy’, ‘punk’ and ‘hardcore’ – was also present in the Mixed and Dual schools (‘If people know that you listen to rock, it’s like you are like a freak, basically. They call you names.’). What was different was that they were not as strongly opposed to those who liked pop and dance music, since these people were not the ‘dominant’ group in interpersonal hierarchies, but an equally subordinate one. Since both rockers and those liking pop and dance were seen as liking ‘white’ music, in spite of criticising each other, they nevertheless shared a common opposition to garage and rap music. Whereas in the White School pop music seemed to be at the top of popularity, in the other two schools it occupied the bottom (at least rhetorically). Another significant difference is that whereas in the White School the ‘rockers’ showed plain contempt for the trendies (pop and dance fans who occupied the top of interpersonal hierarchies), without any sign of ‘respect’ for them, in the other two schools the *guitar boys* often showed respect for ‘black music’, which occupied the top of interpersonal hierarchies.

In the Barcelona schools, the oppositions between tastes in music and their relative positions in interpersonal hierarchies also differed from school to school. In the three schools, as in the White School in Birmingham, there was an opposition between those who liked rock, and those who liked pop and *màkina* music, but their relative position in interpersonal hierarchies was different. First of all, in the Periphery School, but to some extent also in the Inner City and Catalan schools, *màkina* fans and those nearer to the ‘*cholo*’ side of youth geographies,

tended to see rock, punk and heavy fans as ‘*guarros*’, an epithet matching the meaning of the English ‘*grebo*’ – which, by the way, was only used by one interviewee in Birmingham. The difference was that whereas in the Catalan School those who liked punk had a dominant or at least high position in the interpersonal hierarchies, in the other two schools they were marginal in relation to *màkina* and pop fans. Although *màkina* was almost taken for granted as an element of the ‘majoritary’ taste in both the Periphery and Inner City schools (particularly among autochthonous pupils), in the Catalan School, liking *màkina* was to some extent an act of ‘resistance’ to the dominant musical disposition. One boy described how those *màkina* fans who displayed their taste in public with a stereo, were often mocked by others (‘I això, la gent els hi diu que “*para esa mierda*” o...’). It is not strange, therefore, that as we have seen in the preceding chapter, those who liked *màkina* felt that liking it in the Catalan School required more ‘credit’ (‘*es más real*’) than in the other schools where it was more popular (like the Periphery or Inner City schools). In the other schools, any action of social control of those who liked *màkina* was carried out in playful terms, mostly between boys and girls, since *màkina* was a dominant taste linked to the more popular and tough pupils in the school.

The articulation of toughness and taste in music, as we have already seen throughout the preceding pages, differed in the three schools: whereas in the Catalan School it was apparently residual, in the Periphery School it seemed to be the prerogative of *pelaos*, and in the Inner City School it was fairly evenly distributed among different groups, although it was perhaps seen as more accentuated, as a means of attaining social dominance, among (some of the) Moroccan pupils. It is not my intention to give the impression that the Periphery and Inner City schools were ruled by toughness. On the contrary, interactions were overwhelmingly playful and amicable, like the discussion concerning taste in music reported by a boy in this school, who explained that when girls were mocked for liking the Backstreet Boys, they often struck back by saying that the boys’ *màkina* ‘*sólo tocan tambores...*’. As I have remarked elsewhere, the difference I am reporting is rather of the importance of toughness as a means to achieve social dominance: whereas in the Catalan School it was not mentioned by any interviewee, in the Periphery School it was mentioned as an important feature of popular *pelaos*, and in the Inner City School as a ‘sometimes-necessary’ disposition to negotiate one’s own position. In other words, in the Periphery School the danger of physical aggression was not felt in the air, even though it was mildly experienced in the streets (a couple of interviewees referred to group solidarity as a defensive strategy: ‘*Sí, los de mi barrio se arrepintieron rápido [de atracarme]. Llamé a toda la troupe (...) y no veas tú cómo se lió, ¿sabes?*’). By contrast, in the Catalan School most interviewees did not refer to physical violence even as a possibility. When it happened, it was attributed to bad luck, and faced as a kind of ‘natural phenomenon’ which simply led them to take future precautions:

Jose: [Sortíem per Marina], però és que ens van atracar dos cops i al final els vam enviar a... a caseta.

Roger: Us van atracar a on?

Jose: No dins del bar, però al metro. Al metro un cop li van fer una pallissa a un, un que anava amb nosaltres..

Roger: Per què? Per la pinta que feia o...?

Jose: No, no, si a sobre portava una d'aquestes jaquetes Nike, polar. Doncs per treure-li li van fotre una pallissa, li van treure, i el van deixar allí estirat que el van haver de portar a l'hospital.

Roger: Ah, sí! Això al metro?

Jose: Sí, es veu que el van pegar amb cadenes (...). Sí, sí, un grup de *pelats*. Llavors, jo m'havia quedat a un bar que m'estava pixant i llavors quan vaig baixar m'el vaig trobar, vaig trobar el panorama.

In his case, the anonymous character of the aggression would have made it difficult to avenge, but it was clear that, in the first place, they did not have a group behind them that could be mobilised. Physical aggression was not part of the 'atmosphere' in their school or neighbourhood, and didn't seem to be an 'objective possibility' for them. The different experience of this social control mechanism can allow us to further develop the point, mentioned above, about the complex and subtle imbrication of the hierarchies of generalised advantage and ethnic or immigrant differences, on the one hand, and the interpersonal hierarchies, on the other, through toughness and the different masculinities related to it (we have shown how a 'tough' attitude was typified by the interviewees as linked to some neighbourhoods and not others: lower class in terms of generalised advantage and 'immigrant' or 'black' in – so to speak – 'ethnic' terms). The differences among the three Barcelona schools are illustrative in this sense. Following the example, we find that they did not think that revenge was necessary to restore or reaffirm their 'honour' and 'manliness'. They just stopped going out in that part of the city, and confirmed their distance from '*pelats*', who were known to be tough and dangerous. This reality was opposed to that of the Inner City School, where, as in the three Birmingham schools, the tension was also felt within the school walls. The long quote that follows, offers one view of the everyday life of the school and the neighbourhood, which – even though it was not shared by most of her schoolmates – would just be unthinkable in the other two Barcelona schools:

Roxana: Es que aquí cada uno se crea sus barreras... Por lo menos nosotros... No es que odiemos a los *pakis* o los moros, pero sí un poco... así...

Roger: ¿Porque son diferentes?

Roxana: Por su idioma y el nuestro... Para mi consejo ¡son muy raros!

Roger: ¿Por qué?

Roxana: Porque los chicos así ya... roban... No digo que nosotros... pero ellos roban, hacen de todo, son los que más buscan problemas...

Roger: Los pakistanies...

Roxana: No, los moros, los marroquíes...

Roger: Pero en el grupo has dicho que vais con ellos, ¿no?

Roxana: No. Sólo uno, que está aquí desde los 7 años, aunque en su casa habla el idioma marroquí... Pero habla el castellano y el catalán...

Roger: Sólo uno pues...

Roxana: Si, sólo uno... En el curso de tercero, todos... la mayoría son marroquíes, y mantienen ellos [el grupo apartado de] marroquíes... Los *pakis* con los *pakis*, los filipinos con los filipinos... Aquí los que más se mezclan son los españoles, los colombianos, algunos filipinos que están aquí hace mucho tiempo... (...) Yo por lo menos aquí he tenido muchas dificultades con marroquíes...

Roger: ¿Porqué? Que se meten contigo un poco...

Roxana: Si, se meten conmigo... Yo no sé. Claro, yo soy de las personas que si a mí no me dicen nada, pues vale, yo no hago nada. Si me hablas, yo te hablo. Si me miras mal, yo te miro mal. Y si me vienes a pegar, yo no me voy a quedar con las manos cruzadas. Yo también saco la mano y te meto. Claro, sí.

Roger: ¿Por qué alguna vez te han venido?

Roxana: Si, un niño marroquí, ¡lo odio! Estaba por ahí, y viene y "pam", me mete una cachetada. Entonces me quedo mirándole yo fijo y le digo, "¿Qué haces?" Y en un momento lo cojo y contra la pared, y casi lo mato.

Roger: ¿Y él lo hacía en serio?

Roxana: ¡En serio! Si me lo dio en la cara.

Roger: ¿Y porque?

Roxana: No sé, le caía mal. Yo que sé.

Roger: ¿Y a parte de esto?

Roxana: Luego vino una amiga, una chica marroquí que es de tercero, y ella tiene un hermano. Y bueno, de él me le reí porque... el usa gafas, pero él iba con el dedo en la boca y chorreando baba, entonces yo le dije algo, y le reí, y cuando vuelvo, me dicen: "Acá". Y yo les digo: "De comer". Y me dice: "No te vuelvas a burlar de mi hermano porque te piso la cabeza". Y yo le digo: "¿Quién me va a pisar la cabeza? ¿Tú a mí? ¡No seas ingénu!" Y entonces ha venido y le he contado a un amigo español, y me ha hecho un puño al chico...

Roger: Se montó un lío...

Roxana: Se montó un lío, sí.

Roger: Y a parte de casos de estos ¿el día a día es así de decirse cosas o es más relajado?

Roxana: No, es relajado. Por lo menos, el domingo estábamos nosotros ahí y un chico así en la calle cantando música de su país, marroquí, y coge un español, un señor ya de edad, y se queda mirando al chico, y luego el chico vuelve con un grupo de amigos, y le tiró una piedra así de grande al perro, y se pusieron ahí a discutir... Y comenzaban a pegarle al señor, y el señor les ha soltado el perro, y el señor empieza a decir vulgaridades, palabras feas, y luego dice: "Luego dicen que porque les echan de su país, y no sé qué, y que viene aquí para estar bien y mira. Ojalá los maten a todos, hijos de...". Horrible. Luego se mete una señora y le pega a un marroquí, pero pequeñito, como un niño de 7 años. Y luego viene otro grande y le pegó. Muy feo, ¿eh? Terrible.

The varied experience of physical aggression in Catalan and Inner City schools is important because it points to different 'normalcies' that are related to different positions of generalised advantage. The plurality of cultural expectations affects here the use of physical (and probably direct verbal) violence, which is clearly uncommon and out of place in the Catalan School – and predominantly middle-class schools in general – and relatively common or expected, however sporadi-

cally, in the Inner City School – and some working class schools, particularly those in ‘rough’, disadvantaged neighbourhoods. When direct physical and verbal violence are not present, the enforcement of youth hierarchies relies exclusively on indirect forms of aggression like social closure, rumours, marginalisation and so on.

The example of diverse expectations in relation to physical aggression, as well as the former analysis of differences in objectivated music and youth hierarchies, points to the importance of the local context of interaction in marking out the particular boundaries of social geographies. If having an acceptable degree of social dominance is important in youth social space, if being ‘respected’ is crucial and the negotiation of respect a central aspect of young people’s everyday practices, it is clear that the strategies to attain these will differ depending on the local context of interaction. In each of the six schools, the balance of social dominance of different groups – with different tastes in music – varied considerably, although there were important regularities as well.

Traditions, trends and pluralism

As well as the variability of musical and youth geographies in different schools, cities and countries, in each of these localised musical and youth geographies there is a plurality of possible positions. Depending on the particular location in a given network of personal relations, young people will be socialised in very different meanings and expectations. Just to name one example, we have seen how in the White School, depending on whether you are one of the ‘rockers’ or one of the ‘kevs’, you will need to adjust to – and be socialised in – a completely different ‘objective reality’, which in its turn will be considerably different from any of the available youth tastes in the Catalan School in Barcelona. This ‘objective reality’ is doubtless dynamic and to a some extent open-ended and negotiable, but it is nevertheless externally ‘imposed’ on individuals. It can be misleading, therefore, to talk about a single objectified ‘culture’ or ‘tradition’ faced by individuals, since what we have is a contested cultural arena where meanings of different traditions are objectivated, fought for and negotiated. The same argument, needless to say, could be made in relation to the broader culture and its high internal diversity in terms of gender, ethnicity, generalised advantage or simply lifestyle. Behind historical images of cultural homogeneity in a given geographical or social milieu, there is always an astonishing degree of hidden – in the sense that we are not fully aware of it – cultural diversity. Any youngster will need to choose, however unreflexively, among many normative expectations: parents, teachers, cousins and different friends and acquaintances, as well as media representations, will put different normative pressures on his everyday practices. Any individual pathway through these conflicting expectations must thus be understood as the result of a complex negotiation of loyalties as well as oppositions.

As I have argued in Chapter 1, if we are to understand how new forms of common culture are produced and developed, we must begin by accepting that ‘contemporary popular culture’ is part of young people’s tradition, in the sense that it culturally (re)produces meanings that are passed from generation to

generation. If musical and youth geographies are perceived by young people as 'existing out there', as I am arguing, it means that they are faced as a social reality that some materials and individuals 'transmit' (carry) to others, maintaining it alive – and at the same time, naturally, transforming it. Popular cultural meanings do not grow out of nowhere. They are learned, performed and transformed within a tradition of meaning, as is their imbrication with social hierarchies. Different locations in musical geographies and youth hierarchies imply different locations in this tradition, or to put it differently, a location in different traditions of meaning.

The meaning-making implied in youth geographies, as well as their historical continuity, are hidden realities only rarely acknowledged in books, newspapers or museums. The invisible character of not only the cultural production implied in the transmission of this tradition from generation to generation, but also of the cultural idiosyncrasy of its institutionalised result, is due to a great extent to the fact that it is a tradition that reaches every new generation not from adults in personal face-to-face social relations (parents, teachers and so on), but through older generations of young people (the older siblings, the older gangs in the street, those in the higher classes in the school) and through the commodified materials of popular culture. Quite often, the only adults involved in the process are those in the cultural industries, and they are often more aware of the 'artefacts' which sell well among young people than of the actual meanings they 'carry' or 'mediate' in the context of youth geographies. The meanings which result from the articulation of musical geographies and social hierarchies are not discussed in the public arena, but in hedonistic and sensuous acts of consumption.

The fact that this 'tradition' uses the commodity form as its central material support is highly relevant because it affects its social organisation and its dynamics of change. On the one hand, its social organisation is not objectified in public and visible institutions, nor publicly reported in the mainstream media. Its social and cultural conflicts are thus not channelled through public and visible institutions, but through their sensuous acts of consumption in the market, which are collective but highly individualised, ephemeral and opaque – they 'happen' on street corners, in school playgrounds, clubs, record shops, bedrooms, as well as in the media. On the other hand, as regards its dynamics of change, as long as the commodity form is subject to the logic of fashion, trends, fads and obsolescence, youth popular culture is constantly renewed by new waves of artefacts (symbolic forms) that necessarily accelerate the cultural re-production of inherited traditional meanings. If this tradition of grounded meanings is passed from older to younger young people instead of from adults to children, and if it is dependant on the logics of the market of commodities, it is obvious that we are talking about a very dynamic 'tradition'. One interviewee who liked drum'n'bass, which had recently lost its popularity in his school, expressed this dynamism as follows: 'It's always change... There's change all the time. Some people still like drum 'n' bass, tough...'

We have thus got a very dynamic, diffuse and subterranean tradition(s) of meaning in which every new generation of young people is socialised. A tradition of meaning, moreover, in which general social hierarchies – social structures – are

imbricated in an opaque way, and which does not constitute a unified homogeneous set of meanings. On the contrary, it is a highly contested tradition. Depending on the location in, and pathways through, youth geographies from which you get in touch with this tradition, you will have a completely different view over it. Moreover, it must be stressed that young people's affiliations with different positions are often loose and shifting. Each individual represents a particular confluence of inherited meanings, a particular view about inherited traditions. Young people, depending on their identification with – and pathways through – a commercial or anti-commercial taste, or with – and through – *màkina*, techno, garage, pop or indie pop, as well as depending on the particular individuals, groups or media materials through which they get familiar with any of these traditions, will have access to very different ways of conceiving and performing taste in music, as well as masculinity, social and cultural distinction, ethnic, immigrant and national identities and so on. The interesting point is that popular culture's rapid transformation, at the speed of fashions, trends and fads, makes it an accelerated field of on-going re-production of tradition. Alongside the historical continuity, which is strong, we find important cultural innovations that continuously transform the inherited tradition(s) of meaning.

Nevertheless, it is also true that some of these meanings, as we have stated in Chapter 2, will dominate over others, however precariously, and that certain meanings and practices shared between different particular traditions could be understood as a broad, dominant or shared tradition. The contested, fragmented and plural character of this broad tradition, as well as its rapid change, does not mean that there is no such thing as general meanings shared by youth social space as a whole. As happens in broad social space, there are some meanings that are clearly dominant across different positions in youth social space – thus enabling communication, a general 'being together' – and others which, without being necessarily shared by all youngsters, are indeed acknowledged as 'objectified'. In the fieldwork, examples of clearly dominant meanings were the centrality of commodities (consumption) in signifying youth geographies – even those styles opposing consumer culture signified their opposition to particular styles through 'alternative' commodities which were bought in the market – the normative opposition – even when it was done in merely rhetorical terms – to what was seen as the 'adult culture' of work, responsibility, and social conventions; as well as the subsequent worship of emotion and informality as the marks of authenticity. These features are not exclusive to youth geographies, but in the case of young people they are a particularly *relevant* criterion for social hierarchisation: because of their hegemonic character, those youngsters who do not respect these general rules – or at least *rhetorically pretend to do so* –, are immediately located at the bottom of youth hierarchies ('*boffins*', '*antiguos*', 'those who do not go out'). Apart from these shared clearly dominant meanings, there are others that are also dominant, but not with the same intensity, like the importance of 'fashion' and 'newness', which within given circumstances can be challenged from an anti-commercial disposition without being condemned to the bottom of youth

hierarchies. Much typical knowledge about ethnicity, national identity, gender or generalised advantage should be understood as part of these dominant meanings, which are, if not shared, at least acknowledged as predominant by all positions in youth social space.

As part of an inherited tradition, dominant and subordinate meanings are better understood as a *set of oppositions* between different positions which are worked out from generation to generation: rough and soft, masculine and feminine, commercial and alternative, posh and common, white and black, Catalan and Spanish, autochthonous and immigrant, electronica and rock, student and *towny*, modern and old, cosmopolitan and parochial, etc. What is inherited through tradition is the on-going formulation of such oppositions, which implies by definition the existence of different and opposed meanings and the complex homological relation between them all. These oppositions are inherited from generation to generation, and although they are culturally reproduced by every new cohort of young people in the light of their historical moment, they do so on the basis of what the previous generation hands down. Underlying – or through – particular fashions and trends, the transmission and reworking of these oppositions constitute the basic arena where youth geographies are being culturally produced. Importantly, the cultural production, through symbolic work, of new homologies between all these oppositions, also opens up the possibility of ‘third spaces’ transcending them⁵. The contested character of musical and youth geographies makes them a plural reality in which there is never an univocal set of meanings to be learnt, but a diversity of conflicting meanings, articulations and imbrications among which young people must make sense of, and find individual and collective solutions for, their everyday experience. They are learned and negotiated informally, as a set of unofficial and ‘profane’ meanings that help individuals to make sense of their experience *while young*, often in the form of ‘dilemmas’ they need to resolve, but also in the form of sensuous experiences. In their quest for normative provocation and transgression, playing with the different positions and oppositions, conforming to some, resisting others, enables them to find their place in social geographies.

Take, for instance, the ‘dilemma’ between ‘studying’ and ‘having fun’. Adults expect young people to study hard and get good grades. Friends expect them to be ‘funny’ and spend as much time as possible with them in an endless search for excitement. Maintaining an equilibrium between the two sets of expectations, being ‘valued’ by both, is experienced as a tension that every young person and every group of friends solves in one or another way. These different ‘expectations’ are the consequence of different – and contradictory – cultural meanings or, as we have also termed them in the introduction, different ‘normalcies’ (and ‘normative frameworks’). Other dilemmas could be those of left and right, Catalanism and Spanish nationalism, White and Black Nationalism, tough or nice, posh or not posh, transgressing or conforming, etc. With these dilemmas, individuals are

⁵ See Soja (1997 [1996]) for a suggestive conceptualization of the ‘third space’.

pulled in opposing directions, which requires a particular assessment of conflicting values. As Billig *et al* point out in relation to what they term 'ideological dilemmas', 'the characteristics of dilemmas are revealed as fundamentally born out of a culture which produces more than one possible ideal world, more than one hierarchical arrangement of power, value and interest. In this sense social beings are confronted by and deal with dilemmatic situations as a condition of their humanity' (Billig *et al* 1988: 163). Nevertheless, through their symbolic work on these dilemmas, young people also create third spaces where the very oppositions are brought into question. Nightlife and musical consumption, through the sensuous experience they provide, often play an important role in the production of these creative spaces, but unless these spaces are institutionalised in the traditions to be passed from generation to generation, they remain merely circumscribed spheres of meaning.

Cultural pluralism and dilemmatic situations are inherent features of contemporary society. We must also take into account that any particular social geography belongs to its time, and that any new generation or individual cannot mechanically incorporate it, for it needs to be adjusted to the particular circumstances of those who will *live through it*. A Muslim boy in Barcelona, for instance, explained his dilemma of attending the mosque or not. His parents got angry because he did not want to go because 'Por ejemplo, si estás jugando a futbol o algo cuando es la hora de rezar o algo tienes que dejar de jugar, y eso no...'. Had he stayed in Morocco, the dilemma would probably be defined differently, but in the context of his network of personal relations in Barcelona, it was felt in these terms. If we take together cultural pluralism and the need to adapt any tradition to contemporary situations, it is even more obvious that we cannot talk about *static meanings* being mechanically transmitted from generation (of young people) to generation (of young people). Individuals are *structurally pushed* to make choices, to culturally produce meanings about their existence, and this is an important aspect of an ongoing process of collective cultural production which, while indebted to a tradition, modifies it.

Cultural production: power and cultural change

I have stressed the centrality of the on-going formulation of oppositions, tensions and dilemmas based on what is inherited through tradition. The underlying *set of oppositions* we have just signalled in the preceding section have a considerable stability and are passed from generation to generation as a relatively enduring tradition of meaning. At the same time, however, the question is how young people experience and transform (culturally produce and re-produce) them both individually and collectively. If any process of cultural reproduction implies a new 'production' of meanings, the image of a perfect process of socialization where the meanings of the previous generation are transmitted to the newly arrived individuals is not realistic. The plural character of traditions, as well as the changing context in which they are transmitted, make the cultural production of those who inherit them unavoidable. If we add the fact that the combination of individual and collective

conformism, resistance and negotiation, as well of the continuous movement of fashions and trends, ensure the dynamism of the process, we understand that there is no such thing as a mechanistic reproduction of existing meanings.

For one thing, the game between majorities and minorities is complex and difficult to grasp. What at one moment is popular, soon goes out of fashion, and is then abandoned. Similarly, what at one moment is underground soon becomes popular and as it does so, it is abandoned by those who have a cutting-edge aspiration. And 'labels' and epithets like '*kev*', '*quillo*', '*catalufo*', or '*garage head*' are modified or even replaced with the same facility with which they appear. Furthermore, the balance between conformity and resistance to particular meanings is not easy to identify either. We have argued that the term 'negotiation' is probably more suitable to understand the process of cultural production over existing meanings and expectations, since rather than resisting a particular norm, young people creatively negotiate the confluence of different normative expectations. Even those with an 'anti-commercial' disposition, for instance, need collective reassurance, a relative 'majority', a community where they feel valued and respected.

The fieldwork provides some illustrations of the processes of individual and collective cultural production in young people's pathways through existing musical geographies and youth hierarchies. Individuals, groups or simple aggregations of individuals amidst the waves of changing fads and trends, creatively transform musical geographies. Think of a classroom in a school: a charismatic individual, an eccentric clique or the on-going collective adaptation to new trends can cause a strong impact on localised musical and youth geographies. Bottom-up and top-down change are usually combined in a dialectical manner, but it is obvious that the relative importance of them can vary. We will first analyse individual impact on cultural production and then its collective aspects.

In the six schools, individual pathways through musical geographies were varied and subject to particular circumstances. On the one hand, the social control mechanisms analysed above channelled young people within the boundaries of what was expected, but on the other hand, individuals could play with the diverse music sources they encountered through their process of growing up. Some individuals were quick to adjust to the dominant tastes in their schools, whereas others displayed a more independent taste, sometimes together with their closest friends, and sometimes by themselves. Others not only deviated from the central and popular tastes in their schools, but also influenced others to do so. These individual and collective challenges are part of the on-going redefinition of musical and youth geographies, but not all have the same impact on them. We will show this with some examples.

One boy in the Inner City School developed a taste for Queen and some rock music – completely absent in his school – through the influence of his sister. He did not influence others, but successfully resisted the social control mechanisms resulting from his deviation from dominant taste. His different taste put him in a peculiar position in youth hierarchies, as several interviewees referred to him as

having a ‘strange’ taste in music, but did not prevent him from enjoying an acceptable – albeit not high – level of social dominance. He experienced it as follows:

Roger: Mm. I *lo* que a tu t’agrada aquí, li agrada a molta gent aquí a l’institut?

Pedro: No. A ningú. ¡Que jo conegui!

Roger: A ningú?

Pedro: No.

Roger: Sí? I això com ho veus tu? Com ho vius?

Pedro: No sé. No m’agrada molt perquè no escolten la música. Només això, el que surt per la ràdio i... Que no... Que no escolten la música d’abans i, així, suau i *eso*. Només *màkina* i coses d’aquestes.

Roger: Però tu, ¿vas amb ells molt també, o... encara que escolteu músiques diferents o...?

Pedro: Sí. Vaig, però... Sinó em quedaria a casa [*laughing*] Ha! Però de música no parlem molt. A vegades a algú li dic, “Ah! Mira!”, i li agrada la cançó.

Roger: I què fan? A algú li agrada una mica o no? O es riuen? O diuen “no, no”?

Pedro: Es riuen una mica, la cançó...

Roger: I a tu la música que ells escolten no t’agrada?

Pedro: Home, alguna... Les que tenen músiques àrabs, m’agrada alguna.

Roger: Àrab?

Pedro: Sí.

Roger: En tens alguna a casa?

Pedro: No. No. M’agrada d’escoltar però per tenir a casa no.

Roger: (...) Et sents una mica estrany en aquest sentit?

Pedro: Sí.

Roger: Però és només en aquest sentit o en general et sents una mica a fora de...

Pedro: En la música només.

His case was very different from other youngsters who, like him, did not follow dominant or popular tastes in their schools but, unlike him, not only avoided being teased but even influenced others. One youngster in the Periphery School who liked rap put it as follows: ‘A veces, al principio sí, a mi siempre me decían: “¿Cómo escuchas esto?” Pero después de más días y más tiempo y eso, les va gustando’. The influence could sometimes change the taste in music of a high proportion of pupils. One interviewee recalled that in his primary school, not liking Catalan rock was almost a crime, and justified this because ‘hi havia un noi que era molt, molt català, i tot lo que fos català ho posava molt... Saps? I portava molt la veu cantant de la classe... Saps?’. In the Mixed School, one Afro-Caribbean was often quoted as the leader who first introduced and made garage popular in the school. In the Catalan School, those who liked punk music always referred to one pupil as being responsible for their preference:

Jose: Sí, jo el *punk* no sabia què era, m’ho va dir ell. Em va deixar un cassette, i em va agradar. I em va dir, “Mira, aquest està bé, i aquest està bé”, i me’l vaig comprar, i mira, després més... Al principi no tenia massa idea dels grups, i després te’n vas fent... Al principi no coneixes cap i ara pots fer si em començo a fer llistes

detingudament, buff, no acabaria mai... Perquè ara te n'he dit uns quants però em van venint al cap segons parlo...

Several interviewees, as seen in Chapter 4, referred to friends of theirs who were – or wanted to be – DJs and strongly influenced their taste in music and access to music. All these examples, however, should not make us think that those individuals with enough social dominance as to change existing tastes in a particular school made their taste up out of nowhere, only from their independent aesthetic judgement. Generally, they were also part of networks of personal relations that influenced them. One interviewee explained how he got interested in DJ Kun through his brother, and then he influenced his friends ('Lo empezaron a escuchar a través de mi'). The boy in the Catalan School who 'converted' many of his schoolmates to punk, was in his turn influenced by a friend from his primary school (who was at the time of the fieldwork in another school and apparently did not listen to punk anymore). The Afro-Caribbean interviewee who introduced garage to his school had first heard about it from one of his friends outside the school. Another leader who influenced others' taste in music, in this case in the White School, was defined as follows by a friend of his: 'Well, If David... David hear a new band, on CD or something like that, having heard of it, and we all will listen to it, because we like the same music, so often if he likes it I'm gonna like it... David is probably the big influence'. David himself explained his own pathway through musical geographies with an unusual reflexivity on his influences and changes:

David: Mmm... I suppose I started after pop music and stuff, and gradually it got more...

Roger: Where did you take it from? TV, radio, school?

David: Mmm... parents really. And friends, yeah.

Roger: And what kind of music?

David: Well, they like 60s music from their time and classical music as well, so I've always sort of listened to all that.

Roger: And you like both?

David: Yeah. And then I just sort of... as I've grown older I developed my own taste.

Roger: How do you remember doing that? And when?

David: Mmm... when I sort of... teenager...

Roger: Primary or secondary school?

David: Secondary school, I developed my own taste.

Roger: Was it important the change to secondary school?

David: Yeah, I think so. Yes, because it's when you start becoming more independent and deciding what do you like rather than other people...

Roger: Had you bought records before that?

David: Yeah, I've sort of always bought music.

Roger: Do you remember your first records?

David: No. It was pop music I suppose...

Roger: Which?

David: Mmm... I can't remember.

Roger: Was it chart music?

David: Sort of, yeah. Popular music that lots of people like it. (...) I don't listen to them anymore, so I got rid of it.

Roger: OK, and then you went to secondary school and started to develop your own taste... Which taste was it?

David: Mmm... went into a more, away from pop into rock and stuff.

Roger: But your parents like rock, no?

David: Mmm...

Roger: Or more classical?

David: More classical. I started liking stuff from the 60s, like the Beatles, and the Kings, and stuff.

Roger: And you don't like it?

David: No, that's my parents who like that. They don't like so much the modern stuff. They like the old stuff, yeah. The 60s and stuff.

Roger: And then your taste... what did you start liking?

David: Mmm... the Beatles, the Kings, stuff like that, and then Nirvana, some modern stuff as well.

Roger: And do you remember when you heard about it? Did your friends get into it at the same time or...?

David: Sort of, yeah. I heard basically the Beatles from my parents, and 60s... Bands from the 60s from my parents and then... Other bands just heard about them, the radio and stuff.

Roger: Do you watch Top of the Tops now, for example?

David: Not anymore. I watched it before. I don't. Yeah... I mean, I've been to music festivals and stuff, to watch music...

Roger: When did you go to your first music festival?

David: Mmm... four or three years ago.

Roger: With friends from the school?

David: Not at this school, just friends from out of the school. People older than me as well.

Roger: (...) How did you meet them?

David: Through music really, through playing in a band with my clarinet...

Roger: Classical music?

David: Yeah.

In comparison to most interviewees' serious difficulties in expressing or publicly acknowledging how they had shifted from one taste to another, David's articulated reflexivity is remarkable. Music is generally thought of as a matter of 'personal' preference, and making explicit external influences is not something young people normally do. Most young people, as we have repeatedly stated, have an opaque and imprecise perception of musical geographies, which implies that their creative cultural production is intuitive rather than planned, practical rather than systematically strategic. With regard to musical geographies and also their homological relation with social hierarchies, the taken-for-granted, opaque character of young people's knowledge was particularly acute. On more than one occasion, interviewees verbalised typifications that they had never consciously

considered, particularly in relation to the imbrication between taste in music and different social hierarchies. Even some of the adult interviewees working in the political economy of music were surprised at some of their answers, and noted that they had not previously thought about these matters. A clear example is offered by the interviewee who had just shifted from liking *màkina* music to getting strongly interested in Offspring. He recalled having only recently become aware of the ‘coincidence’ (‘no se si es casualidad’) of taste in music and linguistic practice:

Roger: ¿Crees que a los que hablan más catalán les gusta igual la *màkina* y todo esto?

Jesús: Yo veo que un poco diferente, puede ser que le guste. Por ejemplo, la gente [catalana] que conozco no le gusta tanto la *màkina* como a los españoles. O a la gente que conozco [que habla catalán] les gusta más bien la música... pues... la que te he dicho... esta Offspring y eso... Pero esto no se si es casualidad o... (...)

Roger: ¿Y de dónde los conoces?

Jesús: No, por el barrio, conozco a varia gente que habla catalán así. (...) Si. Por la calle y no sé. A uno le pregunté, “¿Te gusta la música *màkina*?” y [me dijo:] “No, no, no”. Y le pregunté a tres o cuatro, y no sé si es casualidad, pero... [todos me dijeron lo mismo], no sé...

The same ‘surprise’ was shown by a male interviewee in Birmingham, who, after distinguishing the inclination of white girls for boy bands from that of Afro-Caribbean girls for r’n’b, garage and hip hop, exclaimed with surprise: ‘Yes really! I’d never realised that until today!’. Another example of the opacity of musical geographies and their articulation with the imbricated social hierarchies is the belief of many interviewees that they no longer liked boy and girl bands not because they had, as listeners, grown older, but because this type of band was no longer fashionable. Their perception was that age had nothing to do with their reduced commitment to boy and girl bands, but it clearly did. Neither musical geographies nor their homological relation with imbricated social hierarchies were fully apprehended. The Asian girl in the Mixed School who had not even heard of garage, the most popular music in the school, is naturally a good example of it. As we have seen when analysing the importance of the mediascape, she was aware that an important amount of symbolic work had to be done through magazines, TV shows, radio stations, films, shops and other sources of informations like older cousins.

The opacity of musical geographies was linked to the general belief in individual autonomy – in the fact that taste in music was dependent on an individual’s idiosyncrasies. As we have already pointed out, the paradox – pointed out by Miles (2000) – is that young people tend to think that *everyone but themselves* is influenced by fashion and consumer culture, particularly as they start to have a sense of ‘maturity’, when they are about 16 or 17 years old.

Although we could draw an analytical distinction between youngsters who have an important influence on other youngsters’ taste in music and others who just accommodate to what they perceive to be expected of them, the reality is that individuals are in fact always somewhere in between, in the midst of the practical

and diffuse way in which young people make sense of musical geographies and youth hierarchies. Individual idiosyncrasies can arise out of a creative negotiation of the taste in music, but also because of personal accident or the simultaneous influence of different networks of personal relations and mediated symbolic forms. The many alternative pathways and intermediate positions shown by interviewees make it clear that these idiosyncrasies are an important variable to take into account. Several examples beautifully illustrate this: one interviewee got interested in the Chemical Brothers through a game on his Play Station; two others reported that their interest in rock music started because they played an instrument ('I like to play guitar, so I listen to some pieces of guitar music and I like it. It's a nice track...'); a girl who basically liked boy bands also liked Queen's music because her music teacher played it once at school and then she saw it on '*Los 40 Principales*'; a boy in the Periphery School, who mainly liked *mákina* music, started to like rap and hip hop a year and a half before the interview because he heard a couple of songs from a friend and then started to listen to it; other interviewees claimed to have started to like anti-commercial music because they listened to it on the radio, or a club, and then liked it. An Afro-Caribbean boy who liked rock music, finally, explained his 'deviation' as follows: 'This is why I'm different. Because I think... if you like to play an instrument, you respect the music more').

In addition to the importance of personal accident produced by chance and multiple possible combinations, we must remember that social control mechanisms are not strong enough to avoid personal idiosyncrasies (they are not, it has been said, electrified fences). Those who 'deviate' from what is expected will doubtless often need to put up with many jokes, teasing or even difficulties in socialising, but they can also cope with them and even reach a more than acceptable degree of respect. In the following example, Sebastian did not participate very much in his classmates' social life, and had a taste in music that was not regarded as 'acceptable' in his secondary school:

Sebastian: Desde pequeño. Me gusta Celine Dion desde que la oí hasta, hasta ahora.

Roger: Y eso que te guste, porque que le gustaba a tus padres o?

Sebastian: No, la oí en, oía su voz por la radio y, y yo decía: "Esta música me gusta". Pero no sabía quien la canta. Un día fuimos con mi prima a casa de su amiga y ella me dijo que le gusta mucho y me enseñó sus cintas. Y cuando las puso, yo vi que era la misma cantante que a mí me gustaba. Y desde entonces la escucho siempre. Mariah Carey también.

He was from an East-European country, and basically focused his social life around his family and girlfriend. Although he claimed to be 'isolated' from the surrounding musical geographies and even social hierarchies, as if he did not need to negotiate them, he seemed to receive an acceptable level of respect in the school. He represents an extreme example of the fact that even when pathways through taste in music were strongly marked, individuals made choices and, depending on

their particular biographies, traced particular trajectories that deviated from expectations. The interviewees expressed many changes in the music they liked, and these changes did not always follow expectations – or, more accurately, expected pathways. One girl in Barcelona, for instance, started liking rock'n'roll and then shifted to the Backstreet Boys, a very unusual development. The reason is that she was first influenced by her brother and afterwards by her school friends. The example is illustrative of the importance of the significant networks of social relations through which young people develop their taste in music. Depending on the network of social relations in which young people carried out their search for acceptance and respect, they had to adjust to different expectations.

It is becoming clear that young people's pathways are not rigid through a monolithically institutionalised set of expectations, but a complex confluence of influences and personal reactions to symbolic forms. In this thesis, however, the focus of attention is being placed on the social interactions, on young people's search for respect, mediated by musical forms. A boy in Birmingham explained how after being seen as a '*boffin*' in year 7 and 8, he acquired a more youthful hair-style, a 'sense of dress', and a taste for pop music, and felt more accepted and self-confident because of this. These modifications in his lifestyle were the tools through which he adjusted to his surrounding expectations, the expectations in the network of personal relations in which he wanted to be respected. Particular friends or relatives and media consumption were indeed fundamental in mediating young people's access to the meanings configuring musical geographies. Any of them – friends, relatives, media – can initiate significant changes in young people's pathways through musical geographies, and the unpredictable combination of all these different influences in each case leads to a notable diversity of individual pathways. One more example will illustrate the shifts and varied influences that some young people experienced in relation to their taste in music:

Joan: (...) A casa meva, què s'escoltava? Jo que sé. Com a molt música clàssica. El meu pare devia tenir discos de *vinilo* però no me'ls posava mai.

Roger: De música clàssica, vols dir?

Joan: De música clàssica i de *lo* que ell tenia quan era jove. (...) Després la meva germana [gran]... (...) també. Més o menys hem escoltat *lo* mateix. Ara [escolta música] així de música electrònica... Doncs home... Vull dir [que] així de música ella també n'ha escoltat molt i ara ha sigut quan així, comentant sobre música electrònica i tot això, doncs també li agrada. (...) *Bueno*. ella ja me n'anava ensenyant. Em deia: "Escolta això, escolta això".

Roger: I abans t'anava més la música rock. Deies també que escoltaves rock, *heavy*... *Heavy* també?

Joan: *Heavy* també.

Roger: Com què?

Joan: Marilyn Manson. Després clàssics com el Led Zeppelin. (...)

Roger: I quan vas canviar? (...)

Joan: És que tampoc l'escoltava molt. (...)

Roger: Quin curs era?

Joan: Buf! Jo que sé... Als sis o set anys.

Roger: I ja et vas comprar això! [T'ho vas comprar] perquè ho havies sentit per la tele?

Joan: No. Vaig dir... no sé si em van dir: "Música màkina". I jo: "Oh! Música màkina!".

Roger: Qui t'ho va dir?

Joan: Un amic. De l'escola.

Roger: I després com vas començar amb la música *heavy*, o rock?

Joan: Al tocar la guitarra.

Roger: Amb amics de la guitarra?

Joan: No. Com que toques la guitarra també t'agrada escoltar com sona. I després quan...

Roger: (...) Bé, la música que escoltes ara, com vas començar? A la ràdio, a la discoteca?

Joan: Anant a la discoteca. I... és que és això... També, abans, no sabia molt de música, i anava a discoteques que... ufl [meaning bad] (...)

Roger: Què més? Com vas començar a anar allà? Te'n recordes? Eren amics d'aquí?

Joan: *Bueno*, jo perquè tenia un amic meu que es va *desfassar* molt, anant de festa... I jo que sé, em deia: "*Vámonos de fiesta*".

This quote refers to the influence of his parents, sister and different friends, as well as of clubs and the media, on his pathway through musical and youth geographies. Joan keeps modifying his taste in music, adjusting it, through symbolic work, to different moments and influences. In general, personal relations were the main reason for changing tastes among the interviewees, so individual pathways through webs of friendship will be of great importance to understanding how musical and social geographies are produced. The following Moroccan boy, whose narrative shows the diverse influence of his relatives, youth club (*Casal*) friends and football teammates, provides a good example of the link between changing personal relations and changing pathways through musical geographies:

Roger: ¿En tu casa qué se escuchaba antes?

Karim: *Raï*.

Roger: ¿*Raï*?

Karim: *Raï* y otra música es que se llama "Said" ⁶.

Roger: Sí, ¿Te gusta a ti también?

Karim: Sí. Es muy *guapa*. La empecé a escuchar cuando tenía nueve años.

Roger: ¿En casa?

Karim: Sí, en casa.

Roger: Por tus hermanos, por tus padres...

Karim: Por mis padres.

Roger: ¿Y también les gustaba *raï* o no?

Karim: Sí, pero les gusta más la otra "Said". Y a mí me gusta también las dos cosas.

⁶ I have been unable to find any reference to a genre of Moroccan popular music called 'said' or anything similar. Karim might be referring to the very popular Moroccan artist Samira Said.

Roger: Luego el *rai* ¿cuándo empezaste? ¿También en casa o...?

Karim: En casa y con los amigos así a veces empezamos a escuchar música en el Casal o nos traemos cintas al colegio..

Roger: ¿Y a los amigos del Casal le gustaba más *rai*?

Karim: Sí, *rai*. (...) Sí. A los chavales así les gusta más *rai*. Y ¿la música pop? Hace tres años.

Roger: ¿Y cómo fue?

Karim: Cuando tenía trece o diez años. Con las Spice Girls y esto que empezó el grupo.

Roger: Y ¿qué fue? ¿Lo escuchaste en la tele? O algún amigo, en la calle, en el colegio...

Karim: No, en la radio y después lo vi por la tele, en el concierto que hicieron aquí en Madrid o en España.

Roger: ¿Y te gustó?

Karim: Y me gustó. Y la *màkina*, hasta el año pasado. Empezó a gustarme el año pasado mucho la música *màkina*.

Roger: Y ¿cómo o por qué fue?

Karim: Porque me invitaron a ir a una discoteca y fui con ellos y, no sé, me gustó bastante ¿sabes?

Roger: ¿Y que eran? ¿Amigos de aquí del Instituto o de la calle o...?

Karim: No, de la calle. (...) No, son amigos de mi equipo. Voy a un equipo de fútbol en [otro barrio de la ciudad].

All these examples make it clear that individual pathways and individual creative cultural production cannot be ignored. Personal accident and individual negotiation of existing meanings and expectations are a constituent part of young people's pathways, and by extension, through the aggregation of individual pathways, of musical and youth geographies. At the same time, however, we must also understand the importance of the processes of 'collective' cultural production. Even if it is not easy to see the border between 'individual' and 'collective' cultural production, it is obvious that negotiation and cultural production of meanings must be understood as a 'collective' enterprise. New meanings, even when introduced by a single individual, become relevant only when they are shared by – and make sense to – many individuals. Take, for instance, the case of the 'rockers' in the White School. The fact that they collectively resisted dominant meanings in the school enabled the group to culturally produce an autonomous social space. Similarly, in the Dual School, the *boffins* had built a positive image of themselves as the 'talented' and the 'intelligent', the ones with a 'future'. Indeed, contrary to the original spirit of the 50s and 60s rockers, they were in the White School the '*boffins*' of the school, the most academically oriented and the best behaved. As one teacher put it from her institutional point of view, they were the '*goodies*'. At the same time, playing music, and in the case of the rockers liking rock music, allowed them to work out a better self-image than simply being 'the *boffins*'. Rock music was, at that moment, very unpopular in the school, and they were, as seen above, teased and mocked because they liked it. The transgressive image of rock, however, allowed them to build a public presentation different from traditional

'*boffinness*', at least at a rhetorical level. When directly asked about the 'sex, drugs and rock'n'roll' stereotype, however, they clearly distanced themselves from it:

Roger: What about the image of rockers, and drugs, sex and rock'n'roll... and that kind of dangerous life? Do you associate in some sense... or do you like this kind of thing?

Paul: Some of the older bands... you know? [*condescending*]

Peter: Yeah, yeah...

Roger: No, I mean, yourselves, the fact of going out...

Peter: Yeah, there are some that... that sort of people, but...

Paul: In dance and trance there's more...

Peter: In rock there's nice people...

Paul: Nice...

Peter: It's like what you read in the papers, people taking ecstasy and dying on the dance floor...

Roger: And has rock any meaning of resistance, of being wild, eccentric, against authority... Is it important at all?

Peter: I mean, some of the older bands...

Roger: No, no, I mean you personally...

Paul: It's not really important for me. I'm not... fond of authority or anything like... but don't... like... no.

This quote shows that it is not only that they did not incorporate the transgressive image of rock'n'roll, but that they even made fun of the 'old bands' who did. In any case, rock music as a sociosymbolic form allowed them to build a youthful image while distinguishing themselves from the '*kevs*'. Moreover, when they started to get involved in the 'rock scene' and they realised that it was 'nice' and 'pacific', this enhanced their positive disposition towards it, since it matched their general stance in the school and their dismissal of '*kevs*' because of their rudeness. Through all this reflexive and (mostly) unreflexive symbolic work, they were collectively able to resist the negative image of '*boffins*' found in other schools and convert it, among themselves, into a positive one, even though it was a subcultural set of meanings within the school. As Michael explained, the same collective construction of an alternative set of dispositions was carried out by his group in the same school: a group of people who liked pop music but strongly disliked the '*kevs*'. He guessed that they were 'just a bunch of freaks', and immediately added that this was 'more interesting'. It was thus possible to observe alternative meanings. As long as you were sufficiently independent of others' judgements, and most of all, as long as you had a big enough group of friends supporting the alternative set of meanings, dominant meanings were very much negotiable.

To understand the process of cultural production we need to look at power relations and the capacity of individuals and groups to 'resist' dominant meanings, on the one hand, and to influence and impose their meanings, on the other. To understand any youth style, or any individual or collective location in youth geographies, it is very useful to ask what is thought of as its opposite. I am not talking about collective 'resistance' to dominant culture, but to localised and

socially situated resistance to meanings against which individuals and groups position themselves. Broadly speaking, the rockers were against the '*kevs*' with their 'tough', 'consumerist' and 'counter-school' dispositions, whereas Michael's group of pop music fans in the same school were against the '*kevs*' because of their 'toughness' but not because of their 'consumerism'; the '*kevs*' themselves were probably against middle-class niceness and Afro-Caribbean and Asian challenges; *màkina* style was to a great extent developed against (what was perceived as) middle-class snobbery and Catalan, whereas garage and 'black music' taste was developed against 'white' and 'middle-class' centrality and active racism; and so on. Much of this resistance had to do with imbricated hierarchies of generalised advantage, ethnicity or gender, but this connection must be analysed in the light of the socially situated everyday tradition of meaning. It is in the context of interpersonal hierarchies and typified youth styles that these game of positions and oppositions is developed.

All of these diverse cultural productions needed collective power to become institutionalised in a given context, both in terms of their political economy and the actual individuals that made them. We have already analysed the importance of group solidarity in negotiating racist and ethnic discrimination in those schools where physical aggression was more present. In the Mixed School and the Dual School, for instance, the important presence of Afro-Caribbean pupils and their social dominance within the school culturally produced an inverted hierarchy where white pupils started at the bottom of the ladder of popularity. We have also seen the case of a group of girls in the Dual School who liked pop, a taste despised by the dominant groups in the school, but collectively were happy and proud of their subordinate position in the school. Once any cultural set of meanings and practices was institutionalised and had its own social control mechanisms, it was subject to conformism or resistance from individuals.

The point is that the changing balance of followers of different music genres and artists – or the changing balance of meanings attached to different music genres and artists – is the result of the aggregation of all individual and collective negotiations in the context of given power relations – the imbrication of hierarchies in youth social space. Meanings are always on the move. Take, for instance, the words of this boy: '[garage] was black... and then whites starting listening to it... (...) and it has spread now'. This change means that it is not as 'black' as it used to be, and its meanings are thus also modified. In terms of popularity, what at one moment is 'peripheral' or 'underground' can become 'central' or 'commercial' in a few months, keeping or modifying the meanings it carries. And what is now central can quickly go out of fashion. In a given context, the most popular sound can be 'commercial' or 'anti-commercial'. This would be the case of *màkina* in Barcelona or garage in Birmingham, which, in spite of their commercial success, keep an anti-commercial edge that gives them street credibility. Ongoing changes naturally make musical and social geographies more opaque and diffuse. One boy in the Catalan School, after explaining his pathway from punk to ska, heavy and then techno music, when asked whether there are

many heavy and punk fans who strongly dislike any type of electronic music, replied that this was true, 'Però cada cop menys; tot i així les coses es barregen molt, últimament...'. He likes heavy and techno music at the same time, a combination that would have been unthinkable five years before the interview. Interestingly, he does not like current metal music ('No, el *heavy* d'ara no m'agrada, gens ni mica, és *metal industrial*, *bueno*, bàsicament es fa això i, *bueno*... els barregen amb *rap*; a mi aquestes vies em sobren moltíssim').

This ongoing negotiation and cultural production of musical and youth geographies is mediated by the artefacts provided by the market, which play an active role in shaping them. As well as the centrality of personal relations in the development of young people's taste in music, its material support were the commodified artefacts and places – analysed in *Part II* – through which it was realised. A mainstream or a late-night underground radio show, the existence of a pirate radio station, the organisation of music labels in magazines, records shops or radio-formulas, the existence of a particular club night in the city, the strategy of big major labels in hitting the charts, or the presence of certain magazines in the newsagents, also had an impact on how individual pathways through musical and youth geographies developed. As a result of the dialectics between the political economy and young people's negotiation of meanings in their everyday life, taste in music is constantly produced and re-produced. All together constitute what I have attempted to analyse in this thesis, that is, *the process of cultural production, through musical commodities, of a certain way of experiencing both social distances and inequalities and our own pathways through them.*

CONCLUSIONS: CONTEMPORARY COMMON CULTURE

The starting point of this thesis was to analyse the process of cultural production, through music commodities, of a certain way of experiencing social geographies and our own pathways through them. This means that instead of focusing on musical forms or the aesthetic relationship between young people and music, the object of attention has been the 'cultural production' of (some of) those meanings around music mediating young people's experience of their social world. This biased approach to music has brought to the surface a rich range of social implications of taste in music in young people's everyday social interactions. By leaving aside the active role of different unique symbolic forms in producing different effects on listeners, as well as many other relevant aspects of young people's musical experience, we have been able to look at taste in music as a cultural production itself. By doing so, I will argue, a new insight can be gained into the social logics of contemporary common culture.

In this concluding chapter I will firstly make a brief overview of the journey that has been made in the preceding pages. Secondly, I will reflect on the comparison of the empirical information in both cities in order to discuss the global logic of cultural production. Thirdly, I will venture into a theoretical discussion of the centrality of 'coolness', in contemporary commodified common culture, for the understanding of the complex imbrication of hierarchies in everyday life. And fourthly and finally, I will discuss the possible threads of research and theoretical discussions that might follow from this contribution.

A circular journey

The title of the introduction, 'The Lugbara of Uganda', is a reminder of the social and historical relevance of what is analysed in this thesis. Although young people's organization of their social world is not so different from the Lugbara's organization of theirs, the relative autonomy and commodified character of youth geographies make them idiosyncratic and they therefore require further analysis. This is what has been done in the light of the theoretical and methodological framework specified in the three opening chapters (*Part I: Musical forms and musical geographies*).

The approach to the *cultural production of musical and social geographies* has been developed through a circular strategy. This means that 'musical geographies', understood as the (culturally produced) distances and proximities between musical forms, have been approached through the empirical chapters from multiple complementary – and overlapping – perspectives ranging from the decision-making process of those trying to make a profit out of them to young people's experience of social hierarchies when appropriating commodified symbolic forms, from the distribution of meanings through networks of personal relations to the role of mainstream media in enabling those meanings to transcend localised face-to-face contexts.

Attention has been firstly directed to the carriers of musical traditions, that is, the supports through which the meanings organising musical geographies are

made available to young people from generation to generation (Chapter 4: *Carrying, actualising and mediating musical traditions*). The tradition of meanings around music analysed in this thesis is passed from generation to generation neither through a merely oral tradition (the Lugbara) nor through official and formalised social institutions (academic knowledge). Instead, it is organised and introduced to new generations through a combination of personal face-to-face (very) informal meanings – linguistic and sensuous – and commodified anonymous materials subject to the rapid succession of fads.

These two main types of carriers have been analytically distinguished: on the one hand, *social networks of personal relations outside the market*, and on the other hand, *commodified 'mediascapes', artefacts, places and events*. Although there is a considerable empirical overlapping between them, the analytical distinction helps to distinguish the importance, in the dissemination of knowledge and meanings about musical geographies, of both personal face-to-face relations and commodified materials. First, networks of personal relations configure the web of connections through which musical geographies are culturally produced, negotiated and transmitted across time and space in face-to-face interactions. The combination of family, school, street and other networks set up the way meanings are disseminated. Two schools can have different musical geographies, but if pupils of the two schools interact because they are cousins, because they hang around together in the street, or because they play in the same football team, they will need to mutually adjust – explicitly or implicitly – their typifications of musical geographies in order to be able to communicate, *to be together*. The result of the aggregation of all these crossed mutual adjustments throughout the multiple networks of personal relations is what I term 'typified youth (musical) styles', that is, a set of typifications shared not only by youngsters that personally know each other in a given local space of face-to-face interaction, but by contemporaries that will never interact with each other. Musical geographies are part of this.

Second, commodified materials are necessarily the mediators of such meanings. Without them, musical geographies would just not exist as they do. The commodity form, and not academia, is what enables contemporary popular music to transcend the personally transmitted – in the sense of face-to-face – tradition. Commodified materials enable contemporary musical forms to be heard, possessed, bought, accumulated, exchanged, danced to and embodied as they are. The current meanings circulating across networks of personal relations *presuppose* and *are based upon* the existence of commodified materials and discourses. These materials, moreover, because they transcend the localised context of face-to-face interactions (record and media materials, and to a certain extent nightlife as well, are experienced as anonymous sources rising above networks of personal relations), further accentuate the supra-local character of musical geographies. An isolated individual can get to know, listen to or be impressed by a musical form in an anonymous relationship with a record, a radio program, a best-selling list, a concert and, increasingly, the internet. Individuals in different localities (across the globe) thus

sometimes come into contact with musical forms not in personal relations – nor institutions like the school or academia – but through the media.

Finally, the last section of Chapter 4 has analysed musical genre categories as central co-ordinates of musical geographies, as landmarks mapping out the expectations of young consumers, music-makers and those working in the music industry. In order to make sense of the endless stock of sounds, musical genres allow people to organize them in categories that are related to each other – however precariously – in sets of (musical) distances and proximities, which in their turn can be, and often are, homologically related to social geographies.

The next angle from which musical geographies have been approached is their political economy, understood as the logic of production of commodified materials mediating them (Chapter 5: *The political economy of musical geographies*). Through the marketplace, musical forms are objectivated and organised in actual records, selling lists, magazine reviews or news, as well as music club and bar sessions. The industry around music builds symbolic materials which are shared by different localities thanks to the mediation not of face-to-face relations, but the structuration of consumption through commodified 'mediascapes', artefacts, places and events. The different production, distribution and promotion strategies of these materials are thus of central importance in understanding the cultural production of musical geographies. And this is precisely what has been analysed throughout this chapter: the way those working in the music industry understand and decide upon their way of trying to make a profit out of music. Through its different sections, we have seen the active and often powerful role of the political economy of music in the cultural production of musical geographies, from the very distinction between 'commercial' and 'underground' to the gate-keeping mechanisms used by big corporations; from the social closure and policing strategies in nightlife premises to the organization of music labels in record stores; from the different circuits of change of different musical genres to the strategy of market segmentation. The chapter, nevertheless, has also highlighted the industry's trial-and-error strategy and responsiveness to young people's buying decisions.

We have then turned to young people's experience of both musical geographies (Chapter 6: *Musical geographies*) and their articulation of imbricated social hierarchies and homologies (Chapter 7: *Imbricated hierarchies and homologies*). Parallel to the importance of commodities in transcending local face-to-face contexts, networks of personal relations remain fundamental in determining the actual meanings young people attach to the surrounding (commodified) musical forms. Records, nightclubs and media spaces provide young people with the materials they will appropriate in their personal relations. The fact that these materials are shared at a higher level (local, national or even global) is a very important feature of contemporary popular culture, but the appropriation takes place in the context of face-to-face relations. To dig into this aspect we have first described the organisation – and young people's experience – of musical distances and proximities in the two cities. Second, the longest chapter of the thesis has analysed the way young people make sense of the homologies between musical geographies and

(imbricated) social hierarchies. To do so we have focused on the meaning of music as part of young people's presentation vis-à-vis others, and therefore embedded in their experience of social hierarchies.

We have seen that different tastes in music, when displayed by young people in actual social relations, signified elements that had to do with popularity, typified youth styles, generalised advantage, ethnicity, linguistic and national identity, immigrant labelling, gender, sexuality, modernity, cosmopolitanism, etc. All these meanings homologically connecting musical geographies and social hierarchies cannot be empirically isolated from each other, since they are in fact 'imbricated' in everyday social relations. This imbrication is culturally produced and re-produced across generations, partially through taste in music, that is, through the cultural production of homologies between these imbricated hierarchies and musical geographies.

These two chapters have shown the objectified presence, in young people's process of growing up, of a tradition of meanings organising their musical and social experience in a set of distances, proximities and homologies that map out musical forms and social hierarchies. This rather static and reductionist analysis of objectified geographies and imbrications has been complemented (Chapter 8: *Negotiating the search for respect*) with the dynamic analysis of young people's struggle for respect throughout their pathways across youth social space. In this final chapter, the centre of attention has been placed on the tension between, on the one hand, the objectified musical and social geographies imposed on individuals through networks of personal relations – and their social control mechanisms – and commodified artefacts and, on the other, the creative symbolic work carried out by young people on the basis of these objectified meanings. This more dynamic analysis has made it possible to discuss how the meanings of musical traditions are culturally re-produced from generation to generation.

This circular journey around musical geographies has thus approached them from the perspective of their carriers, their political economy, their objectified meanings, their homological relation with imbricated social hierarchies and their cultural re-production in young people's pathways through youth. Each of those perspectives could have probably been a whole thesis, but simultaneously analysing all of them in the same empirical work opens up the possibility of broadening the theoretical interest – at the price, nevertheless, of losing in-depth accuracy in each of them. In order to take advantage of this possibility, rather than summarising or going back to what has already been said, I will take a step backwards to look at the whole picture.

Common culture across borders

The empirical analysis has provided evidence against common portraits of youth styles as the result of either the culture industry's manipulation of young people *or* individual and collective creative and free use of commodities. Both elements are determinant in the cultural production of contemporary common culture. Although the common cultural tradition of meanings shared by young people is

based upon the materials provided by the market *from above*, the truth is that young people have an active influence on what they are provided with (at least in validating or not what is on offer through their acts of consumption), and also, more importantly, that the meanings they attach to the commodified materials are largely learnt, negotiated and disseminated in face-to-face interactions. In this sense they are partially subterranean, not directly represented in the media nor in the commodified artefacts themselves, but hidden from the public gaze.

Subterranean common cultural production has always been important. The tension between continuity and innovation of this 'hidden' cultural stream can be exemplified by the evolution of slang. If we compare, for instance, Barcelona's current slang with the argot of one hundred years ago as it was recorded by the novel *La xava* (2003 [1910])¹, we find both change and permanence. Juli Vallmitjana depicts Barcelona's *lumpen* of the beginning of the 20th Century speaking in a vivid Catalan argot – with a strong gypsy base – which is now nonexistent (the argot currently used in criminal subcultures and the slang spoken by youth subcultures is overwhelmingly Spanish). Nevertheless, among this subcultural vocabulary recorded by Vallmitjana, we find words which one century later are still used or known by young people, some in the same or similar way ('*pasma*', '*quinar*', '*pasta*', '*xungo*', '*piltre*', '*pirar*', '*menda*') or in a notably modified ('*pringar*', '*pillar*') or different sense ('*camelar*', '*nanai*', '*manguis*', '*mangar*'). Others, finally, have been incorporated to everyday ordinary spoken language and are not slang anymore ('*cabrejar-se*', '*jalar*', '*clapar*', '*adinyar*'). The interesting point of this persistence of some words is that they are subculturally transmitted in the streets, and not by teachers, books or even parents. Slang has only recently started to be recorded, and is always learnt practically without the intervention of any school or adult influence. This means that misunderstandings cannot be solved through any Academic authority (a dictionary) and can more easily lead to modification of meaning, so it is not strange that several of the contemporary words that were already recorded in *La xava* have now significantly different meanings.

Taste in music and musical – as well as youth social – geographies are a cultural production similar to slang, with the peculiarity that they are *inherently* mediated by commodified materials. In other words, this tradition is not merely subterranean, since it receives the powerful top-down influence of, and is partially objectivated in, those commodified materials and representations provided by the market. Even if the meaning of these materials is ultimately produced in their local appropriation in face-to-face personal relations, it is also important to acknowledge that commodified musical forms make an active impact on meaning-making processes. Musical forms are not all alike, that is, they have different objective possibilities – not 'essential', but resulting from their 'integral circuits' of meaning. This is why those working in the political economy of music – in the production

¹ I am using here the common distinction between *slang* and *argot* as it is made by Pujolar, that is, where the former is 'used to refer to the most widespread forms of unconventional speech and the latter to the forms of speech of the lowest social strata, petty delinquents and prison population' (2000: 155).

and distribution of these materials – have an active and powerful role with political consequences in culturally producing musical geographies and articulating local hidden meanings and commodified musical forms – as seen in Chapter 5. They have a strong influence through their decisions upon the production of what in Chapter 4 has been termed ‘Commodified mediascapes, artefacts, places and events’. Nevertheless, the industry is always highly responsive – much more than academia – to its customers, since sales and profit figures are dependent on it. This means that they do not only pay central attention to what is liked and disliked by the public (consumers), but also that they try to make sense of them through (grounded) theoretical explanations, including a portrait of the profile of their real and potential customers. This is made through personal experience, which includes past failures and successes as well as both personal and anonymous feedback from real and potential customers. Not only sales figures, but also qualitative feedback from friends, acquaintances or anonymous customers (through personal conversations, systematic survey-research and many other mechanisms) offer the possibility of gaining access to the way buyers make sense of their products. In their attempt to combine what they know about the audience and the way they market their products, they are implicitly attempting to match visible materials and hidden meanings. We are not merely referring to those working in big corporations, since the role of those involved in local musical geographies, often on an amateur basis, play a particularly important role as nodal influential points in local networks of personal relations. They are, in fact, key mediators between the hidden stream of meanings and the production of visible musical forms and representations. Local musical geographies are sustained on a significant web of professional, semi-professional and straightforwardly amateur entrepreneurs.

To discuss the tension between hidden and visible meanings and representations, as well as between local and global symbolic forms, we can close the circle of our journey by looking at the whole picture, that is, comparing the realities in Birmingham and Barcelona. In our goal of understanding *young people’s process of cultural production, through music commodities, of a certain way of experiencing social geographies and their own pathways through them*, comparing the empirical results in the two cities generates an interesting perspective: we find how young people’s ‘common culture’ makes sense of existing local musical geographies and social hierarchies and injuries *at the same time* that it connects them to a broader (global) shared social and cultural space. In order to review the empirical analysis to understand *what is shared* and *what is not* in young people’s musical geographies and social hierarchies in the two cities, I will focus on three different aspects: musical forms; meanings related to musical and youth geographies; and the logics of production of musical geographies.

First, if we are to talk about shared musical forms across national borders, a good start is the most obviously commercial side of what in Chapter 5 has been called the ‘music industry conglomerate’. As has been noted, four – five at the moment of the fieldwork – record companies collectively accounted for around 75 percent of the record market. These ‘major’ companies, and the conglomerate of

interests organised around them – radio stations, concerts, clubs, etc. – have a radically different strategy and logics of survival from small underground businesses: although they both need to make profit or at least break even to survive, they differ in their economies of scale, their negotiation power, the risk they can take in promotion and advertising investment, and their capacity to push minority musical forms. The result is that in Birmingham and Barcelona major companies overwhelmingly monopolised mainstream media and distribution visibility, and that independent businesses were much more capable of breaking and pushing new and minority sounds. Big corporations, as a result of their attempt to maximise profit and rationalise their production and marketing strategies on a global scale, tend to downplay, or at least strategically modulate, *annoying* local meanings.² Because of this, the most clearly commercial – and global – centre was somewhat ‘placeless’, in the sense that local meanings were broad enough to allow communication – local meanings understood as more or less explicit references in the music, either the lyrics or the sounds, or in their connotations and homologies in localised musical geographies. Since their goal is to produce musical forms for a broad (transnational) audience, they ideally sell musical forms appreciated by as many buyers as possible worldwide, and particularly in the most well-off areas. Musical forms with localised references and meanings could be an obstacle for this relatively placeless image unless they referred to the cultural centre of popular music, that is, the United States and the United Kingdom. *Placelessness*, therefore, is in fact an implicit and taken-for-granted general framework of US and UK Western capitalist consumer culture. Popular culture is full of local references to this framework, from the ‘Liverpool’, ‘Manchester’ or ‘Bristol’ sounds, to the link between blues and Chicago, or country and Memphis, or the mythological authenticity of American popular culture and geography (Route 66, California, New York, Hawaii, L.A., Miami). Although in transnational musical forms the cultural references to these places need to be generic enough to allow identification and recognition on the part of consumers of other countries, the truth is that the US and UK visibility beyond their borders makes them not only familiar to the world audience, but also a powerful source of authenticity. What does not match this implicit cultural framework is generally encapsulated under the ‘world music’ category.

In the fieldwork, the most obviously commercial materials, that is, boy and girl bands like the Spice Girls, Backstreet Boys or Westlife and very popular solo artists like Britney Spears, Christina Aguilera or Jennifer Lopez, were the most clearly placeless – always within a Western capitalist English-speaking taken-for-granted context – and classless. They are the paradigm of musical forms produced from the core of the music industry with a clear commercial intention. They are not perceived as grassroots artists that ‘make it’, but acts which originate from their very beginning from the industry. As we have seen throughout the empirical

² See for a good illustration of this, the dilemmas faced by Shakira after achieving success singing in English (‘Shakira, the crossover queen’, in *The Economist*, July 21, 2005).

analysis, many of the artists that interviewees most clearly identified as 'commercial', and thus operating as the landmarks of the commercial core of musical geographies, were the same in both Birmingham and Barcelona. Nonetheless, not all boy and girl bands were equally present in both cities, since many British and English-speaking acts which were very popular in Birmingham (A1, Boyzone, Five, S-Club 7) were only marginally *present*, if at all, in Barcelona. The relevant point is, however, that the meanings and homologies of these acts were similar in the two cities, in the sense that boy and girl bands, as symbolic markers of the commercial centre, were not only homologically related to younger ages, effeminacy and lack of (sub)cultural distinction, but also as distant from minority and peripheral musical forms and youth styles.

This meant that, in some sense, these more commercial – and thus visible – musical forms facilitated social integration, in that they offered an easy mechanism of social participation to those entering musical and youth geographies: since they represented the (conventionally) commercial and fashionable centre of youth and musical geographies, and since access to them was easy and open (they were everywhere), they facilitated becoming *part of the flow of the times*. We have seen many examples of interviewees of younger ages, minority groups, an 'immigrated' background, or with a working class origin, using commercial popular music as an access to the social mainstream (a nice, classless and rather neutral social centrality in youth social geographies).

Nevertheless, not all commercially influential musical forms lacked clear social and geographical meanings. Major record companies also produce musical forms which, while appealing to a majority audience, are full of local and social connotations. They could be either commercial acts designed by the industry or artists that just 'make it' after local success and even long careers. In these cases when artists raised in specific local musical geographies *make it* and become popular throughout their country or even the world, or when commercially originated products incorporate local meanings in one sense or another, an interesting cultural process is happening: some face-to-face meanings of their local musical geographies, when incorporated and objectivated into commodified musical forms, can transcend their hidden and local dimension. As soon as a song achieves high visibility and arrives in a commodified and anonymous form to other neighbourhoods, cities or even countries, it transcends its original networks of personal relations. Although these local meanings are often substantively lost or modified in the process of commoditisation, they can nevertheless have some influence outside the context in which they were created. Examples of this are 'black' and 'working class' cultures. Once the industry institutionalises 'black music' sections and divisions (now 'r'n'b' music, although it has also been called 'urban' and, a few decades ago, 'race' music) in major record companies and record stores, or decides to market a band as a paradigm of 'working class authenticity', this allows some meanings of musical and youth geographies to be objectivated – in a particular way – in the symbolic forms it sells, both in commercial and alternative markets. 'Rap' music is an archetypal illustration: it was first disseminated across New York

through sound systems in parks, youth clubs, community centres and night-clubs. Then, when small record labels produced it on records, it was disseminated across the United States and then, alongside spectacular *breakdance* and *graffiti*, it reached the whole world through mainstream media communicating *the latest New York hype*. Some of the initial meanings in the Bronx and then other cities in the US, linked to contemporary Afro-American street culture, thus had an impact on other street – and non-street – traditions of meaning that have appropriated them around the world.

Thus the situation is that, around the more commercially successful acts in the 'core' of musical geographies, we find other very popular musical forms which are stylistically marked, in the sense that they do not signify the mainstream commercial centre but particular stylistic, social and sometimes geographical connotations. Examples of popular bands and artists who simultaneously occupied the concentric circles around the commercial core in both cities are Oasis or Eminem. Rather than originating from the commercial conglomerate, they can be understood as representing the 'commercial' (in the sense of popular and thus profitable) side of particular styles and scenes within musical geographies, in this case Brit pop and rap respectively. These artists' perceived authenticity was linked to meanings relating to specific localised musical and social geographies, although not in a way that made their reception difficult in other countries. This did not imply that these 'local' meanings and homologies were shared in different localities. On the contrary, this type of mainstream but stylistically specialised acts, not necessarily seen as part of the commercial centre but as the successful products of particular styles, had sometimes quite different connotations in the two cities. This was the case of 'black music' ('urban', 'r'n'b', 'rap', etc.) artists. Take the example of Craig David, who, after hitting the charts in the UK, first in his vocal participation with the UK garage act Artful Dodger and afterwards in his solo debut, *arrived* in Barcelona as a commercial urban-pop act. This implies that whereas in Birmingham he was part of the crossing-over of UK garage, and was thus connected – however mildly, or in a *whitened* sense – to the white-black articulation of meanings, in Barcelona those connotations were lost. Its integral circuit of meaning was significantly different. In Birmingham, young people made sense of r'n'b, rap and garage music, particularly underground but also commercial, in relation to its association to the Afro-Caribbean experience, whereas in Barcelona this was just unknown, and at the most it was related to 'black' culture as it was imagined through anonymous indirect knowledge (through the media) of the Afro-American experience in the United States. Another example of commercial acts having different meanings in the two cities is Enrique Iglesias. Before he sang in English, even though he was a huge commercial success in Spain as a teenybop artist, he was barely known in Britain, where he was placed in one of the hidden 'world music' shelves in record stores. Once he sang in English and was globally promoted through mainstream media visibility, he became well known in Birmingham as well, but had a different positioning from the one he had in Barcelona. In the latter, he was perceived

differently depending on the position in youth geographies: for some, for instance, he was a very popular mainstream 'local' (Spanish, but ethnically 'neutral') teenybop idol, whereas for others he was a distant 'Spanish-speaking' singer. In Birmingham, finally, he was a 'peripheral' Latin voice within the mainstream American-English pop music arena³.

Among these first concentric rings of very commercial artists surrounding the commercial centre, there were many acts which were not shared by the two cities. Many of the very successful acts in Birmingham were practically unknown, or very unpopular, in Barcelona, like for instance r'n'b and rap artists like Missy Elliot, Sisqo, Dr Dre or Gabrielle, or dance artists like Alice DJ. Since Birmingham was part of the 'cosmopolitan centre' and Barcelona of the 'parochial peripheries' of popular music, this was naturally more accentuated the other way around, so many artists near the commercial centre – very popular – in Barcelona were completely unknown in Birmingham. Bands and artists like Camela, La Oreja de Van Gogh or Estopa, while enjoying massive sales in Barcelona, Catalonia and Spain, did not cross the British border. These artists were 'commercial' in terms of sales, but were regarded as closer to some (decentered) musical and youth styles than to others. The case of Estopa deserves special mention, since they achieved astonishing sales figures while successfully projecting an image of 'working class authenticity'. In contrast to the boy and girl bands *which were not shared* by both cities but had the same, or a very similar, homological position in their respective musical and youth geographies, these locally commercial acts surrounding the commercial centre often articulated meanings and homologies which were specifically local. The exact connotations of Estopa, Dr Dre, Camela or Alice DJ were not incorporated into other parallel musical forms in the other city. They were specific to the localities in which they were popular, in that the cultural traditions behind 'black' or 'white' working-class experiences in Birmingham, or the 'Spanish immigrant' experience in Barcelona, were specific to these localities.

As we move from the commercial mainstream centre through the concentric circles and get closer to the minority underground acts, we find materials that are shared by the two cities and others that are not. Very local alternative and underground musical forms in Birmingham and Barcelona are naturally not known outside them, but there were minority circuits through which the most prominent underground and alternative musical forms did travel, particularly from the 'centre' (England) to the periphery (Catalonia), although on occasion also the other way around. In both Birmingham and Barcelona, underground scenes were often in touch, through alternative media and alternative distribution channels, or even visits, with musical forms created in distant places, particularly but not only in what were perceived as the culturally productive nodes like New

³ The case of Latin 'salsa' music provides another interesting example. Whereas in Birmingham it was part of a small but relatively popular 'exotic' dancing scene, in Barcelona it was linked, in its more pop oriented version, to a big commercial 'nice' working-class and Spanish-immigrant following.

York, Los Angeles, London or, in the case of Barcelona, Madrid. This partially global character of 'underground', 'alternative' or at least 'minority' materials is not always self-evident. In spite of being often distributed through alternative minority circuits – although the more popular manifestations often cross over and are thus co-opted by the majors – key minority musical forms are very influential in the development of local musical geographies around the world, and as happens with boy and girl bands, they operate as 'landmarks' – however invisible to most young people – of musical geographies across countries. In other words: they are, alongside very commercial materials, important markers of young people's participation in a cultural space transcending their localities.

Second, apart from these musical forms closer to the underground peripheries which were shared, we must also ask whether the same forms had similar or different meanings in different localities. If we pay attention to the 'genres', we find some with very – or partially – similar homologies in Birmingham's and Barcelona's musical geographies: this is the case of indie pop and 'arty' dance music, loosely connected in both cities to more or less 'avant-garde' and middle-class dispositions in youth social space, or punk and rock music, linked to an 'oppositional' but rather well-behaved, white, middle-class disposition, or like hardcore electronic music, mainly identified in both cities with working-class youngsters. Others, nevertheless, presented considerably different homologies, like ska music: whereas in Birmingham this was connected to the 'black' musical tradition, in Barcelona it was generally seen as a social marker of a *'catalufo'* or *'independentista'* position within youth geographies (and therefore relatively close to Catalan rock). To understand this we should trace back the appropriation of this Afro-Caribbean sound by punks and other white artists in England and its subsequent arrival in Catalonia, and its endogenous development there in an integral circuit of meaning over the last twenty years in – largely through Basque punk bands. Through this trajectory, ska has acquired localised meanings that differ, for instance, from the ones attached to hip hop. The result is that whereas in Birmingham hip hop and ska were seen as part of the same musical tradition, and were thus close in musical geographies, in Barcelona they were regarded as considerably distant. Sharing musical genre categories did not necessarily imply, therefore, that they had the same meaning in the two cities. Another illustration is the case of house and techno categories: as has been explained in Chapter 4, whereas in Birmingham 'house' was used as the general category for dance music, in Barcelona the general term, among the 'advanced music' followers, was 'techno' and, gradually, 'electronic music'. The articulation of different dance genres in local musical and youth geographies in the two cities was notably different, although there were some similarities as well.

When comparing musical geographies in the two cities, therefore, we find many resemblances as well as differences between them. Mainstream and minority territories shared some materials and meanings, but also had materials and meanings which were idiosyncratic to each of them. Whereas the commercial core signified participation in mainstream fashion and consumer culture in a very

similar way in both cities, as we move away from the more stereotypically 'commercial centre', even in its surrounding popular circles, young people tended to position themselves *against* the mainstream centre, and this often implied the articulation of socially marked local meanings. These meanings might be recognizable from other localities, but are distinctly local. The empirical chapters have shown many examples of localised materials only comprehensible in circumscribed contexts of interaction. Even when the same – or similar – materials were shared, they often carried or signified different meanings. Think, for instance, of the 'helter skelter' genre in Birmingham and the *màkina* one in Barcelona. Although they were both part of the shared trend of dance music, they stressed their uniqueness through particular 'categories' that only made sense in the light of local musical and youth geographies. We are dealing here with different 'objectifications' of particular local realities or homologies. The homology, in the White School in Birmingham, between 'helter skelter' music and '*kevs*', was unknown not only in Barcelona, but also in the other two Birmingham schools. And a similar thing happened with *màkina* (a category coined and broadly used in Barcelona, known in other parts of Spain, and practically non-existent in the rest of Europe⁴), which was homologically related to the adjectives '*pelado*' and '*cholo*', as well as to '*gitaneo*' music. In a similar way to the already mentioned identification of 'black music' with the Afro-Caribbean working-class experience in England, *màkina* and '*gitaneo*' music was identified with the immigrant, Spanish-speaking and working-class experience of young people in Catalonia.

Nevertheless, *màkina* music presented important similarities with helter skelter, not only in terms of the music (the 'harder' and 'whiter' side of electronic music), but also of its more general homology with generalised disadvantage and tough masculinities. We have the situation, therefore, that whereas '*gitaneo*' music was a local specificity of Spain, *màkina* could be regarded – in spite of its idiosyncratic development through Valencian (*bakalao*) and, subsequently, Catalan (*màkina*) clubs – as part of European and global trends in electronic music. *Màkina* music was thus simultaneously part of a global musical trend and a local cultural production articulating very locally specific meanings that had to do with an opposition to both '*Catalanness*' and 'extra-communitarian immigration' through its 'hard' and 'provocative' sound. These meanings, central to the organization of Barcelona's musical and youth geographies, would naturally be unknown to any youngster in Birmingham. We are talking about a set of homologies that do not generally appear in the media, nor are explicitly present in musical forms. On the contrary, they are the result of multiple face-to-face negotiations and dissemination of meanings in hidden sites of cultural production, even if these

⁴ Although in England, interestingly, it did enjoy some popularity in a few clubs and events in the North-East of England like Hangar 13 (<http://www.hangar-13.com/>) and others. According to the Wikipedia, it began after DJ Scott started his distribution company, MakinaUK, in 1999. See <http://www.happyhardcore.com/forums/> for some discussions among British fans about the style and the scene, including the differences between the North-East and the BCN styles (consulted January 2007).

negotiations are carried out through music commodities and sometimes even produce a sedimentation of the resulting homologies in ‘categories’ like ‘*kev*’ in Birmingham or ‘*cholo*’ or ‘*catalufo*’ in Barcelona – with a powerful impact on the production of not only cultural but also social distances and proximities

In spite of the local differences, the truth is that at both the commercial and underground poles there was a clear perception of being part of global musical geographies. This implied that young people in Birmingham and Barcelona shared a general cultural framework or co-ordinates, as well as a clear spatial hierarchy between the ‘cosmopolitan’ centres and the ‘parochial’ peripheries. The centrality in this cultural framework of the US and the UK, as the strongest focus of popular music production, implied that they were an endless source of exogenous influence on other countries’ – including each other’s – musical geographies. The parochial peripheries, on the contrary, had a much smaller impact on other countries’ popular music⁵. As seen in Chapter 7, within countries, localities are also organised in spatial hierarchies. In this sense, within the UK, Birmingham was subordinated to London, and although from the perspective of Barcelona it was clearly part of the ‘centre’, from the perspective of Birmingham, the city’s musical geographies were strongly influenced by London’s – and America’s – musical life. Needless to say, Birmingham’s social and cultural proximity to London, as well as its active contribution to the field of British popular music, made its subordination less obvious and asymmetrical than that experienced by young people in Barcelona.

We have the situation, again, where not only each local musical geography had musical forms of its own *coexisting* with musical forms shared with other local musical geographies, but also both idiosyncratic and shared musical forms mediated meanings and homologies that were *partially idiosyncratic and partially shared* with other nodes of this globally interconnected web of musical geographies. Thus, the question is the extent to which we could talk about a ‘global’ common culture. Even if we can go to a club anywhere in the world and listen to (many of) the same songs, this does not necessarily imply that we can correctly read its connotations in terms of ‘modernity’, ‘coolness’, ‘gender and sexual identities’ or ‘ethnic and class connotations’. To what extent do young people make sense of, and culturally produce, their musical geographies globally? The answer seems to be that *this ‘common culture’ exists in terms of the imagined connection to a shared cultural space, and broad co-ordinates organising the cultural production and articulation*

⁵ During the 90s, for instance, in England half of the number-one singles were from the UK, and 84% were from either the UK, the US or Ireland (<http://www.theofficialcharts.com/html/index.shtml>, consulted in 19th July 2005). In Spain, although the percentage of Spanish records (not singles) in the top-50 best-selling list has increased from 30% in 1993 to almost 80% in 2003 – during the years of the fieldwork it varied between 40 and 60% (Promusicae 2005) – the rest of the cake is hegemonically dominated by American and British artists. Whereas in Barcelona English music was very visible and had an aura of quality and hipness, in England promotion of Catalan artists or events was an exception (during 2000 I only recall seeing paid adverts of the Sónar Festival in British dance magazines, and one reference in *The Guardian’s* guide of Dublin’s 3345 crew all-dayer devoted to ‘Spanish clubbers’ paradise’, which was ‘not cheesy Ibiza, but super-hip Barcelona’ (‘The Guide’, *The Guardian*, February 26, 2000).

of musical and social geographies, but that its locally experienced form is idiosyncratically produced by local traditions of meanings and local musical forms. Young people make sense of musical geographies 'locally'; they not only have the perception that they are participating in a somewhat 'global' cultural space, but actually operate within a general framework of meaning which is globally shared. Rather than a 'global' cultural space, therefore, we would probably better describe musical geographies as a 'globally interconnected' web of local and national musical geographies, where trends were mainly originated from the English-speaking centre, visible to the peripheries through both the mainstream and the alternative music industry. Young people throughout the world pay attention to shared popular musical styles and trends, and they originate, or are at least 'validated', from the centre. This provides a *sense of sharing a cultural space* and thus *enables communication*, that is, their being together. At the same time, however, these global materials and meanings are always filtered and combined through, and appropriated by, local traditions of meanings and materials that constitute *barriers to communication or mutual understanding* between youngsters in different places. When we are in a foreign night-club, we might identify many, most or even all the songs played by the DJ, and we might feel familiar with the play of cultural and social interaction on the dance floor, but we will also find that there are many meanings and cultural codes that we cannot grasp, like for instance the homologies between taste in music and dress codes, dancing styles, flirting rituals or social background, as well as musical materials that are unknown to us. The patterns of interpretation, and the actual typified and sensuous meanings we carry with us, therefore, will be only partially useful to make sense of our being together with other youngsters.

The fact is, and this leads us to the third and final aspect that will be highlighted in relation to the comparison between Barcelona's and Birmingham's musical geographies, that these different local meanings and materials are created following a shared (global) logic of cultural production. This implies that even if each locality culturally produces its own musical forms, and its own homologies and articulations of shared musical forms, it does so largely by following a shared cultural pattern. Or putting it differently: *even if localised musical geographies have many local and hidden meanings differentiating them from others, they are part of global musical geographies not only because they share some or many of their musical forms and their attached meanings, but because they also share the same logic of popular cultural production.* The influence of the cosmopolitan centres on the peripheries, therefore, does not end in the exportation of musical materials and some of their attached meanings, but goes far beyond this, since it disseminates an entire logic of (popular) cultural production resulting from the historical evolution of youth cultures in the context of modern capitalist consumer culture. The relevance of this global logic is that meanings that *emerge locally* follow in fact a *global and shared logic*. We have seen an example of this in the contrast between helter skelter and *màkina* music, each of them with very localised meanings but, at the same time, sharing a similar homological relation: both were a sort of 'hard' and 'tough' developments of electronic music that were homologically related with working-class pride.

We can analyse this from the perspective of the importance of the commercial/underground axis organising musical geographies and the homologies between musical geographies and social hierarchies. The centrality of the distinction between commercial and the underground manifestations in musical geographies, both in the way young people make sense of them and in the organization of the political economy, is part of the global logic of popular music *and* a local endogenous force of cultural production. In every locality, there is a commercial centre and its underground peripheries, and in all of them the centre is primarily defined by major record companies, and the peripheries by alternative or independent record and distribution companies providing more specific – in the sense of minority – sounds. Major record companies are mostly global, although they provide both ‘global’ and ‘local’ commercial musical materials, including the more popular among the specialised types. Alternative or independent companies, on the contrary, are mostly local, although often connected to global distribution networks. These minority materials, therefore, can respond to global or local trends, but are in any case strongly embedded *by definition* in the nuances of the peripheries of local musical geographies – even when they are used to signify ‘universality’, in the sense of relatively placeless participation in cosmopolitan global trends.

Thus, on the one hand, many of the new commercial and alternative trends are globally disseminated through either major or independent labels, becoming part of the global circulation of musical forms and meanings. On the other hand, however, when appropriated by local musical geographies these trends incorporate particular local meanings. In the case of minority musical materials, because of their ‘anti-commercial’ belligerent disposition and the absence of a broad appeal, these local meanings are often stronger, not necessarily in the musical forms themselves, but in their appropriation in actual local musical geographies. Since young people make sense of these ‘alternative’ music materials by opposing them to both local mainstream and other specialised forms, they acquire more locally situated connotations than the ‘mainstream’ musical forms in the ‘commercial’ centre, which are more dependent on their connection to global trends in mainstream popular music.

The point is, nevertheless, that even when musical forms and musical geographies are locally produced they follow the same global logic – both in terms of their political economy and their social appropriation – distinguishing the commercial centre from the minority peripheries. The opposition between ‘commercial’ and ‘anti-commercial’ dispositions, and its link to different strategies of cultural and social distinction through fashion, coolness or hipness, are inherent to contemporary global common culture. Even though the very concept ‘commercial’ is highly ideological and polysemous, the meanings and distinction struggles it mediates are extremely similar in both Birmingham and Barcelona, not only because the two cities share the centrality of commercial/anti-commercial divide – or continuum – but also because its homologies with social hierarchies like popularity in interpersonal hierarchies, gender, sexuality or

generalised advantage, as well as its articulation of time (the experience of 'modern' times and the cycle of change) follow a very similar pattern⁶.

To review how this similar pattern of homologies has been identified in the preceding chapters, we can recall how they are articulated alongside commercial and anti-commercial alignments. In order to do so, I will group the anti-commercial manifestations described in the empirical chapters into three different types, which are equally present in both Birmingham and Barcelona. This will help to more precisely identify, in the empirical analysis, the shared underlying logic of cultural production in regard to the way young people articulate structural homologies through their different *intergration in, or opposition to*, the commercial centre. The three types of anti-commercial disposition are: 1) *a commercial but cutting-edge taste in music*; 2) *an 'arty' or a 'politicised' taste in music*; and 3) *a street-wise, tough taste in music*. This distinction is analytical, since the three dispositions empirically overlap with each other. The theoretical significance of this organization of '(sub)cultural distinctions' is that instead of merely reproducing the modern overlapping between the high/low culture (or high/popular culture) divide and socioeconomic position⁷, it complexifies it. With the exception of the anti-commercial disposition linked to the street, which is *homologically related* to and *signifies* disadvantaged positions in terms of generalised advantage and ethnicity, the other spaces are very ambivalent in terms of their articulation with social hierarchies. Let us separately analyse each of them.

First, the differentiation from the commercial centre through a cutting-edge, 'advanced' or 'trendy' commercial taste in music, is a cultural distinction in terms of 'aheadness'. It does not present a radical opposition to commercial music (or youth styles), but an attempt to be ahead of it. It must be understood, therefore, as a cultural distinction by being part of the trend-setting collective. It openly accepts the cultural machinery of commercial trends and just tries to stay in a more advanced position. In this type of anti-commercial differentiation we could also include those youngsters that distinguish themselves from the commercial mainstream by means of a marked fashion-conscious extravagance. In terms of musical

⁶ The youth cultures literature shows many examples of youth styles bearing similar homologies with social hierarchies across the globe. One clear example is the Young & Craig (1997) description of skinhead subculture in Canada, which presents the same set of stylistic oppositions as in Barcelona and (previously) in England, before it became residual: the "Oi"- "Neo-nazi" opposition, the Neo-nazi radical opposition to punk and hippy styles and superficial knowledge of the genealogical history of the skinhead style, the use of shoelaces to differentiate different factions, their reproduction of the manual/mental dichotomy through their glorification of working-class ideals, as well as of patriarchy through a clean-cut style, physical prowess, an aggressive pursuit of the opposite sex, an open rejection of homosexuality and anything that was perceived as 'feminine'.

This must not allow us to forget, though, that idiosyncratic local appropriations of globalised styles are also possible. We have already seen, for instance, the example of ska music in Barcelona, but other examples could be provided from the youth cultures literature. A particularly interesting example is provided by Wallace & Kovacheva (1996) when describing how the influence of the same youth styles in different parts of Europe with different regimes did not imply that they signified the same things.

⁷ In the sense analysed by Bourdieu's *Distinction* (1988 [1979]).

and youth geographies, therefore, it is located relatively close to the commercial centre. If we analyse its homologies with social hierarchies, we find that it is related to high positions in interpersonal hierarchies, in fashion-conscious positions in typified youth styles, and in white positions in general hierarchies. In terms of generalised advantage, although it did not signify either advantaged or disadvantaged positions – since it could be linked to any group with a sufficient amount of disposable income and the will to follow the rules of trends in a more or less sophisticated way – it was stylistically opposed to strongly disadvantaged positions. This implied that disadvantaged young people identifying with this disposition were stylistically neutralising their social origin. And although this was a rather ‘masculine’ disposition, it was the more female-friendly of the three types of anti-commercial roads we are analysing.

Second, the differentiation from the commercial centre through an ‘arty’ or a ‘politicised’ taste in music is more frontally opposed to the commercial centre, since ‘commerciality’ is seen not as the ‘natural’ evolution of the music that is consumed, but as the devil from which consumers and their favourite artists should keep as much distance as possible. This ‘underground’ disposition is the archetypical expression of the *bohemian anti-gregarious artistic cool* attitude opposed to anything that could be seen as conventional or socially influenced in any sense. Although it is also dependent on the commercial centre in order to define its very opposition, it is imagined by its followers as an isolated republic of creativity, art, or political engagement – all of them different forms of constructed ‘authenticity’ – opposed to the (perceived as) phoney, manufactured, dumb and industrially produced commercial centre. This differentiation can range from ‘arty’ and even ‘obscure’ roads into electronic or indie music to politically charged or loud manifestations in the punk-hardcore or goth scenes. Although this type of anti-commerciality was located, when ‘pure’, at the very periphery of musical geographies, many intermediate positions were possible. Those engaged in this differentiation might occupy any position in interpersonal hierarchies of popularity, in the sense that depending on the weight and respect that those alternative meanings and styles obtained in each particular context of interaction, they could be regarded ‘nerds’ and ‘boffins’ as well as ‘cool’ and ‘popular’. They always felt, in any case, cultural pride and distinction from the commercial centre. In typified youth styles, while being seen as peripheral, they were important spectacular symbolic markers of youth geographies. As to homologies with social hierarchies, this differentiation tended to be – although not exclusively – associated with middle-class and white positions, and was by no means opposed to good academic performance. It was also very ‘masculine’, although often in its middle-class (‘nice’, mental) sense – implying that from the viewpoint of archetypal working class masculinities it could also be regarded as effeminate.

Third and finally, the differentiation from the commercial centre through a street-wise, tough taste in music fabricated its ‘authenticity’ not through an opposition to the commercial centre in terms of ‘aheadness’ or ‘arty’ or ‘political’ engagement – although it could include or combine all of them – but through its

'street' character. This anti-commercial disposition had to do with making its fans proud of its anti-establishment edge. In representing and signifying that they are opposed to the 'official' visible dominant social group (White or Catalan middle-class), it provided a heightened sense of authenticity. This street oppositional authenticity is represented through marked transgressive musical forms, both in terms of the music (hard, loud, fast) or the lyrics (swearing, violence, sex). The important point is, however, that in contrast with the two previous types of anti-commercial dispositions, this third one is often quite commercially successful – the other two anti-commercial distinctions can also become commercially successful, but then tend to lose their anti-commercial aura of authenticity. In Birmingham it was 'black' music, as well as harder versions of dance music like hard-trance or hard-techno. In Barcelona it was *màkina* (and in an emerging way also *raï* music). In both cases, interviewees praised its oppositional imprint. In social hierarchies, as long as this street anti-commercial disposition was dominant enough, it was homologically related with the positions of social dominance in interpersonal hierarchies, although they were also often disliked and many of those who liked the music did not combine this taste with the necessary lifestyle performance to achieve social dominance. In the school with a minority of working-class pupils they were a relatively isolated group. In terms of youth typified styles, they ranged from very obscure and peripheral transgressive positions to a rather 'popular' (the style was seen by many as 'commercial', although clearly connoted and represented as tough anti-commercial) positions in musical and youth geographies. As for general social hierarchies, it was the taste in music that most clearly signified – in real or 'imaginary' terms – generalised disadvantage and ethnic minorities, as well as tough masculine and homophobic gender identities.

If I say that this differentiation between three types of anti-commercial dispositions is not empirical but analytical, this is because 'anti-commercial' consumers, producers and genres often combine the three of them with more or less intensity. The analytical differentiation is, nevertheless, useful in three senses. First, because it enables us to see that the two cities share not only the commercial/anti-commercial distinction, but also the same three broad anti-commercial dispositions. Second, because it also allows us to appreciate that in both Birmingham and Barcelona the different positions bear similar homologies with social hierarchies. The actual articulation with imbricated hierarchies certainly depends on each localised context of interaction, and this is what makes musical and social geographies in each locality idiosyncratic. Nevertheless, there is a familiar flavour that seems to respond to a general logic of contemporary popular culture and its organisation of fads, fashion and commercial visibility. And third, because it throws light on the complex articulation of what we might loosely call 'resistance' to the commercial centre in contemporary common culture.

We are dealing here with the development of contemporary common culture, and the role of musical forms in it. Whereas in the 19th and early 20th Century cultural consumption was hierarchically organised in terms of the high/low culture divide, contemporary consumer culture has partially erased this (still

relevant) distinction in favour of a much more ambiguous and subtle space of cultural consumption. Whereas postmodern theory has argued that this change implies an implosion of 'the social', I would prefer to argue that what has spread is the epistemological fallacy that the social is not as relevant as it used to be. My argument is that social hierarchies continue to be fundamental in the organisation of cultural consumption, but they do so in a much more opaque manner because of the apparent neutrality of the commercial 'mainstream normalcy', the ambiguous polisemy of notions like 'authenticity', 'transgression' and 'coolness', and the complex combination of different commercial and anti-commercial dispositions.

Chapter 7 has broadly analysed the presence – and complexity – of gender, sexual, ethnic, linguistic, national or generalised advantage connotations attached to musical forms. The difficulty is that they are not meanings straightforwardly applicable to any taste in music, but the result of its changing and hidden homologies with other symbolic forms and signifying practices. This complexity, nevertheless, does not stop young people from doing symbolic work in order to make sense of their social world – and musical geographies as part of it. When we compare the two cities, we see that the homologies between music and gender, ethnicity, generalised advantage, time and space follow a similar logic. We have just referred to the homologies between anti-commercial dispositions and positions in social hierarchies. The experience and typification of 'toughness', for instance, is homologically related in both places to 'loud', 'fast' and 'provocative' musical forms in signifying and articulating generalised disadvantage and hegemonic masculinity. And the soft/tough distinction appears as a basic meaningful dichotomy in making sense of young people's social world and personal relations, not only because it clearly structures everyday interactions and play of dominance in the school and the street, but also because it is homologically related to (masculine) young people in a situation of generalised disadvantage – or 'class injuries' – and a taste in music that can be defined as faster, harder and more anti-commercial. Another example we have identified is the symbolic relevance of an 'arty' anti-commercial disposition and its homological relation to a middle-class refined and 'mental' masculinity.

These two broad homologies, present in both Birmingham and Barcelona, are not so different from the old high/low culture divide. What has changed is the way they are interrelated with a third central homological core around the 'commercial' pole and what I have named 'cutting-edge anti-commercial' dispositions in musical geographies. These positionings, articulated around the production of fashion and trends through the commodity form, produce an integrative cultural space without clear social connotations. In both cities the glamour of fashion, consumption and *trendiness* offered a very visible and relevant pathway to social integration, since fashion and mainstream consumption are seen as 'classy' and thus 'upwardly oriented', but they can be considerably inclusive in that a reasonable disposable income and a simple cultural capital can be enough credentials to participate in them. This inclusiveness implies that further inner distinctions are activated, and that within fashion and mainstream consumption

there are particular stylistic traces that can be socially distinguished or a sign of upper-class closure and others as working-class efforts to appear classless. If we take into account that the most visible and omnipresent musical forms and discourses are the commercial ones, and that these distinctions are, when we leave the analytical level, empirically blurred (since the immense majority of young people combine in different proportions all these types of dispositions), it is easy to understand that their homological relation with social hierarchies becomes opaque and problematic.

If we look at them closely, however, we find that underlying this opaque relation between musical geographies and social hierarchies there are strong – but not automatic – homologies between them. Moreover, even if they can be differently articulated with particular local traditions (Catalan and Spanish; Afro-Caribbean, Asian and White; etc.) there is, as we have just described, an underlying general logic in both cities: ‘tough’, ‘rough’ and ‘working class dominant masculinity’ signify generalised disadvantage and are expressed through ‘fast’, ‘loud’ or ‘provocative’ musical forms which have an anti-commercial mark of authenticity but can be commercially very successful; ‘arty’ dispositions signify middle class masculinity and are linked to anti-commercial musical tastes like ‘advanced electronic music’, the ‘indie scene’ and others; ‘commercial’ involvement in fashion and mainstream fads, as well as its cutting-edge manifestations, signifies social integration in ‘normalcy’, that is, in the *flow of the times* (this central cultural space is, nevertheless, very diverse and includes changing, contextual homologies and subtle inner distinctions in terms of generalised advantage or ethnicity). Even if young people and youth styles combine these different dispositions, individuals involved in a strong street identity can take an ‘arty’ disposition when involved in music, or a middle-class youngster can perform a street-wise style, or a cutting-edge commercial music fan can combine it with an arty cultural distinction, this does not invalidate the persistence of the cultural significance of the co-ordinates enabling individuals to make sense of their social world, in this case music and youth geographies. Individuals can reflexively and irreflexively play with them, but the same persistence of the homologies indicates that they are still useful, and meaningful to young people in order to communicate with each other – to orientate their living together.

If we enter the more speculative terrain, this leads to the question of why these broad co-ordinates of contemporary cultural production have come to be shared in different localities. Is it because the flow from the cosmopolitan centre has spread them to the peripheries? From this point of view, the cultural production of a global cultural framework would be built upon the visibility and dissemination of the cosmopolitan cultural co-ordinates through films, information coverage and popular music stars and styles, as well as the local penetration of big music Industry globally producing local forms. The cultural waves of music materials, icons and meanings around youth styles that we could loosely term rocker, hippy, mod, skinhead, punk, heavy-metal, house, indie, hip hop, goth and many others, alongside the more centrally commercial musical forms, would disseminate a range of dispositions influencing, as a powerful source of authenticity, youngsters across

the globe. This causal explanation would see shared musical geographies as concomitant to modern capitalist development, since the extension of capitalism and consumer goods across the globe would bear with them the extension of meanings organising popular culture, most of them originating in the cosmopolitan centre.

Or should we rather look for an explanation in the inherent logic of advanced capitalist consumer society? By this I mean that it might be the case that we should look to the way the political economy of popular culture industries forces the market to be structured in a big profitable visible and central – even if segmented – mainstream and its alternative, diverse and minority peripheries, and that we not only inevitably identify the most popular commercial centre (fashion) with a socially neutral ‘consumerist integrating’ space and the (‘anti-commercial’) concentric rings around it as socially connoted spaces, but also organize these social connotations according to the cultural shape of social and economic hierarchies. That is, if modern patriarchal capitalism has, since the 18th century, been sustained upon a certain articulation of meanings around the structuration of class, gender, ethnic and territorial inequality (in terms of nice/tough, mental/manual, masculine/feminine, white/black, modern/backwards, cosmopolitan/parochial), the arena of popular music and youth geographies, as well as its organization alongside the commercial/anti-commercial tension, would need to incorporate them in one sense or another. I am talking about the theoretical relevance of the mutual adjustment between cultural differences in musical and youth geographies and the social organization of socio-economic hierarchies – which could lead to a speculative interrogation around the causal prominence of this ‘dialectical’ relationship, or even about a possible ‘functional’ explanation. From this point of view, the capitalist, sexual, ethnic and geographical organization of formal and family labour and its subsequent structuration of economic production, would need to match the existing distribution of cultural practices and dispositions, and vice versa.

If we pay attention to the general homologies relating taste in music and generalised advantage and gender in both cities, for instance, we will see that they are characteristic of civilised modern Western capitalist societies. Authors like Elias (1989 [1977]), Willis (1981 [1977]), Sennett & Cobb (1993 [1972]) or Bourdieu (1988 [1979]) all deal with them in one way or another: Elias analyses the historical substitution of uncivilised bodies by the modern self controlled *homo clausus*, carried out on a socially downward evolution from the royal courts to the other social groups, and this same pattern of dispositions is reproduced alongside the central rough/nice differentiation in musical and youth geographies. Willis identifies the link between the mental/manual orientation and the re-production of social class, which manifests in the rough/nice articulation of counter-school and pro-academic dispositions. The same could be said of the working class strategies – depicted by Sennett and Cobb – to overcome injured dignities resulting from the hierarchy of ‘expert knowledge’ in modern capitalist societies. Or think of Bourdieu’s identification of the reproductive importance of a bourgeois aesthetic detached disposition and working-class taste of necessity, and its correspondence with the middle-class connotation of an arty disposition in musical and youth geographies.

To me it seems obvious that the two forces – the cultural influence of US and, by linguistic proximity, UK popular culture in the development of capitalist consumer culture, and the inherent logic of advanced capitalist consumer society – are hardly distinguishable. Both of them are central to the historical production of the homologies between musical and youth geographies and social hierarchies. What is relatively new is the ambiguous arena opened by consumer culture, where these meanings are not represented in a visibly hierarchical space, but in complex and rapidly changing articulations of distances and proximities which, instead of opposing ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture, map out a cultural space differentiating a (diverse) commercial centre and its different peripheries. The central value of coolness and the anti-conventional disposition of youth cultures and, by extension, consumer culture as a whole, is an inversion of the cultural framework of early capitalism. Relatively significant phenomena like middle-class incorporation of working-class elements (hip hop, for instance) and working-class integration in the apparently neutral cultural space of commerciality, produce a symbolic inversion that conceals the permanence of the homological relations between musical geographies and social hierarchies. Underlying this apparent mixed and polysemous play of symbolic forms, nevertheless, there are relatively stable *sets of oppositions* and *markers* of generalised advantage articulated with ethnic and gender distinctions. The racialization or ‘ethnification’ of generalised disadvantage (black and Asian in Birmingham; ‘*cholo*’, ‘*moro*’ and ‘*paki*’ in Barcelona), or the ‘softer’ disposition of both femininity and generalised advantage, are strong cultural and social markers that we identify as part of ‘global’ common cultural homologies organising both *global and local* cultural production. The ongoing cultural production around distances and proximities in music and youth geographies cannot be properly understood if these *sets of oppositions* are taken out of the equation. Nice, tough, transgressive, consumerist, academic and arty dispositions and predispositions are all aspects that cannot be isolated from broad social hierarchies of generalised advantage, gender or ethnicity.

Coolness, authenticity and commodities

Continuing the thread of reasoning, at this point I will dig deeper into this more theoretical level in order to further the analysis. I am referring to the common cultural production around the axes of what we might call ‘authenticity’ and a ‘cool’ attitude. If Simmel identified fashion as a social institution trying to solve the tension between ‘individualisation’ and ‘social belonging’, between differentiating ourselves from others and collective affiliations, between continuous change and permanent social bonds, nowadays the increasing centrality of ‘cool’ transgression of conventions is giving this institution a further twist. Fashion is now not as much the downward extension of fads from above, from the social elites to the subsequent layers of social strata, nor a mere space of individualised daydreaming and hedonistic practices, but a socially ambiguous mix of trends ‘from above’ and ‘from below’ that complexifies the articulation of social meanings in commodified materials.

Let us recover the differentiation that was made at the end of Chapter 1 between three main phases through which external recognition and an inner sense of dignity have been organised in Western societies after the Ancient Regime was dismantled and modern individualist market-oriented societies replaced it. We are talking about a first phase centred on work (during the 19th and the first part of the 20th Century), a second one where consumerism gained relative importance (when it was extended, after the Second World war, to the working class), and a third one centred on an anti-gregarious *cool* authenticity. These three normative patterns, as has been said, are not clear-cut chronological realities but coexisting forces with changing equilibriums, and should be understood as external normative expectations intersubjectively stratifying people on a scale of social value *as well as* providing a subjective source of inner dignity and well-being.

If we analyse how the three phases (or 'logics') organise the homological relation between cultural geographies and social hierarchies, the relevance of the differences will be more clearly seen. In the first phase, when social recognition and inner sense of dignity was more centrally articulated through the labour market, there was a clearer overlapping between economic position and cultural consumption (or lifestyles), since high and academic culture, on the one hand, and more expensive fashionable consumption, on the other, established two clear, mutually connected and visible models coming from 'above'. The working classes were excluded from these spheres (although they often had considerable respect for high culture as well as enthusiasm for fashion), and were thus clearly regarded as occupying 'low' positions in economic, cultural and lifestyle terms. These dominant models were the only legitimised visible standards, which in their turn were closely connected to traditional social and moral conventions.

In the second phase, the social extension and exponential growth of consumption, parallel to the emergence of audiovisual mass media, implied a cultural revolution. As a consequence of rising living standards and the production of affordable consumer goods, almost all social sectors were now invited (always in the context of Western countries) into the consumer society, fuelling two crucial social developments: the extension of the competitive game of consumption and the democratisation of pleasure implicit in modern hedonism. First, the extension of competitive consumption meant that external recognition was still strongly focused on a hierarchical organisation of lifestyles matching disposable income and cultural capital. Authors like Weber, Veblen or Bourdieu developed, during the 20th Century, insightful approaches to this competitive consumption and its consequent hierarchy of lifestyles matching economic and social position, which, although it was present from the beginning of capitalism, it was now extended to all social classes. During this phase, therefore, the hierarchy of lifestyles around consumption continued to closely overlap with socio-economic position and cultural

capital⁸, as well as to clearly distinguish between 'high' and 'low' (in terms of material and cultural consumption). Nevertheless, the popularisation of mass audiovisual media (cinema, radio and television), alongside the rise of middle-class occupations and educational credentials, alongside what was termed 'embourgeoisement' of the working classes, introduced a new factor obscuring the former visibility of the higher positions in the economic and cultural ladder as a source of standards. The mass media played a key role in both the production of mainstream cultural standards – the middle-class lifestyles it made visible through fiction and advertisements – *and* the impulse of the exclusive circle of celebrities. On the one hand, it brought to the centre of attention, as the most visible standard, an ordinary, mainstream emerging middle class, which undermined the relative importance of high economic and cultural sectors in setting the social dominant model. Popular culture, for instance, gradually stopped being stigmatised as 'low'. On the other hand, it stimulated the increasing relevance of celebrities – alongside the higher economic and cultural classes – as material of desire and emulation. They and their world of glamour and exclusivity became the object of attention and fascination. Importantly, their status did not only derive from economic and cultural capital or acceptance into exclusive social circles, but also from their popularity (fame).

The work of Horkheimer and Adorno (1992 [1947]) is an early reaction to these developments and the role of the mass cultural industries in the dissemination of certain standards that they regarded as pernicious. Nevertheless, like most early accounts of the emerging consumer culture, it did not pay attention to the use individuals were making of what they saw as standardised and alienating cultural commodities, which is the second development I want to highlight of this second phase: concomitantly to this impact of audiovisual mass media, there was a powerful increase of what Campbell (1994 [1987]) describes as the development of day-dreaming and fantasising, characteristic of modern hedonism – that is, the individual autonomous use of imagination to produce mental images which provide them pleasure – as opposed to traditional hedonism. During this extension of mass consumption, those occupying lower positions in social hierarchies gained considerable participation into the day-dreaming through commodities, as well as, thanks to cheaper goods, into the play with the world of fashion. Aesthetic consumption became a viable means towards inclusion in mainstream society but also towards individualised aesthetisation. Simmel, in contrast not only to Adorno, but also to Weber, Veblen or Bourdieu, did take into consideration the importance of this side of individualisation in contemporary society, not only in relation to fashion, but also to the need to 'be special' and differentiate from the mainstream *autonomously of competitive pyramidal consumption*.

⁸ Socio-economic position and cultural capital were closely interconnected, although depending on the particular structure of capital – to use Bourdieu's conceptualisation of it (1988 [1979]) – one of them could weigh more than the other.

The way commodity culture has been used by individuals to negotiate their sense of dignity and their everyday pleasures, which has been highlighted by cultural studies and postmodern approaches to consumer culture, is central to an understanding of the third of the phases we are analysing: the increasing importance of what I have called an anti-gregarious *cool* authenticity. Although its cultural sources date back to the Romantic reaction to the Enlightenment, for our purposes we will focus on its popularisation through the combination of a growing teenage market and popular music after the Second World War. Even though the conventional (adult) cultural standards have always been subverted by young people through extravagant dress, talk, music, and behaviour, since the world impact of rock'n'roll on young people's common culture, followed by the dissemination of the subsequent stylistic and musical developments of youth popular culture, the public visibility and cultural influence of anti-conventional and often transgressive models across the globe has achieved a decisive social centrality. The novelty is that nowadays anti-conventionalism, extravagance and transgression have become to some extent normative (what in the introduction was termed *normative provocation*) also for adult and mainstream society, at least rhetorically, and that the source of social standards is not exclusively the upper economic and cultural social groups as in the first phase, nor the world of glamour and the commercial centre added in the second phase, but also the transgressive anti-conventional subcultural groups emerging from youth social space. Transgression, in this context, can be manifested through sexuality, toughness, drugs, as well as through counter-cultural or political dissidence.

The oppositional drive channelled by normative provocation and transgression, what in the 1970s was regarded as 'resistance' to the dominant culture, now has become part of the same dominant youth and even adult culture. This implies that among the most visible models of standards, the *chosen few* occupying media attention, there is a significant presence of those coming from, representing and glamorising street culture and underground dissidence. Once they become celebrities, they enter the Olympus of glamour attracting popular attention and scrutiny, and although they automatically transcend their social origin to become individuals who *have made it*, as long as they keep representing their social and cultural background they incorporate and legitimise cultural referents which used to remain stigmatised in public life. In other words, the source of fads, fashions and standards that has replaced the 'Court' and the 'Church' is a mixed combination of the (now less visible) 'higher classes' and the 'cultural elite', on the one hand, and the commercial mainstream and the world of celebrities broadcast – made visible – by the media, including those commercial and anti-commercial transgressive oppositional models *from below* which were formerly stigmatised and demonised. The fictional and real ordinary middle class is a dominant cultural standard made visible through the media, while the closed circle of 'celebrities' used as referents at the top of the social hierarchy are not only, or even primarily, royalty, prominent high culture artists, academics, businessmen and politicians, but also successful athletes, top models, actors, media

stars and pop idols, as well as media-produced celebrities. Since many of these celebrities embody models that are far from the conventional standards of behaviour, as is the case of many pop idols and media icons, we find that what in the first half of the century were scandalous provocations of bohemian artists, or stigmatised 'low' cultural manifestations, have become part of the cultural mainstream, or the visible legitimate range of models embodied in the celebrities occupying the mediascape⁹.

The increasing visibility of an ordinary (mainstream) middle-class lifestyle (which produces a relative 'popularisation' or 'democratisation' of fashion) and the subsequent 'mainstreaming' or 'normalization' of what used to be stigmatised dispositions (the pervasiveness of sex, drugs and rock'n'roll, working class cultural manifestations, gay and lesbian sexualities, ethnic minorities, etc.) substantially modifies the hierarchical organisation of cultural standards, since by breaking down its initial downward dissemination, its homological relation with social position becomes less clear and straightforward. This means that alongside the former organisation of pyramidal competitive consumption and 'downward' public provision of visible models of desire and emulation, which remains operative, there are now powerful interferences providing an alternative source of stylistic hierarchisation which, rather than coming from the 'top', are better understood as coming from the 'centre' (socially indifferentiated middle-class mainstream commercial space) or the 'peripheries' (anti-commercial positions, some of which are located at the 'bottom' of social hierarchies). When this happens, the formerly explicit social distinction and competitive character of consumer lifestyles become implicit and opaque. The prominence of anti-conventional cool authenticity, moreover, puts at the forefront meanings around uniqueness and authenticity that erode them even further. When participation in the commercial mainstream, on the one hand, and the cool, hip, anti-square transgressive disposition, on the other, translates into new models or 'conventions', and when both fashion in its broad sense and anti-commercial dispositions are a plural, fluid and thus broadly accessible ideals, competitive consumption becomes less obvious, and the codes of the articulation of social position and consumer goods more polysemous.

These contemporary social and cultural developments have indeed made the signification of social hierarchies more opaque. The cultural realm has been diversified in many coexisting youth styles and cultural distinctions which respond to different logics of differentiation. Since the standards do not always come from the top of the socio-economic hierarchy, nor from male and white positions, the simultaneous articulation of a diversity of codes makes the cultural landscape a more subtle amalgam of meanings. This accentuates the subjectivisation of identities, and the experience of collective affiliations as disconnected from social hierarchies. The production of authenticity in this context becomes a plural and contested arena

⁹ Chambers (1985) dates the incorporation of rock to the social mainstream of metropolitan fashion in 1964, the moment in which it stopped being a spectacular, peripheral, adolescent working-class phenomenon.

where different simultaneous objectifications and experiences of it are possible – all this being subject to the rapid cycle of change and obsolescence of consumer culture.

The continuous replacement of youth styles, fads and fashions, with the growing importance of the cross-over influence from ‘below’ (the cool underground), leads to a dynamic and plural construction of ‘authentic’ audiences in the popular cultural arena where aspects like ‘popular’, ‘arty’, ‘posh’, ‘popular’, ‘white’, ‘underground’, ‘Catalan’, ‘trendy’, ‘effeminate’, ‘black’, ‘mental’, ‘masculine’, Moroccan’ and many others are articulated in diverse ways. Disputes over ‘authenticity’ and its ambivalent relation with ‘popularity’ and ‘commercialism’ are central to contemporary popular music and its new cultural distinction mechanisms. Popular music is on-goingly developing its own traditions of meaning with its own cultural hierarchies, which do not mimetically follow the traditional high/low culture distinction but others like commercial/underground, fashionable/unfashionable, cool/uncool, tough/nice, and so on. The visibility, through the media, of different models of emulation and ‘subcultural’ patterns of authenticity, has promoted this diversification of contemporary cultural hierarchies.

Nevertheless, underlying this complexity, competitive consumption is still alive and healthy, and because of this, instead of interpreting these changes as the implosion of the social and the opening of free choice of lifestyles through an aesthetisation of everyday life and an increasing fluidity of cultural identities, as postmodernist approaches would do, I contend that we should rather understand it as a concealment of the competitive social distinction mechanisms – modifying in fact the way social position and one’s own pathway through social hierarchies are experienced. The importance, among young people – as well as among adults –, of the notion of ‘authenticity’ points to the negation of social influences. From this common sense appreciation, social determinations and influences make individuals boring and ‘inauthentic’, so the ideal individual is the one who is not *corrupted* by them. Note that we are not talking about an individual who is formed in a given tradition and who later is able to break with it, but about an individual who is not corrupted by this tradition and its conventions. This inevitably leads to a social myopia, since social influences (the prejudices of the inherited traditions) are not critically discussed and reflexively negotiated, but naively denied. The *sociological imagination* connecting individual biographies, historical processes and social structures (Mills 1967 [1959]) is thus being buried under the powerful epistemological fallacy (Furlong & Cartmel 1997) making collective determinations invisible. The aversion towards ‘formalised’ collective affiliations, traditions and conventional interactions does not imply that socially structured reality no longer channels individuals, but that it increasingly does so with the appearance of freedom. The preceding chapters have shown the relevance of different musical traditions and the individual’s need to negotiate them when growing up. Even if they were ‘informal’ and changing, they were institutionalised in the sense that they had their own social control mechanisms, rituals, artefacts and even the political economy making them possible. Since young people

experience their pathways through them as authentic individual trajectories, they will hardly be aware of their socially structured character.

It is in this context that we should understand the importance of the globally shared homologies around the commercial centre and the three main anti-commercial forces. They establish the main co-ordinates through which musical geographies are organised, and through which young people make sense of, and negotiate, their surrounding social hierarchies. At the same time that musical and youth geographies provide a space for individually enhancing experiences capable of subjectively transcending 'adult' and 'structural' hierarchies, they mediate young people's experience of them. The interference of partially classless social and cultural distinctions like 'coolness', 'anti-commerciality' and even, in its wider sense, 'fashion', implies that a given position in a social hierarchy *does not automatically correspond* to a given musical or youth taste. On the contrary, the plurality of tastes, meanings and axes of differentiation create an external social reality where not only can the same position be signified by different tastes in music, or the same taste in music signify different social positions, but also individuals in the same position can play in various ways with those meanings to accentuate or dissimulate their social origin. The plurality and complexity of meanings implies that the signifying process of taste in music is not straightforward and that 'choice', reflexive or not, cannot be avoided.

Young people must work out their position in musical geographies, either individually or collectively, since 'position' is not something which is given depending on one's location in social hierarchies, but something that you must socially and culturally produce. Depending on this cultural production of their pathways through musical geographies and youth hierarchies, the way their social position is signified and experienced will differ considerably. A white middle-class youngster identifying with underground garage music, a black working-class kid involved in indie or rock music, a young girl strongly committed to hardcore punk music or a middle-class Catalan boy enthusiastically participating in hardcore and *màkina* music, are all departing from the dominant cultural expectations of their social position. In this sense, youth styles, and taste in music as part of them, must not be seen as perfectly overlapping structural positions, but as *channelling* them in one way or another. That is, musical geographies are homologically related to social hierarchies, but this does not mean that a certain position in musical geographies (and youth styles) invariably corresponds to a certain position in social hierarchies, but rather that it channels it in a particular way – both in the way it is experienced and in the way it is signified to others. The examples provided above are good examples of individuals who would be challenging or negotiating the dominant expectations of their position in social hierarchies, whereas those who more straightforwardly followed dominant expectations would instead culturally reproduce and reinforce their position in them. Although, as Jackson (1989: 6) reminds us, the politics of consumption are rarely straightforward, and apparently reproductive practices can modify social geographies, and at first sight resistant or challenging cultural identities can be

just subtle and hidden distinction mechanisms (see for instance Holt & Griffin 2003), the relevant fact is that those 'dominant' expectations exist, allowing young people to make sense, however unreflexively, of their social world, including broad social hierarchies. Even if they experienced their taste in music as a matter of 'personal choice', it articulated the way they experienced and signified their position in social hierarchies.

The point is that our experience of social distances, hierarchies and injuries is not a direct result of social inequality. On the contrary, social inequality is shaped and experienced through cultural meanings. And the way our cultural framework makes them understandable is generally not a systematic set of meanings and typifications mapping out the different dimensions of inequality in which we are placed, but a practical and somewhat unitary experience of them in our everyday life. This is why the notion of 'imbricated hierarchies' can help us to understand how we understand, experience, articulate and culturally produce, the different levels and axes of social and cultural hierarchisation *at once*. The fieldwork has provided many illustrations of the importance and institutionalised character of differentiations relating to generalised advantage, ethnic, national and linguistic identities or gender and sexuality. Young people's accounts of their social world were full of references to these elements. In the experience of them in everyday face-to-face personal relations, however, they are not separated from each other, in the sense that generalised advantage is often 'racialised' or 'ethnified', or that ethnic and generalised advantage differences are inherently connected to particular experiences of masculinity and femininity, of toughness and niceness. In the same direction, the articulation of all these different axes of social hierarchies was experienced to a great extent as inseparable from youth typified styles and interpersonal hierarchies in the school and the street. Popularity, toughness, fashion, anti-commercial distinctions and many other aspects were closely imbricated with meanings making sense of broader social hierarchies. Sometimes clearly reproducing them, and sometimes partially transcending or challenging them. Even if the considerable amount of identity play with all these elements made the homologies between musical geographies and social hierarchies somewhat problematic, young people kept making strong implicit or explicit references to class, gender and ethnic typifications to make sense of their social and cultural world – discriminating, for instance, between 'being' and 'acting'.

In fact, the way they identified with some styles and not others was part of their opposition to, and symbolic fight with, particular elements against which they defined themselves. These oppositions were part of their search for identity and respect within both interpersonal and general social hierarchies. Through their taste in music, youngsters in socially subordinated groups could negotiate the way they position themselves – both in terms of affiliations and oppositions. Many of these oppositions implied not only culturally shaped quests for respect and dignity, but also a particular orientation towards one or another type of transition to adulthood. In general and reductionist terms, strong involvement in tough, counter-school musical and youth styles accentuated an anti-academic,

sexist and homophobic orientation, whereas strong involvement in arty and politicised musical and youth styles oriented to a mental and somewhat upwardly mobile and less markedly gendered trajectory. It is in this sense that not only family and school-to-work transitions can be considerably affected by young people's position in musical and youth geographies, but the same musical and youth geographies can be modified in one direction or another depending on how every generation of young people negotiate, challenge and transform these broad articulations between different social hierarchies and dispositions. An example of this is the cultural production, during the last decade, of important spaces in musical and youth geographies which are virtually free of homophobia, the changing ways in which male-female relations are channelled by different youth styles (an example being the centrality of dancing as a focus activity, not as a means for flirting, in rave), or the varying relative importance that tough/manual and nice/mental elements have in those styles culturally produced from the positions of generalised disadvantage.

The resulting politics of musical and youth geographies thus depend on the weight different elements acquire in their future articulations of imbricated hierarchies. Or, to put it differently, on the result of the struggle for authenticity between different cultural solutions, and the weight and innovative articulation these successful solutions gave to the set of positions and oppositions mapping out young people's cultural space. A historical overview can bring to the surface the changing relative importance of elements like political engagement (valued when hippy counterculture was regarded as authentic and 'cool' among the middle class), homophobia (undermined when rave and house culture challenged compulsory heterosexuality), anti-system disposition (higher when heavy metal, rock and punk were popular among the working class), or hedonistic non-discursive orientation (disseminated when dance music without clear linguistic narratives got popular).

To understand this struggle concerning authenticity, it is useful to ask *against what* different stylistic solutions make sense to young people, since as we have seen it is there that we will find a central drive of common cultural production. The history of pop music is the history of a tension between, on the one hand, fashion- and consumption-led social integration into the mainstream and, on the other, the drive to oppose inherited dominant traditions of meaning through the pursuit of novelty, transgression and rebellion. A young oppositional character is channelled, in different stylistic identifications, through very different objects. Depending on their position in youth geographies, young people can explicitly oppose the commercial mainstream, parents, childishness, racism, moral conventions, poshness, ethnic minorities, out-of-fashionness, immigrants, Spanishness, adulthood, black culture, mental orientation, Catalanness, 'kevnness', 'cholosness', 'consumer society' or 'the system'. The oppositional drive can even be found among the more centrally commercial identifications, which although apparently 'conformist', also present a significant opposition to 'rudeness', 'subcultural distinction' and 'excessive transgression'. By an oppositional drive I am

referring to more or less *explicit* or focused oppositions making sense of different cultural affiliations. To them, however, we should add the *implicit* relational oppositions between different styles. A young person's drive to claim their existence and uniqueness through their identification with particular styles must be contextualised. In their search for authenticity and sensuous hedonism, the situated and oppositional character of youth styles provides a sense of place, and a new cultural solution always needs to be profitable – and thus to exist – to be appropriated as meaningful and sensuous by a given part of the consumers *in the context of youth geographies*.

The particular cultural solutions to these conflicts and tensions is what channels the cultural production of social hierarchies. In every location, the combination of young people's personal interactions – to a great extent through hedonistic sensuousness – and the political economy of music, culturally produces idiosyncratic musical and youth geographies, but the cultural subordination to the cosmopolitan centre and the shared logics of cultural production imply that on a global scale the main co-ordinates are partially shared. This implies that, as pointed out by Regev (1997: 126), local difference and authenticity are largely produced through the use of cultural forms associated with the US – and the UK – and with the central participation of the powerful commercial interests of the international music industry. As we have seen, top-down influences are combined with bottom-up local traditions, always in the context of a shared logics on a global scale¹⁰.

Depending on the idiosyncrasies of local traditions of meaning, but also on the strength and structure of the local political economy (local commercial and underground industries around music) *and* the relative position in respect to – or imagined relationship with – the cosmopolitan centre, this cultural production will differ considerably. In the on-going adjustment between demand and supply of musical forms through the succession of fashions and fads, being in the centre where trends are generated or in the periphery where they are incorporated makes a substantial difference. Whereas Birmingham was a global producer of authenticity, Barcelona's popular music could hardly be seen as an authentic global product. In the case of Birmingham, being at the centre of popular culture meant, first, that both commercial and underground industries were stronger, which made both production and consumption more powerful and dynamic and reinforced the intertwining between social meanings and music geographies. In Birmingham there was an awareness that any youngster involved in music-making could become a globally renowned musician, whereas in Barcelona the limit of its potential success was basically restricted to Catalonia or Spain, or at the most Latin-America. Barcelona's dependence on English and American popular music was taken for granted, as a self-evident way of participating in 'modern' and 'authentic' popular culture, although this dependence was combined with important localised artists, bands and even fads and styles. Second, the cosmopolitan position of Birmingham

¹⁰ Two good works perfectly portraying this are Bucholtz (forthcoming) and Messey (1998).

also implied that, as a consequence of the strength of its political economy, change was much faster. In Birmingham, the strong and hectic cultural industry around music (record labels, clubs, music press, radio) renewed musical fads at a more frenetic speed than in Barcelona. This faster wheel of fashion and fads was an additional impulse to a more dynamic intertwining of musical and social meanings. Third, the underground seemed in Birmingham less radically isolated from the mainstream than in Barcelona. In Birmingham, there was the impression that originally underground acts could cross over and hit the charts, even without signing for a major record company, whereas in Barcelona the line separating mainstream and alternative was seen as a difficult line to cross. Fourth and finally, the Afro-Caribbean, working-class tradition was not only an endless source of innovation and authenticity, but was also in continuous interreaction with white, middle-class arty positions, which made the homologies between taste in music and social hierarchies less stable. In Birmingham, therefore, since local artists were seen as potential world stars, underground scenes were seen as potential future commercial hits and the strong industry was subject to a frenetic cycle of change, the play of homologies between music geographies and social hierarchies was more energetic. Even if they also received the influence of US popular music, they were aware that they were the co-centre of production of popular music trends.

A way forward

The analysis of *cultural production, through musical forms, of a certain way of experiencing social geographies* somewhat challenges mainstream youth cultures research, which proposes a relational approach to youth cultures – or more properly, youth geographies – that allows to bring back to the analysis the centrality of generalised advantage. By doing so, I would argue, new roads could be opened in order to bridge the gap between cultural and structural approaches in youth studies. The identification of antinomies like rough/nice, transgressive/ normal, or arty/commercial as homologically related to social hierarchies, on the one hand, and musical forms, on the other, as well as the unitary experience of them in interpersonal relations, not only underlines a central element of the experience of popular music that is often downplayed in music studies, but could also be a possible way to overcome the segregation of the analyses of youth styles and youth transitions.

From the perspective of the sociology of knowledge, and with the experience of social hierarchies as the primary object of attention, the appeal of the proposal is, from my point of view, that it could also provide youth studies with a greater significance for sociological theory as a whole, and particularly to the analysis of globalization and social structure. By this I mean that it could stimulate its contribution to the analysis of the process of cultural mediation and articulation of the experience of social hierarchies in everyday life in the context of globalised consumer culture. The approach developed through the preceding pages aims at situating the debates around all these matters at an empirical level that is not theoretically irrelevant.

In accordance with this possibility, the effort made in this thesis poses further empirical and theoretical questions for youth and popular culture research. I will set out what I regard to be the three main ones: 1) the impact of young people's positions in youth geographies on their transitions to adulthood; 2) a broader comparative analysis between different localities; and 3) a backward and forward historical analysis of change over time in musical and youth geographies.

The first aspect, that is, the link between young people's pathways through musical and youth geographies and their school-to-work and family transitions, would scrutinise the possible link between the cultural and structural approaches in youth studies. To do so, rather than comparing the impact on youth transitions of different positions in youth geographies in terms of youth and music styles, it should elaborate an analysis which also took internal differences, within youth styles, in relation to the weight of different homological elements that could have a causal influence on youth transitions, like 'tough/nice' or 'commercial/anti-commercial' dispositions, mental/manual orientations, type and degree of transgressive behaviour and degree of social dominance in the hierarchies of popularity. The hypothesis would be that to working-class pupils 'tough', 'transgressive' and 'manually oriented' dispositions, particularly those with a more anti-commercial edge, would be a causal force leading to reproductive trajectories in the labour market and sexist gender relations, whereas an affiliation with an arty anti-commercial disposition could lead them to an upward trajectory and more egalitarian family gender relations. By contrast, in the case of the middle-class, a downward affiliation with anti-commercial tough youth styles might or might not be a causal force affecting the most successful careers and accentuating sexist gender family relations. The other aspects, I speculate, might have a variable influence on young school-to-work transitions depending on the particular context of interaction, although inner differentiations between the cutting-edge anti-commercial and commercial affiliations might be identified as having some influence on upward or downward transitions. In terms of family transitions, I guess they would be rather reproductive, or at least neutral, regarding sexist gender relations. A further element that would be interesting to analyse is the degree of inter-class and inter-ethnic marriages in each of the positions in youth geographies.

Finally, as part of this aspect, it would be interesting to research the permanence, in one way or another, of cultural affiliations and personal network of friendships when entering adulthood. Or in other words, to see the extent to which taste in popular music remains alive in either stable or evolving terms, or fades out as a teenage accident, and how past affiliations are abandoned or incorporated to new cultural consumption and general dispositions.

The second aspect is the development of a broader comparative analysis between different localities, to understand the weight of the flows of musical forms in different directions and the autonomously developed integral circuits of meaning around both shared and localised musical forms and genres. Existing research (Liechty 1995; Grixti 2006) shows, for instance, that in both Nepal and Malta Western commercial music is used as a middle-class claim to modernisation,

but further detail should be obtained to understand how local traditional and popular music, as well as specialised and even underground Western styles are situated in local musical and youth geographies over time. Another relevant empirical question that should be addressed is the extent to which non-British electronic music is mitigating the asymmetry of the cultural flow between the continent and the British Isles.

This second aspect should be complemented with the third and final road of research, that is, the backward and forward historical analysis of change over time in musical and youth geographies. The historical analysis of the evolution of musical geographies during the last decades is a seriously underresearched area that could bring important theoretical insights into the emergence and development of contemporary common culture mediated by commodities. The experience of authenticity, rebellion and diversity in musical geographies has been constantly modified throughout the last half century, and a retrospective relational approach to this development combined with the geographically comparative analysis just mentioned could help us to understand the past and future evolution of common cultural production. If many older interviewees recalled that in their teenage years there was not much choice between different musical styles, we can venture that the exponential growth of available segmented channels, and most of all the current extension of wide band Internet, can give the logics of popular music production and consumption a further twist. Just as DJs revolutionised the articulation of music industry and consumers, and dance music transformed the political economy of music, the internet, MP3 players and computers could give rise to new forms of cultural production. Peer-to-peer exchange of music files and the success of Internet sites like Myspace or You Tube might – or might not – modify the way musical and youth geographies are culturally produced. It could seriously undermine the record as a fetishist artefact and lead to a more profane and diverse use of music files. The mere possibility that the central mainstream fades out to be replaced by a more radically segmented amalgam of minority tastes raises a lot of questions about the popular cultural relations of the future. Without an integrating visible centre, the way shared musical geographies could be culturally produced is difficult to imagine.

The way musical geographies will culturally articulate social hierarchies in the near future might be substantially modified by this shifting political economy, but also by the changes in social hierarchies themselves. It is not clear whether the decreasing importance of manual jobs in Western countries could modify the importance of toughness in musical and youth geographies, nor the way shifting gender and sexual relations will develop and be articulated in youth geographies. It is not clear either how minority groups, immigrants and – in Barcelona – Spanish and Catalan national and linguistic identities will socially evolve. If significant sections of ethnic minorities, for instance, followed an upwardly mobile trajectory, they would further complicate the current articulation of generalised advantage in musical geographies through what we have named ‘racialisation’ and ‘ethnification’. Or think of the global flow of meanings and musical forms: it is not

clear how the current asymmetrical situation between countries will be modified in one direction or another. A final relevant question is how the normalization of transgression evolves and modifies the cultural codes of normalcy.

What is clear is that there is no way back, and that the accelerated cycle of change is bringing popular music to a new land where the commercial and anti-commercial distinctions, as well as their articulation with social hierarchies, could be substantively modified. The wheel of contemporary popular culture and the way every new generation of young people – and the cultural industry – culturally produce their surrounding reality is in full motion. We are into a cultural transformation of important significance, where meanings like ‘authenticity’, ‘spontaneity’, ‘transgression’ and ‘coolness’, to name just a few, are modifying the way we make sense of our social experience. Applying the sociological imagination to the way young people – and adults – experience the power of symbolic forms through moments of lightening joy, of individual and collective ecstasy and ineffable beauty, we can contribute to make sense of these changes. A challenging task for the social sciences.

‘Though the best-known bands immediately signed with major record companies, that half-dozen meant nothing to the hundreds and thousands in the pop wilderness: there something like a new pop economy, based less on profit than on subsistence, the will to shock, marginal but intense public response—a pop economy meant to support not careers but hit-and-run raids on the public peace of mind—began to take shape. People cut records not so much on the off-chance that they would hit, but to join in: to say “I’m here” or “I hate you” or “I have a big cock” or “I have no cock.” Teenagers discovered the thrill of shouting “FIRE” in a crowded theater—or even in an empty theatre’

Greil Marcus (1990 [1989]: 75-6)

GLOSSARY

This glossary has been compiled to a great extent using other sources. When books have been used, they are referenced as in the rest of the thesis. When the definitions rely on the Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary or the Wikipedia, this will be indicated with the abbreviations CALD ([http:// dictionary.cambridge.org/](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/), consulted in July 2007) and W (Wikipedia, [http:// wikipedia.org](http://wikipedia.org/), consulted in July 2007).

Anthems: Used in club culture to refer to the well-known tracks that are liked by everybody, capable on their own of making the dancefloor crazy.

Bakalao: Term to define the new modern music that was being played in Valencian clubs during the 1980s. The term originated in Valencia in the mid-1980s to refer to all the modern cutting-edge music being played in Valencian clubs at the time, from techno to EBM and techno-pop. As the style evolved, it incorporated other influences like house, new beat and acid. In Catalonia it followed its own path to what was called 'màkina' (used by many people as a synonym of 'bakalao'), with a stronger influence of hardtrance and happy-hardcore. (W)

B-gangs: Derived from b-boy, a person committed to hip hop culture.

Beat people: People who are rough and rude.

Beastie people: People who are rough and rude.

Bhangra: 'There is no all-inclusive equation for defining bhangra, but its driving rhythmic form often has at least some of the following features: handclaps, chanted vocals, Punjabi lyrics, electric guitars, layered electronic keyboards providing synthesised orchestral sounds and most crucially a heavy percussive beat in which the dhol – cylindrical drum – provides the backbone.' (Huq 2003: 32).

Blue party: Illegal party, a very important institution alongside the Sound System for the development of new sounds in England during the 1980s and 1990s.

Boffin: Literally, 'a scientist who is considered to know a lot about science and not to be interested in other things' (CALD). Among young people, it is used to describe those youngsters who are solely or primarily committed to studying (*empollons* in Barcelona) or other activities, when another term modifies it (like for instance 'computer-boffin'). Although the word is generally derogative, it can also be used in a positive sense by those who are labelled as such.

Bpm: The abbreviation of beats per minute, 'was originally only important to DJs but became increasingly important as different genres of dance music were defined by the speed at which they were recorded' (Osborne 1999: 36).

Break Beat: 'One of the key innovations to shape modern dance music, break beat has become central to a host of genres and has consequently come to mean different things to different people, depending on what musical source they are taking their definitions from. Break beats were originated by Kool Herc, a Jamaican who moved to New York in 1967 and became a reggae DJ. He soon picked up the urban funk sounds of the Big Apple. Noticing that the dance floor

reached its height during bass- and percussion-led funky instrumentals, rather than during vocal sections and cheesy string and horn breaks, he began cutting between short sections of two copies of the same records on two turntables' (Osborne 1999: 37-8).

Catalufo (lufo, Catalanufo): Term originating in Catalonia in the 1990s to derogatively refer to Catalan-speaking people, and most particularly to those with a strong separatist or nationalist stance.

Chav: A derogatory term that refers to a rough working-class subcultural style associated with rap, r'n'b and dance music. This epithet was not mentioned by interviewees, although similar ones like 'kev' and 'geezer' were used.

Cholo: Term used in Barcelona to define working-class youngsters using stylised Spanish and identifying with Spanish culture. Depending on the context, it could refer to all working-class Spanish-speaking youngsters or the the minority closer to 'flamenco' and with a tough street identity. It is also used sometimes narrowing down its meaning to a 'lolailo' style. At the time of the fieldwork, 'cholo' was related to either *màkina* music or *flamenco*, although it had more to do with a general style in terms of class and linguistic identification than with music.

Dance: Catch-all term for electronic-based music, although very often used to narrowly define the most commercial versions of it.

Disco: Although this dance music genre is remembered for its mainstream success in the early 1980s, the musical influence of its underground origin in New York has been tremendous in contemporary popular music.

Del palo: Spanish slang expression that initially defined, accompanied by a noun, one's own behaviour ('*ir del palo*' *makinero*, rock, *enrollado*, *chungo*, *pijo*, etc.) that in the late 1990s and early 2000s was used, depending on the context, to define a tough stance, particularly among *màkina* and hip hop fans.

Drum'n'bass: 'Originally a generic term used as an alternative to jungle, by the mid-nineties drum'n'bass had become increasingly associated with new converts to the scene, who were often accused of being white, middle-class youths who sought to dissociate jungle from its raga roots' (Osborne 1999: 76).

Ear'holes: Boffins as they were called in Willis's classic *Learning to Labour* (1981 [1977]), in reference to their good disposition towards academic work at school.

Electronica: 'Essentially big beat re-packaged for the USA market, Electronica was invented by confused music journalists and marketing people, who, on finding the predominantly rock-oriented North American market liked UK dance acts such as the Chemical Brothers and the Prodigy, had to find a way of categorising it. The term, which bears little relation to the music, is used to describe anything from drum'n'bass to downbeat techno, as long as it sounds British' (Osborne 1999: 86-7). In Barcelona, at the turn of the millennium it gradually replaced 'techno' as the catch-all term for dance music with 'an artistic intention' – that is, with arty pretensions.

Flamenco (gitaneo, jaloteo): Music sound identified with gypsies and Andalusia, particularly flamenco but also the Catalan-born rumba and their hybrids with pop culture..

Flyer: ‘The traditional form of club advertising, the arrival of desktop publishing and the proliferation of club venues and nights during the eighties saw flyers develop into a boom industry. Initially consisting of scrappy pieces of paper or cardboard with printed text and maybe a rough-and-ready logo, as the competition grew the need for flyers to stand out and represent the quality of the night led to ever more elaborate design.’ (Osborne 1999: 98).

Empollón: Boffin in Barcelona, with a more directly derogative connotation.

Facha: Literally fascist, although it is generally used by interviewees to mean Spanish nationalist, ‘*pelao*’ or just identifying with Spanish nationalism.

Gabber: ‘Gabber kicked into life in Holland in the mid-nineties with DJs and producers pushing the beats per minute to incredulous heights’ (Osborne 1999: 107). In Catalonia, some *màkina* clubs played gabber music.

Garage (two-step, speed garage, US garage, UK garage): ‘Used as a generic term for soulful house music that has a Disco Diva vocal over the top, and not to be confused with lo-fi guitar music, garage gets its name from Larry Levan’s Paradise Garage club in New York’ (Osborne 1999: 109). In the UK, garage was known as US garage, to distinguish it from the developments termed UK garage (as well as speed garage and two-step garage): ‘Ragga-inspired MC chants and deep sub-bass lines, borrowed from drum’n’bass, are thrown in the mix, and the tempo is pitched up’ (Osborne 1999: 300).

Garagehead: hardcore fan of garage music.

Garrulo: Literally meaning a ‘rustic’ person, it evolved during the 1980s to describe working-class Spanish immigrants in Barcelona, with a meaning very similar to ‘*quillo*’ or ‘*cholo*’.

Geezer: A slang term for working-class tough, rough and rude youngsters.

Gitaneo(jaloteo, flamenco): See ‘flamenco’.

Goth: ‘Growing out of the back of the punk movement (...), goths took their inspiration from the dark fashion of Siouxi Sioux and by the mid-eighties had spawned a thousand gloom-ridden followers. Favouring black clothing, or dark colours such as deep purple, crushed velvet and leather, white make-up and black eye shadow and lipstick, elaborate silver jewellery, long dyed hair that’s often semi-spiked, goth fashion drew in equal measure from Hammer horror movies and mutant sci-fi flicks’ (Osborne 1999: 116).

Hardcore: It can mean either a sub-genre of punk rock originating in the United States in the late 1970s or a sub-genre of electronic music. ‘Growing out of the rave scene of 1989, hardcore reflected the intensity of rave DJ sets, which were usually shorter due to the number of DJs that were booked to play and were consequently harder than more leisurely club sets. Hardcore pitched the tempo of house music up and, rather than creating drum patterns on a drum unit, used sampled break beats that were left to kick and splutter at an ever-increasing b-p-m. (...) By 1991 hardcore had become an identifiable genre with its own thriving scene of second-generation promoters.’ (Osborne 1999: 129) In Barcelona, it found a public in the harder *màkina* clubs.

Hard-nock: A person who is rough and rude.

Headbanger: A slang term for those who like rock music. It refers to the fact that many rock fans move their head up and down following the rhythm of the music, often emulating a guitar player.

Helter skelter: A category used in the White School in Birmingham to refer to a type of electronic techno music liked by what some interviewees described as 'kevs'. The category most probably refers to the events called 'Helter Skelter' (music promoters in the UK who specialise in promoting superparties; <http://www.helter-skelter.co.uk/>). As one review of a recent Helter Skelter event held in a Birmingham venue puts it, 'The name alone conjures up visuals of raves past, anyone from the midlands who loves their dance will most probably have been to one of the Skelter events and had a night' (review by mrchewy at http://www.gurn.net/reviews/Helter_Skelter/11-01-2003/human_traffic, consulted in September 2nd, 2006). The web page (consulted in August 10th, 2005) of the promoters of Helter Skelter events explains the origin of the name as follows: 'Many people ask where the name 'Helter Skelter' originated from. The inspiration came from the fact that all the organisers of the first party had in common the word Helter Skelter for one reason or another'. The club Air in Birmingham, which opened after the fieldwork was carried out, has recently hosted Helter-Skelter parties in the city.

Hip hop: Used to name a music genre and its broader youth culture. The music genre is 'a style of popular music which came into existence in the United States during the mid-1970s, and became a large part of modern pop culture during the 1980s and since. It consists of two main components: rapping and DJing (production and scratching). (...) The music, along with hip hop dance (notably break-dancing) and urban-inspired art, or notably graffiti, these compose the four elements of hip hop culture, a cultural movement that was initiated by inner-city youth, mostly Blacks and Latinos in New York City, in the early 1970s. Though it can be referred to as an African American music, its creation and proliferation can be credited to many groups of people within the United States and around the world'. (W)

House: 'Derived from the disco music of Chicago of the early 1980s, house took its name from the city's warehouse parties and the Warehouse club, where luminaries such as Frankie Knuckles would cut up disco and electronic music on reel-to-reel tapes. The music grew from roots in New York's gay club scene and in particular The Loft and Paradise Garage. Essentially house beefed up disco, with the DJ using drum machines to exaggerate the kick drum' (Osborne 1999: 141).

Indie: 'Taking its name from Independent record labels, Indie music is antipathetic to the corporate music industry and is essentially low-tech guitar music. It became prominent in the post-punk period of the late seventies and early eighties and is a catch-all term for music that is not commercial or influenced by dance music' (Osborne 1999: 146).

Jaloteo (gitaneo, flamenqueo): See 'flamenqueo'.

Jungle: It 'grew out of the London hardcore scene of the early nineties. The music and its name immediately inspired controversy. In common with hardcore, the

tempo of the rhythms and the urban intensity of Junlist sounds jarred on the ears of happy house enthusiasts. Musically Jungle is a hybrid, combining break beats from hip hop and the tempo of hardcore with samples and ragga's half tempo, subsonic bass lines(...). As jungle developed it became divided into an increasing number of camps' (Osborne 1999: 156-7): ambient drum'n'bass, darkcore, drum'n'bass, hard step, jazz step, jump up, raga jungle, etc.

Key: A slang term for, roughly speaking, working-class tough anti-academic youngsters, also connoting roughness and rudeness. The origin of the word is possibly 'Kevin', a typically working-class name in England.

Leftfield: 'A term that has its roots in jazz-influenced music, describing almost anything that was experimental and underground but particularly related to cut up break beats and techno. It lost popularity after Neil Barnes formed Leftfield the band, at once killing the efficacy of the term and causing some confusion among beat heads trying to describe their musical preferences to the uninitiated' (Osborne 1999: 171-2).

Lolailo: Argot for a gypsy style, which includes flamenco music and a particular hairstyle, dress, and talk. It could be also used as a synonym of 'cholo', although its gypsy connotations are stronger in the term 'lolailo'.

Màkina: Coined as a genre in Barcelona in the early 90s, when the club Psicódro and its DJ resident, nando Dixkontrol, tried to import the Valencian club culture of the time related to what was known as 'bakalao' music. Whereas during the late 1980s and early 1990s its sound was close to the EBM, techno and industrial, in its commercial explosion from the mid-1990s it received the influence of hardtrance and happy hardcore. It was a massive phenomenon in Catalonia, particularly in working-class neighbourhoods, and had some influence in the North-East of England. (W) In Barcelona, *màkina* was seen by most individuals involved in arty electronic music scenes as non-quality dance music.

MCs: 'Growing out of the Jamaican sound system tradition of DJs or toasters bantering to the crowds while the records were spinning, the first DJ to recruit MCs (Masters of Ceremony) to support his sets was Grandmaster Flash, whose team of rappers became known as the Furious Five. While hip hop continued to employ MCs to support DJs, eventually leading to the rappers being more famous than the DJ, MCs went through periods of decline and popularity in other musical areas. In the UK, with its strong urban Jamaican population, the tradition of MCs already had roots and hip hop rapping quickly caught on, while many MCs adapted the toasting of existing sound systems to new musical styles such as house, garage and jungle' (Osborne 1999: 189).

(Club) **Night:** Most UK clubs, and since the late 1990s also some Catalan ones, are positioned among their customers not in terms of the club but of the different nights it holds, being or not organized by external promoters. The same night can thus move from one club to another and keep their following.

Pelao: A youth style derived from the skinheads, which combined their dress style and tough attitude with a taste for *màkina* music. It tended to connote anti-Catalan and racist dispositions as well.

Pijo: Term used in Barcelona to refer to either upper-class youngsters or a brand-conscious disposition in dressing and a snobbish attitude. The problem of the notion is that it is ambiguous; depending on the perspective of the person who uses it, it can mean very different things.

Posh: The English equivalent of 'pijo'.

Progressive: 'Coined as a genre in 1991 by journalist Dom Phillips, progressive house distinguished between the dominant rave scene and the new school of UK house. At the time the scene was split between rave and the more soulful and funky US garage and house of people such as Steve 'Silk' Hurley. Progressive house artists such as Laurence Nelson combined the rougher edge of European music with the funk of US grooves. (...) [I]ts popularity brought complications. Identifying what the tag meant became increasingly confusing. What it means now is anyone's guess, but it's not what Phillips, Chester, Weatherall and co. meant' (Osborne 1999: 232). In Barcelona, the term was popularised among *màkina* fans at the turn of the millennium, when it was popularised by the dance radio station Flaix FM.

Proles: proletarians, working class people.

Punters: customers. Used in the club scene to refer to the people attending the clubs.

Quillo: See 'cholo'.

Ragga: 'Raggamuffin music, usually abbreviated as ragga is a sub-genre of dancehall music or reggae, in which the instrumentation primarily consists of electronic music; sampling often serves a prominent role in raggamuffin music as well' (W). Ragga appeared first in Jamaica, and later in Europe and other parts of the world.

Rap: Often used as a synonym of hip hop music, it can also be used as only referring to the hip hop music which includes rapping.

Rave: 'Following the acid house explosion, which attracted the attention of the gutter press and the police, venues became harder to secure and, in the tradition of earlier warehouse parties that operated outside the legal licensing restrictions, raves began to be held in disused industrial spaces, fields, airstrips and farms. (...) The events happened all over the UK, but most notoriously took place in Blackburn, the south-east and London (...)' (Osborne 1999: 246).

Reggae: 'The term reggae is sometimes used in a broad sense to refer to most types of Jamaican music, although the word specifically indicates a particular music style that originated after the development of ska and rocksteady. Reggae is based on a rhythm style characterized by regular chops on the off-beat, known as the skank. The tempo is generally slower than that found in ska and rocksteady. Reggae is often associated with the Rastafari movement, which influenced many prominent reggae musicians in the 1970s and 1980s. Reggae song lyrics deal with many subjects, including faith, love, relationships, poverty, injustice and other broad social issues'. (W).

R'n'b: Rhythm and blues, a category coined as a marketing term in the United States in 1947 (W), that has had many different meanings since it became used at

the mid of the 20th Century. After initially referring to the ‘rocking style of music that combined the 12 bar blues format and boogie-woogie with a back beat, which later became a fundamental element of rock and roll’, it has been considered as a ‘catchall rubric to refer to any music that was made by and for black Americans’, as a ‘synonym for jump blues’, or as ‘an umbrella term invented for industry convenience, which embraced all black music except classical music and religious music, unless a gospel song sold enough to break into the charts’. ‘By the 1970s, rhythm and blues was being used as a blanket term to describe soul and funk. The ‘term R&B is today most often used to define a style of African American music originating after the demise of disco in the 1980s. This newer style, often described as contemporary R&B, combines elements of soul, funk, pop, and, from 1986 on, hip hop’. ‘Contemporary R&B has a slick, electronic record production style, drum machine-backed rhythms, and a smooth, lush style of vocal arrangement. Uses of hip hop-inspired beats are typical, although the roughness and grit inherent in hip hop is usually reduced and smoothed out’ (W).

Rock català (Catalan rock): ‘*Rock català*’ is the label that has been used of the rock and pop bands who sang in Catalan since they became highly visible in the early 1990s. In the summer of 1991, a concert organised by the Catalan government and attended by 22,000 people, marked the success of this recently emerged wave of rock sung in Catalan, as well as spreading an image as a politically fuelled phenomenon – an image that is challenged by Van Liew (1993), who considers it as a mainly self-propelled phenomenon.

Roughneck: A person who is rough and rude.

Skinhead: ‘Skinheads, named after their cropped or shaven heads, are members of a working-class subculture that originated in Britain in the 1960s. They were heavily influenced by the rude boys of the West Indies and the mods of the UK. In subsequent decades, the skinhead subculture spread to other parts of Europe, North America and other continents. Politically, skinheads range from far-right and racist to far-left and anti-fascist; and everything in between (including apolitical). Fashion-wise, they range from a more cleancut mod-influenced 1960s style to less-strict punk- and hardcore-influenced styles.’ (W) In Barcelona, through the neo-nazi skinheads they strongly influenced the *màkina* style, to the extent that it was often described as ‘pelao’ (shaved).

Techno (hard-techno, techno-house): ‘Inspired by the mid- to late-eighties house and garage club scenes of New York and, more directly, Chicago, techno has its roots in the motor city of Detroit. Artists such as Kevin Saunderson, Derrick May and Juan Atkins took the developing dance sound and married it with influences such as Kraftwerk, The Human League, Gary Numan and electro. (...) Techno was at once darker, more industrial and more cerebral than house’ (Osborne 1999: 290).

Teenybop: A teenager (a person between 13 and 19 years old), ‘especially a girl, who eagerly follows the most recent fashion, music, and other interests of her age group’ (CALD 2007)

Trance: 'Developing out of the psychedelic culture in Goa, the roots of trance go back to the early electronic experimentalism at the infamous beach parties of Anjuna and Vagator' (Osborne 1999: 295). At the beginning of the millennium, trance was the dance genre of the year.

Urban music: Urban music and urban contemporary are terms which have been used to refer to 'black' music, from hip hop to contemporary r'n'b.

Vallenato: Latin folk music which is very popular in Colombia.

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APPENDIX

General genres and categories

Answers to the first survey question, where respondents were asked 'Do you like the following?' and were given four options (very much, all right, indifferent and don't like) for each of the genres or categories.

		School					
		White	Mixed	Dual	Periph.	Catalan	Inner City
Boy bands	Very much	11	10	5	3	8	9
		13%	17%	11%	5%	11%	16%
	All right	33	22	26	27	29	19
		39%	37%	58%	47%	38%	33%
Indifferent	8	2	4	12	13	7	
	10%	3%	9%	21%	17%	12%	
Don't like	30	25	10	3	15	7	
	36%	42%	22%	5%	20%	12%	
Chart music	Very much	28	15	13	8	13	17
		34%	24%	30%	14%	17%	28%
	All right	42	24	16	37	38	23
		51%	39%	36%	65%	49%	38%
Indifferent	5	5	6	9	17	2	
	6%	8%	14%	16%	22%	3%	
Don't like	6	16	7	3	6	8	
	7%	26%	16%	5%	8%	13%	
Cheesy music	Very much	4	1	0	8	4	3
		5%	2%	0%	14%	5%	5%
	All right	4	2	1	11	15	4
		5%	3%	2%	19%	20%	7%
Indifferent	4	3	0	18	23	7	
	5%	5%	0%	31%	30%	12%	
Don't like	44	43	14	14	16	9	
	54%	74%	32%	24%	21%	16%	
Pop music	Very much	22	13	14	15	23	25
		26%	22%	33%	25%	29%	42%
	All right	44	20	14	30	32	15
		52%	33%	33%	51%	41%	25%
Indifferent	4	4	6	11	14	7	
	5%	7%	14%	19%	18%	12%	
Don't like	12	22	9	3	9	6	
	14%	37%	21%	5%	12%	10%	

		School					
		White	Mixed	Dual	Periph.	Catalan	Inner City
<i>Rock</i>	Very much	22	7	3	11	14	10
		26%	12%	7%	19%	18%	17%
	All right	25	12	9	16	32	15
		30%	21%	21%	27%	42%	25%
Indifferent	6	6	5	16	19	10	
	7%	10%	12%	27%	25%	17%	
Don't like	30	28	26	16	10	15	
	36%	48%	60%	27%	13%	25%	
<i>Brit pop</i>	Very much	18	9	7	7	10	10
		22%	15%	17%	12%	13%	18%
	All right	21	14	8	18	25	13
		26%	24%	19%	30%	33%	23%
Indifferent	15	6	4	20	19	7	
	19%	10%	10%	33%	25%	12%	
Don't like	11	23	12	5	10	7	
	14%	39%	29%	8%	13%	12%	
<i>Dance music</i>	Very much	39	17	19	24	27	15
		46%	28%	42%	40%	35%	25%
	All right	24	17	18	16	27	14
		28%	28%	40%	27%	35%	23%
Indifferent	7	5	1	9	13	8	
	8%	8%	2%	15%	17%	13%	
Don't like	12	18	7	7	7	12	
	14%	30%	16%	12%	9%	20%	
<i>Classical music</i>	Very much	7	1	1	6	7	6
		8%	2%	2%	10%	9%	10%
	All right	16	6	8	9	13	12
		19%	11%	18%	15%	17%	20%
Indifferent	11	7	5	19	27	13	
	13%	13%	11%	32%	36%	22%	
Don't like	47	36	30	25	28	23	
	57%	68%	68%	42%	37%	38%	
<i>Jazz</i>	Very much	11	8	5	1	4	9
		13%	14%	12%	2%	5%	15%
	All right	18	5	10	10	18	11
		21%	9%	23%	17%	24%	19%
Indifferent	12	14	7	25	23	13	
	14%	25%	16%	42%	30%	22%	
Don't like	40	27	21	23	30	11	
	48%	48%	49%	38%	39%	19%	

		School					
		White	Mixed	Dual	Periph.	Catalan	Inner City
<i>Rap</i>	Very much	17	34	25	12	6	17
		20%	55%	58%	20%	8%	29%
	All right	28	15	10	20	19	21
		33%	24%	23%	34%	25%	36%
Indifferent	12	4	1	13	34	2	
	14%	6%	2%	22%	45%	3%	
Don't like	24	5	5	13	14	10	
	29%	8%	12%	22%	18%	17%	
<i>R'n'b</i>	Very much	14	19	23			
		18%	32%	51%			
	All right	22	14	14			
		28%	24%	31%			
Indifferent	9	3	1				
	11%	5%	2%				
Don't like	22	15	4				
	28%	25%	9%				
<i>Garage</i>	Very much	44	33	33			
		52%	57%	73%			
	All right	17	10	9			
		20%	17%	20%			
Indifferent	4	4	0				
	5%	7%	0%				
Don't like	16	8	1				
	19%	14%	2%				
<i>Màkina</i>	Very much				18	13	24
					30%	17%	41%
	All right				11	18	15
					18%	23%	25%
Indifferent				16	18	4	
				27%	23%	7%	
Don't like				15	27	9	
				25%	35%	15%	
<i>Catalan rock</i>	Very much				6	12	1
					10%	16%	2%
	All right				12	17	7
					20%	22%	13%
Indifferent				17	18	7	
				28%	24%	13%	
Don't like				24	28	25	
				40%	37%	45%	

		School					
		White	Mixed	Dual	Periph.	Catalan	Inner City
<i>Arab rap</i>	Very much						16 28%
	All right						7 12%
	Indifferent						10 17%
	Don't like						10 17%

Activities

Answers to the survey question where respondents gave the frequency with which they did several activities (very often, sometimes, rarely, never).

		School					
		White	Mixed	Dual	Periph.	Catalan	Inner City
<i>Do you buy CDs?</i>	Very often	43%	56%	40%	22%	22%	22%
	Some times	42%	31%	36%	61%	56%	58%
	Rarely	12%	6%	17%	10%	15%	14%
	Never	3%	6%	7%	7%	6%	7%
<i>Do you go out at night to the city centre?</i>	Very often	16%	31%	12%	10%	17%	10%
	Some times	42%	24%	40%	41%	31%	42%
	Rarely	26%	24%	30%	32%	35%	20%
	Never	16%	20%	19%	17%	18%	27%
<i>Do you go to the city centre (daytime)</i>	Very often	30%	36%	56%	25%	21%	26%
	Some times	58%	47%	33%	51%	50%	40%
	Rarely	11%	11%	7%	20%	27%	12%
	Never	1%	5%	5%	3%	3%	21%
<i>Do you watch Top of the Pops/40p?</i>	Very often	18%	28%	30%	24%	10%	24%
	Some times	39%	26%	28%	27%	30%	29%
	Rarely	30%	19%	23%	19%	29%	16%
	Never	14%	28%	19%	31%	31%	31%
<i>Do you listen to Los 40 principales</i>	Very often				31%	22%	30%
	Some times				41%	29%	26%
	Rarely				20%	28%	13%
	Never				8%	21%	31%
<i>Do you listen to FlaixFM</i>	Very often				39%	36%	29%
	Some times				31%	23%	29%
	Rarely				12%	18%	10%
	Never				19%	23%	31%
<i>Do you listen to Ràdio3</i>	Very often				2%	3%	5%
	Some times				2%	4%	20%
	Rarely				14%	13%	23%
	Never				83%	81%	52%
<i>Do you listen to Rac 105</i>	Very often				3%	5%	10%
	Some times				15%	14%	21%
	Rarely				24%	29%	19%
	Never				58%	51%	50%
<i>Do you listen to Ràdio Tele-Taxi</i>	Very often				7%		16%
	Some times				7%	5%	22%
	Rarely				19%	14%	12%
	Never				68%	81%	50%

<i>Do you hang around in the street?</i>	Very often	32%	39%	29%	64%	71%	49%
	Some times	32%	21%	29%	31%	26%	42%
	Rarely	23%	18%	24%	3%	1%	4%
	Never	14%	23%	19%	2%	3%	5%
<i>Do you read teeny'bop magazines?</i>	Very often	3%	7%	12%	12%	13%	17%
	Some times	7%	16%	12%	24%	14%	16%
	Rarely	18%	11%	14%	15%	16%	14%
	Never	73%	66%	63%	49%	57%	53%
<i>Do you read music magazines?</i>	Very often	19%	27%	28%	7%	10%	19%
	Some times	16%	20%	21%	29%	33%	32%
	Rarely	23%	14%	21%	25%	32%	24%
	Never	42%	39%	30%	39%	24%	25%
<i>Do you go shopping/win dow shopping?</i>	Very often	34%	51%	33%	36%	37%	33%
	Some times	25%	25%	28%	39%	26%	33%
	Rarely	18%	5%	14%	17%	29%	19%
	Never	23%	18%	26%	8%	8%	14%
<i>Do you listen to Radio 1</i>	Very often	26%	27%	19%			
	Some times	26%	20%	24%			
	Rarely	21%	21%	21%			
	Never	27%	32%	36%			
<i>Do you listen to Galaxy Music?</i>	Very often	27%	41%	42%			
	Some times	25%	20%	30%			
	Rarely	12%	22%	9%			
	Never	36%	17%	19%			
<i>Do you listen to Silk City FM?</i>	Very often	19%	32%	47%			
	Some times	12%	21%	16%			
	Rarely	9%	7%	16%			
	Never	59%	40%	21%			
<i>Do you listen to BRMB?</i>	Very often	47%	36%	49%			
	Some times	33%	25%	9%			
	Rarely	12%	7%	26%			
	Never	8%	32%	16%			
<i>Do you listen to Kool FM?</i>	Very often	7%	20%	15%			
	Some times	16%	25%	12%			
	Rarely	8%	14%	22%			
	Never	68%	41%	51%			