

Exploring a Digitised, Networked Milieu: The Cardiff
Independent Music Sector in the Age of Immaterial
Product

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This thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the degree

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DECLARATION

This work has not been submitted in substance for any other degree or award at this or any other university or place of learning, nor is being submitted concurrently in candidature for any degree or other award.

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Abstract

The rise to prominence of digitised networks and platforms of wireless communication brings with it an increased focus on immaterial labour and production and the transformative effect that it has on economic, political and social relations, both within and across online and offline spheres. The creative industries of the UK are a particularly important sector in this respect, particularly the music industry, whose trajectory from pre-digital to digital modes of consumption and production has been swift and all-encompassing. This study sought to go beyond the traditional mainstream debates over the possibilities and the pitfalls of digitisation (i.e. online piracy and the vilification of those who engage in such practices), and understand both the economic and social bases of change as they were perceived by independent promoters, musicians and audiences within Cardiff's indie music milieu.

This research adopted a multi-method qualitative interpretivist approach comprising semi-structured interviews with musicians and promoters, ethnographic interviews with audiences and participant observation at live music events. It uncovered not only the evolving attitudes to 'piracy' within independent operations, but also the manner in which sharing of music and the associated promotion and communication which operates within the Cardiff milieu transforms not only the circulation and sharing of the music itself, but facilitates new forms of social relations across online and offline spaces. The de-commodification of music in its physical form, and its subsequent re-commodification across online and offline modes has resulted in dramatic shifts for the way music is promoted. This also raises important issues of 'prosumption' and the extent to which this is present, the changing economic and social value of music, authenticity and music in the digital age and the evolving position of physical forms of recorded music. Singular economic issues, such as piracy, cannot be addressed in isolation from the multitude of other implications arising from digitisation. A much wider understanding of these issues and their impact on musical enterprises, mainstream and independent, is required in order to address the full extent of changes afoot for both business and social interaction.

Glossary of Acronyms

BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BPI	British Phonographic Industry
BSA	British Sociological Association
BT	British Telecom
CCCS	Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (Birmingham)
CEP	Creative Economy Programme
CI	Creative Industries
CMC	Computer Mediated Communication
DCMS	Department for Culture, Media and Sport
DEA	Digital Economy Act
DEB	Digital Economy Bill
DIY	Do it Yourself Movements
DRM	Digital Rights Management
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
FAC	Featured Artists Coalition
F2F	Face to Face
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IFPI	International Federation for the Phonographic Industry
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IP	Intellectual Property
IPO	Intellectual Property Office
ISP	Internet Service Provider
OfCom	Office of Communications
MUD	Multi User Domain
P2P	Peer to Peer
RIAA	Recording Industry Association of America
SME	Small to Medium Enterprise

SNA	Social Network Analysis
SOCSI	School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University
UGC	User Generated Content
WB	World Bank

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Introduction

This thesis seeks to understand the impact of digitisation on independent music milieu; paying particular attention to both economic and social shifts of which the internet and the rise of digitised, immaterial product is a part. Through a qualitative case study of Cardiff's independent sector from 2009-2011, it aims to understand not only how traditional forms of production and consumption are being reproduced, but also reconfigured within these spheres, and the ways in which relationships between online and offline communication are being enhanced, but also problematised by such shifts. Putting the key debates within the media and policy in context, the research approaches the economic disruption caused by illegal filesharing as one part of the much more significant social transformations which are taking place within sectors other than the mainstream.

In December 2011, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport estimated that the creative industries contributed 2.89% GVA to the UK economy in 2009, with the Music and Visual & Performing Arts accounting for the largest number of businesses in the sector (DCMS, 2011). This highlights the significant contribution this sector makes to the UK's economy, and as the sector is becoming increasingly digitised, internet communication facilitates the development and dissemination of immaterial product (Lazzarato, 1996); intangible products which were once bought in physical form only. The invention of the mp3 file has been particularly problematic for the music industry, as the rise of illegal peer-to-peer filesharing practices, such as Napster, and latterly, The Pirate Bay, enables unauthorised sharing of music and film on a global scale. Threats to the mainstream industry's profit margins have driven aggressive government lobbying by large record labels (Bishop, 2005) to legislate against such practices. However, the case for understanding the social impact of digitisation and social networking which facilitate such practices, and the responses to such economic upheaval across a diversity of CIs has yet to be addressed extensively within either academic or policy literature.

Aligning with the corporate arm of the music industry, the New Labour government of 1997-2010 sought to address the concerns of a sector which claimed that unfettered filesharing would signal a catastrophic decline in the UK's music industry, and by extension, its worldwide reputation as a leading force in the creative industries. As part of its Creative Economy Programme (CEP), the government began to build into its vision to improve the creative industry's mission statements and recommendations as to the preservation of copyrighted goods, culminating in the Digital Economy Act 2010 (DEA), a piece of legislation which aimed to implement a monitoring system on consumers on content downloaded and introduce a 'three-strikes' system for persistent filesharers.

This response from a panicked music industry, however, is but one small element of the richer and much more compelling story attached to the impact of digitisation and immaterial product on society. What is described above, and the disproportionate media and policy attention it receives, reduces the digitisation issue to economic considerations of one arm of a much more diverse sector, one which is much more adaptive, and even accepting of the possibility of freer exchange of content online. The attention paid to the mainstream industry, at the expense of smaller operations within the UK demonstrates the ability of big business to make themselves heard. However, these views are not necessarily representative of all professionals working within the music industry, at any level. This research arose from an interest in understanding the unaddressed economic and social issues facing music industry professionals working in the independent sector. It aims to understand practices and perspectives which are more representative of the wider sector, and which are not necessarily bound by regulatory frameworks which govern the mainstream.

Although piracy is an important aspect of the debate over the sustainability of the music industry in the digital age, discussions within the industry and academia have focused less on the morality of illegal filesharing and are increasingly concerned with the reproduction of a digitised music milieu and the economic and social considerations that arise, of which illegal filesharing is an element. This study is concerned with understanding how the rise of computer mediated communication (CMC) and a resultant 'network of networks' (Castells, 2000; Hassan, 2004) has disrupted traditional modes of production and consumption within a particular creative sector; the music industry, focusing on Cardiff's increasingly amorphous independent music milieu (Webb, 2007) at a point when the changes wrought by digitisation

and global network communication is beginning to have a significant impact. Emerging practices of ‘prosumption’ (Bruns, 2008), consumers who are increasingly empowered to create and distribute original content, are supposedly enriching the milieu, encouraging creativity and innovation by drawing upon others works (McLeod, 2003; Gillespie, 2006). The potential for democratic participation in creative sectors has never been better, but the extent to which such capabilities are being exercised within other sectors of the music industry who are not necessarily governed exclusively by the profit motive are yet to be adequately examined.

Therefore, this work makes the case for examining an independent music milieu. It is concerned with operations which are small in scale and with business models distinct from that of the mainstream, in attempting to understand not only the attitudes to the disruption of established business models as a result of piracy, but also the social shifts in roles of production, consumption and distribution initiated by digitisation.

(i) Technology and Society: Impacts on Culture in a Digital World

This thesis takes the relationship of technology and society in the context of digitisation as a central theoretical issue. Eschewing both technologically determinist and social constructionist positions on the relationship, this thesis advocates the understanding that technologies can enable and constrain practice, but that material and immaterial manifestations of technology are also part of social phenomena. Understanding how such technologies are part of social life is central to this research. The use of facilities such as social networking sites and legal and illegal streaming facilities are important practices which constitute the social shifts which are taking place.

Additionally, the growth of networks as a key model of social organisation in contemporary digital society (Castells, 2000) has also shaped communication in enabling contact locally and globally, through online and offline networks. The ability for groups to mobilise in co-ordinated social action from the ground up (Hardt and Negri, 2000; Chesters and Welsh, 2006) has been a key concern in an era in which hierarchical power structures are undermined through a ‘network of networks’. This is particularly important with regards to this study in understanding how the capability of technology has allowed individuals to challenge the established economic order through circulation of unauthorised content. The

consequences of such actions are important not just for future economic sustainability of the music industry, but also in its social effects.

These social effects are wide ranging and contested, are dramatically reconfiguring interactions with one another and with creative product. Bruns (2008) suggests that the growth of networked communication allows consumers to engage much more interactively with cultural product than was previously possible. Whereas previously audiences were confined to practices of consumption, access to immaterial product and social networking facilities provides platforms which encourage productive engagement from all social actors. This democratisation of access and engagement with content which can constantly be re-edited and re-circulated affords the humble consumer a power previously denied them. The manner and extent to which such opportunities are being employed is of key concern to this research. What is important are the dynamics which are emerging as the outcomes of such practices are transmitted across online and offline domains, and as such is also concerned with uncovering the nature and extent of 'mutual embeddedness' of social and economic relations; online and offline (Turkle, 1997, Chandler, 1998; Hardey, 2002 Wellman, 2006). The ways in which an independent music scene is constituted through this interaction is equally as significant in understanding the impact of digitisation on the music industry, as interaction and economic impacts are inevitably intertwined. Social practices within an independent milieu will impact upon definitions of value of products and relations between different social actors, issues which will be addressed in this thesis.

These issues are of importance in the context of studying the music industry, and the case can be made for its selection as a sector of interest over other creative sectors due to the accelerated rate of its development with regard to digitisation. This acceleration has been due in part to the bringing of lawsuits by large record companies against their own consumers, as well as the introduction of pro-copyright preservation legislation in the US and UK. The music industry has therefore served as a test case for understanding possible trajectories of creative industries as they adjust to digital formats, and the extent to which pre-digital business models are ill-equipped to react effectively to such issues.

The research takes issue with the approach of government to the lobbying process of the music industry, and the lack of consideration paid to other sectors of the music industry in the

policy making and legislative process. What emerged from the CEP, and culminating in the DEA, was a pandering to the needs of big business whilst simultaneously ignoring more small-scale operations within the sector. The legislation can be accused of being based on a singular perspective; that of the preservation of the profits of the 'Big Four' above acknowledgement of the diverse perspectives and practices of the sector as a whole. This research, therefore, seeks to understand how professionals within an independent milieu viewed the changes afoot, both with regard to piracy and the wider social implications of the production and distribution of music across online and offline spaces. This has been achieved through taking the scope of interest wider than the singular issue of piracy.

(ii) The Research: Theoretical Approach and Design

Previous research into motivations and instances of piracy has tended to adopt quantitative approaches (Chiou et al, 2005; Bonner and O'Higgins, 2010) and also online qualitative methods (Freestone and Mitchell, 2004) to understanding and addressing the growing problem. These have adopted a moralistic stance on piracy which is in line with mainstream attitudes to the issue, and is orientated towards understanding ways to reduce illegal filesharing and increase legitimate sales. This literature ignores a body of other research which claims that such illegal activities in fact have the opposite effect on sales (Filby, 2008), namely, that practices of free circulation can stimulate legitimate purchase. There is also a significant body of academic literature which highlights the creative and innovative potential of free exchange of content, in line with open-source modes of thought (McLeod, 2003; Gillespie, 2006). However, an in-depth, qualitative exploration of an independent and their perspectives and practices on digitisation has not yet been completed. The term 'milieu' is adopted as a suitable conception for current forms of social coalescence around particular locations and genres of music, eschewing notions of 'subculture' or 'scene' which imply a more stable and fixed social formation (Webb, 2007). 'Milieu' allows for the destabilising effect of cohesive social groupings symptomatic of globalisation and increased fluidity of information flows in the digital age. It is upon these definitions of social formation, and the ways in which mutually embedded practice shapes, and is shaped by such social configurations, that this research is based.

In order to address the absence of independent perspectives on the policy and legislative changes, a study of this nature is a timely and valuable addition to the discussion of how the

creative industries could cope with the potential and challenges of digitisation. It is pertinent, therefore, to draw upon the experiences of promoters, musicians and audiences within the Cardiff milieu in order to understand impacts on practices of production, consumption and distribution.

An interpretivist approach was considered most appropriate for this study. Interpretivism privileges the understanding of the social world from the perspective of those being studied. It is not a value-free approach; it is interactive and seeks to gain insight into the production of meaning for respondents and researchers. This was important, as the study was seeking to understand the meaning making processes attached to operating in a music milieu during the transformation from the pre-digital to digital era. The research wanted to seek perspectives which had not been drawn on previously, in order to understand to what extent they agreed or diverged with the status quo perspective of the mainstream record labels, and what else they could reveal about the economic and social transformations emerging from the combination of online and offline communication. Qualitative approaches are considered most appropriate for achieving *Verstehen* (Weber, 1962), and thus a combination of ethnographic interviews with audiences and participation at live events and music seminars were employed alongside semi-structured interviews with professionals operating in Cardiff. This combination afforded first hand insight into the economic and social operation of the offline milieu through first hand researcher accounts, as well as an understanding of the experiences of professionals and audience members. Additionally, thematic content analysis of webpage content of social networking facilities and other relevant pages was also carried out to understand the nature of interaction between professionals and audiences in the online space.

This study was therefore conducted with the following main research question and three sub-questions in mind. It sought to understanding the experiences of professionals and audiences in the reproduction of the scene and the wider economic and social implications of digitisation beyond, but not excluding, the issue of illegal filesharing;

What is the relationship between the practices, perspectives and interactions of the production, consumption and distribution of independent music in Cardiff across networks and face-to-face domains?

(i) What constitutes the Cardiff indie scene 'milieu' and to what extent, and in what ways, do online and offline spaces work in conjunction to reproduce it?

(ii) How is the shift towards digitisation, the rise of filesharing practices and the changes occurring within the industry more generally viewed by those operating in the independent sector? What are the key social and economic issues arising from such changes?

(iii) How are filesharing practices, both legal and illegal, made sense of by all milieu members in the wider context of their participation within the local milieu? Can filesharing be distinguished from wider practices of participation in an independent milieu?

(iii) Intentions and Omissions: The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the research was therefore to understand, through both the experiences of the respondents and the researcher, the wider social and economic implications of the digital transformation. This takes the literature beyond the singular issue of illegal filesharing. Although this study also aims to inform future the direction of policy through providing insights into the independent sector (something that current policy fails to consider), its concern is with highlighting the wider social significance of digitisation on small-scale music industries; taking into account the nature of online/offline interaction and the concept of 'mutual embeddedness' and the extent to which the online space provides a more democratised environment for producers and consumers. Does this lead to increased productive potential of the latter as well as the former, and are practices of prosumption (Bruns, 2008) as widespread as the literature suggests?

This research does not engage with statistical methods to provide analysis on the extent of illegal filesharing within the UK or elsewhere. This has been explored in other papers and a revisiting of the issue in relation to Cardiff is not the intention of this study. The theoretical perspective and methodological approach used are more suited to exploration of perspectives and experiences of digitisation, and take such practices as established within the Cardiff milieu and beyond. It is not the place of this research to explore the moral dimensions of these practices; it accepts that they are embedded and seeks to explore the interaction

between these practices and others in gaining a fuller impression of the impact of online communication on an independent music milieu.

In terms of policy, the aim of the research is to draw attention to omissions in their consultation approach which have not allowed the voice of the independent sector to be heard on a par with the powerful businesses which occupy the mainstream music industry. This thesis also draws attention to the ways in which the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) have fallen short of its endeavour to ensure that small to medium enterprises (SMEs) are able to compete and be heard on the same platform as larger businesses in the creative industries. The lack of consideration for the strategies employed by smaller business, which often advocate adaptation rather than resistance, is a serious shortcoming which is discussed here.

(iv) Limitations of the Study

Firstly, although representativeness was not a principal concern of this thesis, which favoured a more in-depth knowledge of a specific music milieu offered by ethnographic methods and in-depth interviewing, it is acknowledged that a case-study approach has limitations. The research took place in a specific location, in a bounded time frame, and as such cannot be representative of the entirety of the independent sector. Cardiff's music milieu from 2009-2011 is temporally, culturally and economically specific, and findings therefore cannot be taken to be representative of all the issues faced by independent operators.

The term 'independent sector' is deceptive in its presentation as a single entity. Throughout the course of this research, it has been found that such a sector is complex in its organisation, and is constantly evolving and varied across geographical area and time. This study cannot hope to capture the entirety of such complexity, and in order for both academic and policy understandings to improve, more research needs to be carried out across a diversity of music milieux. This may hope to inform policy more comprehensively on the practices and perspectives of independent milieux in the UK and even internationally. This was evidently beyond the scope of this research. Further work may shed light on the complexity of the sector from the perspective of other, more developed milieux in cities such as London or Bristol, which would build upon the understandings gained here, and help explore themes uncovered in more depth.

Although this research sought data from locally based promoters of music, musicians and audiences at live shows, it is by far more reflective of professional (promoter and musician) perspectives than those of audiences. This was partly due to recruitment and methodological issues with regard to audiences, but also due to the enthusiasm of professionals in comparison to audiences, the expertise held by the former tending to produce richer data and themes which could be examined in more depth. This work would benefit from an additional audience study to build on the data collected here.

Structure of the Thesis

The structure of the thesis aims to firstly highlight major theoretical and empirical issues, as well as drawing into the discussion the relevance of the policy context. The theoretical chapter (chapter 1) discusses key debates regarding the relationship between technology and society in an era of digitisation; exploring the relationship between technology and social agency in an era of networked communication and immaterial product, as well as examining the positive and negative consequences of such shifts. The literature review (chapter 2) discusses the body of work around relationships between online and offline communication; the increasing capacity of culture to originate ‘from below’ drawing upon classic literature around subcultures and scenes, and the interpretation of such practices in the digital age; the ways in which contemporary music scenes have embraced ‘mutual embeddedness’ in practices of production and consumption and finally, the limits to this new empowerment offered by online platforms.

Chapter 3 provides detailed policy context around the creative industries from 2005 onwards, beginning with the inception of the Creative Economy Programme and ending with a discussion of the implications of The Hargreaves Review (2011). This chapter also relates such developments to the research site and relates the implications of policy to the respondents who took part in the research. Chapter 4, methodology and methods, clearly outlines the theoretical approach, research design and execution of the multi-method approach taken. Chapters 5,6 and 7 deal with the analysis and interpretation of the data. Chapter 5 discusses the ways in which Cardiff’s independent music milieu is both reconstituted and reproduced across online and offline domains. Chapter 6 discusses the impact of digitisation on the milieu, and the fundamental effects it is having on music in

terms of decommodification and re-commodification, value and sustainability of the milieu. Finally, chapter 7 focuses more closely on illegal and transgressive acts, and discusses the way these activities are viewed within the independent sector in Cardiff.

Chapter 8, the discussion and conclusion, draws together the analytical threads outlined in the empirical chapters in order to draw conclusions, but also reflects on the strengths, weaknesses and lessons drawn from the research.

Chapter 1

Technology and Society in the Era of Digitisation: The Interaction of Networked Structures and Social Relations

This research intersects with a variety of debates around network and cultural studies which aim to understand not only the impact of technologies on society, but also how social actions and relations shape the uses of such technologies in complex ways. Such key debates have never been more pertinent than to the rise of the mp3 music file as a primary format in which music is produced and shared to a global audience. The contested issues of ownership and control that it raises have important implications not only for the mainstream concern of copyright prevention, but for the development of mp3 technology and the way it is put to use, which have produced a reorientation of economic and social relations extending far beyond the concerns of major record labels and lobbyists. This section covers three main theoretical areas of concern to this research, which synthesise important debates for this thesis and aims to discuss both their uses and shortcomings, before outlining how the current research aims to add to the corpus of literature discussed.

The first section deals with overarching structural theory which informs the understanding of technology's impact on society in an era of 'modernity'. Here, it is argued that an understanding of the mutually dependent nature of structure and agency is crucial in exploring the complexity of the technology-society relationship. The following literature makes the case for viewing the relationship as not one force exerting influence on another, but a mutually contingent. Whilst this thesis is focused on mp3 technology, this chapter draws from a wide range of theory on technology which applies to a variety of media. Although some writers were theorising pre-digital, their ideas still have currency post-digital, and the context of their arguments will be detailed in the text.

The proposal that sociological thought might move away from the structure vs. agency dualism was addressed by Giddens (1990) in Structuration Theory; his attempt to understand the interaction and mutual dependence between the two phenomena, each previously

conceived as discrete and autonomous. The importance of such an idea forms the basis of this thesis' understanding of the technology/society relationship. Such a perspective makes the case for a consideration of agency, i.e. the interactions which occur between social actors within a music milieu. Understanding the importance of interaction in determining the social impact of digitisation is key to moving debates away from the singular economic issues of illegal filesharing which dominate mainstream discourses of digitisation, and move towards a more rounded consideration of the issues at stake. The dominance of Castells' *Rise of the Network Society* (2000), has brought into focus some of the economic and socio-cultural impacts of the rise of the internet and digitisation, and has been the pivotal literature upon which other network theorists have operated. This aligns well with those who have attempted to understand the economic significance of immaterial labour and immaterial product in the networked age (Lazzerato, 1996; Virno, 2004, Thrift, 2007). Although such work affords insight into how informational product is increasingly contested economically, politically and culturally, there is an absence of empirical data which addresses how such socio-cultural implications play out in practice and within a particular milieu.

Likewise, current debates on the technology/society relationship oscillate between favouring a purely technological determinist approach; celebrating the power of technology to enact social change, or towards understanding the significance of social action on the uses of technology and the autonomy of subjects to shape its uses. This chapter takes from Giddens Structuration Theory in positing that, as with his unifying of structure and agency, so too can sociological inquiry recognise the mutually constitutive relationship between technology and society. Understanding that there is a material basis for such relations, i.e. cultural products such as music, this thesis proposes that this mutual interdependence drives interaction and produces a multitude of social and technological effects, which are complex and intertwined. This concern drives the construction of the first research question of this study, which is to understand the material and immaterial interaction in the reproduction of the milieu. This literature also informs the second research question, which aims to understand the full range of social and economic issues facing those within the sector, understanding how they are affected, but also affecting change in their relations with other social actors in the milieu which extends beyond a consideration of piracy. It is this complexity in social interaction which this thesis aims to tackle in more depth, utilising a qualitative approach.

Addressing this complexity means addressing the full gamut of consequences raised by the technology/society interaction, celebratory or otherwise. The final section addresses both positive and negative consequences, proposing that mp3 technology contributes to a decentring of place (Meyrowitz, 1986; Casey, 1997) and the artist (McLeod, 2003) as a result of networked communication which does not always lead to improved economic and social situations for all. This makes the case for using qualitative inquiry to best understand these outcomes and their trajectory in terms of the independent music milieu, as the blurred boundaries caused by 'prosumption' (Bruns, 2008), the cultural enrichment of the scene through democratisation of creative and distributive capacities to those thought of traditionally as consumers, raise significant issues for commodification of such goods, democratic access to music and musicians' control over their product, amongst a myriad of other related consequences.

(1) Networked Spaces and Immaterial Product: Agency and Social Action in a Digital Society

Sociological discussions within the field of contemporary cultural studies have undeniably shifted away from a sole focus on class, race and gender as the dominant lenses through which analysis was constructed throughout the latter part of the 20th century. This has shifted towards an increasing concern with providing a deeper understanding of social action and social practices which take place within these structural frames. Giddens' (1984) attempt at reinterpreting modernity came through the formulation of Structuration Theory, which aimed to resolve the tension inherent in the structure/agency dualism through recognising the significance of social practices. Giddens conceived of the agent as having a complex interactive impact upon structures of society, and that the 'reflexive form of knowledgeability' (1984: 3) that they possessed afforded them a transformative capability within their social milieu. Power resources can therefore be mobilised between social actors or collectivities and not merely imposed from above on 'docile bodies' (1984: 16).

It is this complexity of interaction between structure and social action by agents which prefaces the key concerns and tensions of this thesis. Giddens' understanding of the reflexivity inherent within the strategies employed by social actors becomes ever more salient in a globalised world in which exchange of goods and information, as well as social interaction, are becoming increasingly disembodied from localised space and enacted on a

global scale, achieved through the use of networks as a key tool of communication and exchange. The mobilisation of agents within the networked society, and their increasing autonomy when it comes to initiating economic and cultural disruptions around the transaction of informational goods, or immaterial product, as it shall be referred to, is a key concern of this study as it focuses on a sector through which such transformations are occurring at an accelerated pace; the music industry. Giddens' work is particularly important to this research in that the 'reflexivity' he discusses in relation to structure and agency can be used to understand the ways in which social actors are making sense of technological transformations. Accounting for such reflexivity may help us to understand how these actors are adapting to the changes, as opposed to resisting in favour of economic and social conditions which existed pre-digital. Likewise, their reflexivity is subsequently working to deconstruct and reconstruct pre-digital societal structures in a reiterative cycle under which society and the individual are embedded.

At an overarching structural level, theoretical inquiry has offered certain perspectives on the causes and consequences of networked communication. The rise of computer mediated communication (CMC) and the advent of digitisation have prompted many sociologists to theorise about its implications for economy and culture. Manuel Castells' *The Rise of the Network Society* (2000) was an attempt to make sense of the emerging complexity of the growth of 'networks upon networks' (Hassan, 2004: 15) brought about by a rapid growth in the use of the internet. He proposed that the network society was profoundly disrupting established economic and social bases as a shift was made from a material goods based economy to that of one based primarily on the rapid exchange of information. His five features of the network society constitute the heart of the new economic order; *information as the raw material*; *the pervasive effects of new technologies* (societal existence is shaped by technology); *networking logic* (and its ever present complexity); *flexibility* and finally, *the importance of convergence technologies* (the assimilation of multiple functions onto one platform). Castells also highlighted the application of knowledge circulated in providing a 'feedback loop' of iteration and reiteration of information to stimulate innovation amongst both producers and consumers. This was a key issue, as the capacity to reiterate and recirculate information, particularly copyrighted information, would go on to become a site of significant economic and cultural contestation within the music industry, the subject of this research.

Castells' work has formed the basis of the way we understand the significance of the rise of networked communication in all aspects of economic, political and cultural life. His characterisation of networks and their key features provided insight into how technological advances were influencing economic and social spheres. He argues that a new 'culture of real virtuality' is emerging (2000: 372), in which reality is captured or immersed in a virtual setting. It is not merely a way to communicate and document experience; it becomes an integral part of the experience in and of itself. This process fundamentally re-shapes culture as it is transformed through new modes of communication, disembodied social relationships; the consequences of which are of importance to Castells. Similarly Lash (2001) in explaining his concept of *technological forms of life*, describes how, as technology mediates social interaction, it increasingly becomes a way of life, and is immersed in the process of a reproduction of culture, as Castells outlines. This culture-at-a-distance, in which individuals reproduce culture at significant geographical distance from one another, could not exist without technology, and thus technology and culture become mutually-dependent. Technological forms of life are non-linear in that meaning is compressed in abbreviated forms of communication, and in the fact that technology moves at such a pace that culture becomes increasingly ephemeral (2001: 110). Additionally, a decreased emphasis on the importance of discourse and narratives reduces such forms of interaction to units of information until the individual comes into contact with them.

The accusation of technological determinism has been levelled at Castells' work by many; notably Webster (2002), who takes issue with the autonomous conception of the *mode of production*, which determines how production surpluses are distributed, and the *mode of development*, which drives productivity and determines the amount of surplus production. Castells claims the mode of production is technological and produces growth. However, he does not credit capitalism with the creation of the mode of development and instead attributes it to autonomous dynamics of discovery (Castells, 2000: 59). Both Garnham (2004) and Webster (2002) dispute the autonomous role of the mode of development and emphasise the determining role of the mode of production (2004, in Geof: para 17). They argue that Castells' claim implies that the mode of development follows its own technological logic, and is thus determinist in its approach. These early critiques, alongside accusations of a vague and unwieldy conceptual framework (Van Dijk, 1999), highlight the lack of engagement by

Castells with regard to the technology/society relationship. Both the theory and its critique focus predominantly on broad structural change without critically engaging with the social implications of the network society. There is little detail with regard the social practices that are emerging from networked interaction in a particular milieu and their geographical location. This is also true of Lash's analysis (2001), whose discussion of technological forms of life, although acknowledging the emergence of important characteristics of online communication, fails to mention the importance of mutual embeddedness of online and offline domains. The actual accomplishment of social interaction in these new virtual spaces, and the potential to enact social and economic change through such contact has not been fully addressed utilising empirical qualitative approaches to data collection and analysis. This research seeks to adopt an approach which extends the work of Castells in its consideration of economic and social issues as opposed to a broad structural view of the network society. A consideration of online/offline relations, across local and global boundaries, and between small scale milieu and the priorities of the corporate music industry will be made, in an attempt to elucidate these issues of value of music, democratisation in 'prosumption', authenticity, ownership and control and sustainability in a setting undergoing rapid change.

The importance of understanding the potential of collective social action to enact change around socially charged issues of science and technology has been identified by Winner (in Feenberg and Hannay (1995)). He highlights the plurality of perspectives around contentious scientific and technological issues, as opposed to overriding consensus, which provides weight to arguments that the use of technologies is socially mediated and subject to a variety of appropriations which are dependent on socio-political concerns. He broadly supports the notion that scientific knowledge is socially constructed, and as such our practice will ultimately influence the way such technologies are put to use. Welsh (2000) in his discussion of the relationship in the context of nuclear power, also emphasises neither a technologically determinist nor overly social perspective, but to use culture to articulate an understanding of the interrelationship. Advancing Giddens, he suggests that his concept of 'knowledgeability' sidelines cultural practices and relations and draws upon Ellul (1964) in his discussion of 'technique', the term used to understand the 'performance repertoires' of humans in relation to technology (2000: 26). Such techniques draw heavily from tradition in order to produce a commitment to irreversible technological trajectories, such as in the case of nuclear power. This can also be applied to the dominant business models of the mainstream music industry,

in that, just as in that the moral and scientific case for nuclear power was made with the interests of ‘progress’ at heart, so too is the case for maintaining pre-digital business models by the corporate music industry. Such business models are presented as the ideal and most fruitful means of sustaining the creative sector and progressing the careers of artists, and have, for a large part of the 20th century, become dominant in that they are the most effective in securing lucrative revenue streams, to the exclusion of all others. They have also been successful, until this point, in resisting any threat to their dominance despite notable format developments, such as the cassette (McLeod, 2003). Welsh uses the concept of technique to explore the potential for cultural contestation of such dominant discourses, and the capacity for New Social Movements to contest such trajectories. This is of use in understanding how certain sections of mainstream and independent music scenes are using the technologies provided by digitisation to contest mainstream justification for such business models. Thus the complexity of the technology/society interaction begins to be unpacked.

Later work by Castells, such as *Communication Power* (2009), sought to address some of the gaps identified in his trilogy. In this work, he focuses more closely on power and the control of communication through processes of communication, stating more explicitly than in previous works that power relations are both formed and reconfigured within such space as multiple interests of social actors, as well as established media corporations, are advanced (2009: 57). He acknowledges the collapse of the ‘audience’ in its traditional form and the subsequent ascendancy of innovation from ‘consumer turned producers’. The ability of grassroots social movements to take control of this form of communication has profound consequences for economic and social relations, particularly with regard to this research, which is concerned with the music industry.

David’s (2010) analysis of Castells with reference to the effect of file-sharing on the mainstream music industry takes his work yet further, and specifically with reference to the cultural milieu of concern to this research. He presents an interpretation of his work which simultaneously acknowledges elements of technological determinism, highlighting the ‘relative autonomy and causal efficacy’ with which Castells conceives of technological development (2010: 11), but which also acknowledges that new technologies change the scope for action of individuals and organisations. However, he also highlights the lack of attention to the importance of individual or grassroots social action in Castells structural

approach, and the simplicity of assuming that the medium alone determines social action without exploring the multitude of ways in which geographically proximate communities creatively engage and remake technologies (Miller and Slater, 2000). David draws upon the concept of affordances in order to synthesise approaches which focus on interaction, to others which look at institutional and systemic social relationships that do not fall prey to reductionism.

David's approach to analysing the effect of networks attempts to establish a compromise between granting autonomy to technology and simultaneously exploring the multitude of affordances and social relationships which also have a bearing on uses and consequences of technological development. In much the same way as Giddens, who theorised a compromise, within the structure/agency debate, many have sought to address the body of literature on technological determinism through understanding the potential power of social action to impact on the creation and uses of technology itself. The ways in which such action disrupts established power relationships and enables action from below, from those who may have previously considered themselves powerless, is also a focal point of concern for this research. This has direct relevance to this research, in that, through understanding the complexity and 'mutual embeddedness' of technology and society, we can understand the way that this is integral to the reproduction of Cardiff's independent music milieu. Furthermore, the technological enablement of illegal filesharing has, and is couched within, much wider and complex economic and social issues, which this thesis aims to address. The literature on immaterial labour, the resulting product(s) and the implications understanding the technology/society relationship in the digital age are explored in the following section.

(2) Immaterial Labour and Immaterial Product: Social Action and Interaction in a Contemporary Music Milieu

In contrast to literature which provides predominantly structurally based understandings of the technology/society relationship, there is an alternative body of literature which draws upon postmodern notions of social relations in order to understand the transformations afoot. This literature concerns itself with understanding the transformation in economic and social relations initiated by individuals or movements originating from the grassroots, as overarching conceptions of stratification, such as class, ethnicity and gender are of decreasing significance to these analyses. Unlike Castells, certain discussions of immaterial product and

immaterial labour seek to understand how power from below can work to enact social change within and across online and offline social spaces. This is of particular significance to the music industry and the established threat to mainstream music label dominance over musical output as a result of the rise of the mp3 music file, which addresses the threat to capitalism in its pre-digital form in a more nuanced way than Castells' and others' more structural conceptions of the network society.

Initially, Italian Marxists, such as Lazzarato and others have discussed the implications of a realignment of power initiated from below. His essay, *Immaterial Labour* (1996), highlights the importance of this new form of cultural product which results within these emerging conditions of production and exchange. In line with the transformation into a post-Fordist economy, immaterial labour is defined as the integration of intellectual, technical, creative and manual work. Immaterial labour renders the consumer active within the production process, continually redefining the conditions of communication of immaterial product, rendering the production and consumption process increasingly complex (1996: para 7). The increased prominence of immaterial labour and the resulting immaterial product, in addition to the supposed autonomy of the 'consumer' to produce and circulate informational products online has lead some theorists to conclude that we are witnessing a wider shift in power and the capacity to innovate beyond the traditional owners of the means of production. Here, the concept of 'Multitude' become important, in emphasising the power of the collective social action which coalesces around a diverse set of issues faced by societies in postmodernity (Hardt and Negri, 2000; Virno, 2004). This is a particularly salient shift for the music industry, in which the rise of the mp3 music file is disrupting established value chains and means of creation and dissemination, enabling those once labelled simply as consumers arguably assume control a degree of processes of production and dissemination of music in an immaterial form. To what extent, and in what form this is taking place is one of the key concerns of this research.

This echoes the pre-digital work of Appadurai (1986), who discussed the politics surrounding a commodity, how it may be appropriated by those who hold power and status, but how it can also define dominant 'regimes of value' which circulate within an economy. However, he also notes that notions of value are culturally mediated, and not all will agree upon the dominant 'regime of value'. As technological development continues to further innovation,

dominant regimes may be disrupted and displaced as cultural conceptions of the value of a particular commodity shift (1986: 34). As this innovative potential impacts upon the music industry, the established bearers of power with regard to music may lose a degree of control over the establishment and maintenance of established value chains, and the 'Multitude' may subsequently be afforded more control over production and dissemination. Hardt and Negri claim that immaterial labour has become hegemonic in qualitative terms (Aufheben, 2006), having implications for both labour and society as the Multitude assume increased control of the modes of production. This may begin to explain the shifts we are witnessing in the value of cultural output and emergent modes of production and consumption online. However, this is too simplistic a conception of such shifts to be considered credible; such transformations do not occur in such a wholly uncomplicated manner. Key critiques of Hardt and Negri accuse the concept of the Multitude as being too utopian and celebratory of the potential of the Multitude, failing to acknowledge the underdeveloped nature of such shifts and the complexity in the transformation of power from established owners of the means of production to the Multitude. Chesters and Welsh (2006) also critique the concept of Multitude in its singularity, proposing that there are potentially multiple Multitudes, and thus the potential for inclusion in a particular Multitude is problematic.

Blunden (2003) in particular disputes Hardt and Negri's claim that cooperation within the Multitude can manifest itself independently of capital, proposing instead that the properties of immaterial labour are in fact constitutive of capital and are bound to capitalist patterns of stratification and inequality. They are also accused of assuming that immaterial labour is inherently subversive, ignoring the ways in which these processes have in fact become part of capitalism, oppressing the worker and denying them full capacity to create and disseminate as they claim is possible. It is this that is salient for this research, as celebratory narratives of immaterial labour and product need to be critiqued and questioned as independent and resistant to existing forces of capitalism. It is from this point that we can understand the celebratory narratives of the literature, and the potential for the network society to re-orientate power relations around immaterial goods and to draw attention to alternative 'regimes of value' which exist around sustainability within the independent music milieu. Such regimes are multiple, complex and not always easily extricated from the dominant economic and social frames which have successfully governed the mainstream music industry for many decades, but are distinct in that they are perpetuated by the 'Multitude' as

opposed to the oligarchical structure of the corporate music industry, thus drawing attention to the importance of the social in their reproduction.

The idea that immaterial labour is a purely positive development is mirrored by the largely deterministic conception of technology's impact on society by the medium theorists of the 1960's and 1970's. Their interpretation of the rise to prominence of television and other media perpetuated technological determinism as the dominant discourse through which such relations were understood. McLuhan's famous phrase 'the medium is the message' (1964) highlights the interpretation of technological dominance without consideration of social action or agency within such complex relations. McLuhan's thesis that the media used to transmit content was the key to understanding the influence of technology even went as far as to say that the content itself is of little significance or effect. Kittler's information materialism theory (in Beer, 2006) also advocates an understanding of technology in which its material structures are central (2006: 101); the subjects who engage with the technology are constituted by the media they use. Such ideas were also supported by Innis (in Meyrowitz, 1985), who proposed that the power wielded through technology has the power to break monopolies and provide new potential for control in a technological society. To various degrees, these theorists contend that accessible media can democratise culture through influencing social action. The mechanisms which constitute online communication, namely mp3 and social media, have varying impacts on music audiences' ability to not just consume, but also participate in the production of culture, and is to some degree influenced by the form it takes. However, in their haste to hail technology as a dominant and liberating force for good in society, medium theorists ignored the potential of the social to not just influence technology, but also failed to acknowledge their deeply entwined relationship. Although these facilities shaped the potential of social actors, this uni-directional approach detracts attention from the ways in which technology can be socially and culturally organised (Gillespie, 2009: 58).

The reaction against medium theorists' conception of this complex relationship sought to understand the significance of social action and politics on the uses of technology, emphasising primarily the importance of realising that social action dictates the way technology is developed and used, as opposed to the existence of a purely one-way conception of technology's ultimate dominance over social uses and relationships. Sterne (in

Gillespie, 2009) recognises that technology is bound up with social, cultural and material mechanisms, acknowledging that it can affect, but also be affected by human practices. The very nature of its creation is shaped by socio-cultural considerations; there is no such thing as a pure, isolated history of technology. Theorists who advocate the importance of social agency in this relationship are extensive and are situated across both technological and media theory.

MacKenzie and Wajcman (1999: 4) identified the weaknesses in early conceptions of the technology-society relationship as over-simplified in favour of technological determinism, at the expense of the exploration of socio-cultural factors. Since McLuhan, the influence of medium theory has declined in favour of understanding the symbiotic relationship between technology and society. This literature has relevance to the current research, concerned with the impact of such relationships to the independent music industry, as the explosion in online sharing of music has been in part facilitated by, but also facilitated, the increased use of social networking platforms such as MySpace, Facebook and Twitter, amongst others. The capacity of these social networks to facilitate social interaction alongside the increased circulation of digital products makes the mutual dependence of technology and society especially worthy of study given the prominence such spaces assume in a digitised society.

Raymond Williams (1974) was one of the first cultural theorists to suggest that technology should be viewed within the social dimensions of its development and use. In his discussion of the impact of television, he disputes the traditional technologically determinist views of the impact of TV on social life, arguing that technology was not creating new social conditions, but that technological development emerges out of a complex interaction of social needs and financial prioritisations which form the parameters of possibility regarding technological development. As with TV, it is this complexity of technological, economic and social demand and affordance which has brought about the potential for development in the digital era, and which forms the landscape of technologies, their uses and effects in the present. Bearing in mind his suggestion that every technology is shaped from within by the social requirements of its development, many subsequent theorists have explored the social dimension of technological development and use in their own work. Kline and Pinch's (1999, in MacKenzie and Wajcman: 113-16) Social Construction of Technology (SCOT) theory, suggest that relevant social groups play a significant role in the development of a technical

artefact and share in the creation of its meaning, stating that the ‘interpretive flexibility’ of an artefact allows its meaning to be created according to the needs of different social groups or individuals. This advances thought beyond other social constructionist conceptions of technology through acknowledgement of the significance of both artefacts and their use a radically different according to the nature of their appropriation by various social actors. This has progressed sociological thought beyond the technologically determinist view and recognised this mutually reinforcing relationship. Such ‘interpretive flexibility’ holds particular importance for this research, in that it recognises the malleability of technological use in line with the requirements of particular social groups. Cardiff’s independent music milieu may utilise technologies to particular effects in diverse ways, and it is the role of this study to determine to what extent, and for what purposes they are being used, and the consequences of their use for sustainability of the local economy.

Beer (2006), in his unpublished thesis entitled *Wired for Sound: on the digitisation of music and music culture*, explored this interaction utilising the concept of information materialism to explain shifts from analogue, or pre-digital, engagement in music technology towards the accommodation of digitisation and its implications. Drawing upon Heidegger, he highlights how technology cannot be conceived of only as instruments, but as formed of an interplay of practices, rhetoric and discourse, which forms the basis of an information materialist approach to digitisation. He proposes the adoption of Affordance Theory to advance beyond technologically determinist approaches.

Affordance means simply to understand that technology can offer potential, but also that it can enable and constrain certain practices. These practices are couched in the social phenomena which occur within the boundaries of material constraint (2006: 112). Although this does not acknowledge technology as social phenomena, it does recognise the transformative power of the material properties of technology within the environment. The materiality can both enable and constrain the way technologies are used and interpreted, and thus have both a shaping influence on, and be shaped by human uses and interaction. Affordance Theory does not simply apply to physical forms, such as PCs and mp3 players; it also recognises that individuals are constantly interfacing with digital technologies. Instead of viewing technology as a detachment of information from its material form, the impact of material artefacts, such as mp3 players, filesharing programmes and associated social media

platforms are seen as engaged with the practice of everyday life in order to understand this complex interaction. The concept of affordances was also used in David's (2010) discussion of Castells, by way of looking for a solution to the technological determinism versus social constructionist debate. He proposes that social constructionist approach often results in reductionism to its own levels of explanation, and instead suggests that the term 'affordances' should be used as a bridging term to allow analysis at all levels, from language and interaction up to systemic social relations and practices. It is from this perspective that this research is approached; undertaking qualitative inquiry to understand the implications of social practices at all levels and with a variety of analytical concerns, furthering Castells and others in understanding how the mp3 file and social media is disrupting the influence of dominant and established relations of capital and social interaction in an independent music scene.

Additionally, this research aims to expand not only the level and nature of analysis of the impact of digitisation in a particular geographical location, within a particular creative sector, but also to question the uncomplicated narratives initiated by the technological determinists. There have been notable attempts to provide more nuanced explanations of the network society, Thompson (1995) being one. He proposed that new media produced three types of interaction; traditional face-to-face interaction; mediated interaction, where relations were established by the modern modes of communication, such as letters and telephones; and finally, mediated quasi-interaction, where communication is established by mass media, for an unknown and unlimited set of recipients. Thompson contends that the ability of quasi-mediated interaction, with its distortion of time/space when compared with face-to-face communication, allows users to bring an increased diversity of abilities and range of responses which affords greater agency to users in terms of stimulating collective action and concerted challenges to established power mechanisms (1995: 116). Thompson proposes that this can shift relations of power quickly and unpredictably, fuelled by the increased speed of information flows. In *Merchants of Culture* (2010), Thompson's exploration of the publishing industry and the impact of the e-book, he explores how technology and the way it is used economically, as well as its social impact, draws out some of the notable gains and losses with regards to a specific cultural industry. On one hand, the growth of e-book and e-reader sales have boosted publishing sale on an unprecedented scale, on the other hand, the industry has to contend with the threat of piracy, and the implications of ceding their content

to third parties, such as Google and Amazon, and the issues of control and quality that these developments create (2010: 363). Although there have been a multitude of positive outcomes of networked systems in terms of accessibility and democratic expression, there are flip sides to these affordances, and to explore these in full through qualitative research into Cardiff's independent music milieu will allow a more comprehensive picture with regard to issues of social agency, authenticity and the implications of digitisation for the lived space in which social actors reside. It is these issues, and the justification of the research which forms the rationale for the final section of this chapter.

(3) The Significance of Place and 'Placedness' across Online and Offline Spaces: The Case for Qualitative Inquiry

This section aims to move on from both binary conceptions of technology and society which permeate many theoretical discussions, as well as purely positive conceptions of technology as part of social life, towards addressing some of the complexity presented by technological development. Firstly, it must be made clear how 'place' and 'space' are considered in this research. 'Place', alongside references to location and locale, refers to the physical, geographically placed social arena, whereas 'space' refers to the more amorphous concept of the non-physical social domains of the internet. Social actors 'inhabit' and communicate across both domains. The term 'placedness' can be understood as the exploration of the relationship of each social actor to each domain.

Here, it will be argued that not only must sociologists be mindful of the mutually constitutive nature of the technology/society relationship, but also that they must take a measured approach to understanding both its potential and drawbacks, with particular reference to the research concerns and sites drawn upon here. It is argued that there are simultaneously positive and negative outcomes arising from various types of technological appropriation, dependent on the purposes for which it is used and the individuals and social milieu who engage with it. The particular use of networked technology, including both methods of circulation and sharing of music content, in addition to the transformed social practices taking place as a result of the 'mutual embeddedness' of online and offline communication around the music milieu in Cardiff provide a distinct set of localised issues. Within this milieu, there arise both positive and negative consequences of technological engagement, with the same developments often providing both good and bad outcomes for those involved.

This section aims to address the potential negative consequences of technology as a way of unpacking such complexity, in advance of the presentation of data, which explores this in more depth. It is argued that despite the ability of technological advance to create larger networks, fluid transmission of information on a global scale (Urry, 2003) and democratic access to such information (Thompson, 1995; Poster, 2006), that these developments can be negative in their consequences. Such developments not only cause a de-centring of geographical place and space, causing a disruption to the once established status of the artist and their relationships with their audiences. Such disruptions form the basis for a justification of qualitative inquiry and its use in exploring social practices and their consequences for such relations.

Postmodernists have identified similar shifts, but have elaborated upon their consequences in very different ways. Huyssen (1986) has highlighted the paradigm shift in his discussion of the transformation from modernism (dominant up until the 1960s), to the rise of postmodernism from the 1970s onwards. He argues that the oppositional nature of modernist conceptions of high culture versus the avant garde; for example, the counter-cultural movements of the 1960s, has become less distinctive as the ethos of such opposition has withered and the rise of postmodernism has occurred. This has brought about an increasingly amorphous and scattered set of activities (1986: 186). Under such conditions, rigid distinctions between traditionalist and avant garde conceptions of culture are breaking down as forms of cultural product adopt experimental enmeshing that draws upon both sets of principles. This de-demarcation of modernist and progressive principles means that the basis for such distinction between such rigidly relational terms as producer/consumer, author/reader and professional/layperson are increasingly contested. Culture and artistic production, argues Huyssen, is no longer about oppositional distinctions, but experimental enmeshing in which definitions and practices are simultaneously performed by one individual. This aligns with discussions by Bruns (2008) and others who identify disruptions to established value relations (Appadurai, 1986; Thrift, 2008) as well as the performance of simultaneous producer/consumer roles. Although these explanations go some way to explaining the nature of the disintegration in established economic and social structures within the culture industry, what is needed is an understanding of how this may play out in an

independent music milieu in light of the digital era, and which addresses the multitude of possible consequences of technological development.

Here, it is useful to revisit Giddens' ideas around social systems in times of modernity. He considers contemporary society as modernity becoming more radicalised, as opposed to succumbing to notions of post-modernism. Rather than thinking about society in functionalist terms of 'social order' and how society is bound, Giddens explores how society binds time and space. Furthermore, the reflexive knowledgeability which permeates social life creates a dynamism which re-orders and separates time and space, and thus social relations (1990:14-17), as Giddens explains;

*The dynamism of modernity derives from the **separation of time and space** and their recombination in forms which permit time-space 'zoning' of social life; the **disembedding** of social systems...and the **reflexive ordering and re-ordering** of social relations in the light of continual inputs of knowledge affecting the actions of individuals and groups. (Giddens, 1990: 17 (his emphasis))*

As globalisation, and the associated networked communication takes hold, place is increasingly influenced by distant locales and social actors are increasingly able to foster relations with those not within their immediate locale. Such disembedded relations reinforce time-space separation, and have important consequences for geographically placed social milieu. The possibility that such space-time disembedding can both extend the reach of those within a local milieu, but also potentially unravel and disperse its influence within its geographical context, is explored here with reference to Cardiff's independent music milieu. What emerges is a myriad of consequences, both positive and negative, which simultaneously strengthen relations between social actors, but also threaten the foundations on which they are based. Here, we explore firstly, the de-centring of the local milieu, then the de-throning of artists and finally, a re-examination of definitions and practices of authenticity within such spaces.

Casey (1997) elaborates on the importance of place and its significance in the construction of society's and social actors' history and identity, urging a redefinition of place within the context of an ever-changing society. The ways in which electronic media change the significance of space has been an important debate in sociology even before the development of the internet for widespread use. Meyrowitz (1985), in his consideration of medium theory and Goffman's dramaturgical approach to understanding social interaction, discusses how

changes in the media affect physical, face-to-face social environments, drawing upon how previous media theorists, such as Eisenstein (1979), highlight that the development of print evokes new senses of authorship and control over the content transmitted through the printed word. Such shifts in communication contribute significantly to social change, leading firstly to a gradual disintegration of the hierarchical nature of access and participation with the development of different communication technologies, and destabilising established notion of social 'place'. However, he is critical of theorists such as McLuhan and Innis for their lack of clarity and evidence with regard to their technologically determinist perspective, in addition to their lack of attempt to link analysis of media characteristics with an analysis of structure and the dynamic of social interaction (1985: 27). He is also frustrated with situational theorists who ignore the impact of media on interaction (1985: 33). It is this that Meyrowitz addresses in outlining the importance of shifts in social relations, interaction and understanding media in context. He attempts to create a framework which understands the significance of a change in media forms and their impact on social interaction in two senses, and highlights that;

*Changes in media in the past have always affected the relationship **among** places...but the relationship between place and social situation was still quite strong. Electronic media go one step further: They lead to nearly total dissociation of physical place and social 'space'....where we are no longer determines where we are and who we are socially (Meyrowitz, 1985: 115 (his emphasis))*

Drawing attention to the ability to participate in distant events, there is a destabilisation in audience/performer relations due to geographical division, but also a breakdown in social status, to some degree; the evolution of media has therefore blurred the boundaries between stranger and friend, affecting relationships between those involved. This blurring of distinctions echoes literature from Huyssen (1986) and Bruns (2008), with regard to production and consumption.

Increasingly, sociologists and geographers emphasise that physical space does not define who we are socially. This echoes Giddens' time-space disembedding, but with a more substantive focus on the effects of media. What is useful here is both the identification of such temporal and spatial shifts, which are significant when examining a specific locale, such as Cardiff, but also the emphasis on the importance of examining these changes in terms of its effect on social interaction, the main focus of this research. Such issues are pertinent when understanding how more advanced electronic media, specifically the networked capability of

the internet, will have as we move into the digital era, and the complexity that arises as both economic and social relations are disrupted.

Webb (2007), in his study of the music milieu in Bristol, highlights such complexity with specific orientation to independent local music operations. Durrschmidt's (2000) definition of milieu acknowledges;

a relatively stable configuration of action and meaning in which the individual actively maintains a distinctive degree of familiarity, competence and normalcy, based on the continuity and consistency of personal disposition, habitualities and routines, and experienced as a feeling of situatedness (2000: 18)

This concept acknowledges the situatedness of an individual and the complex social configurations of situatedness, which may or may not be physically placed. Furthermore, such a locale is further complicated through technological development and an embracing of networks within the music sector. Flows of people, information and ideas force us to look towards the 'extended milieu' as a way of understanding the interconnected nodes of information which lead to contact with diverse milieu in distant physical locations, whilst reasserting 'place and locality into the centre of the theoretical prism' (2007: 33). What Webb aims to achieve is a sense of how the local shaped the growth of the music milieu(x) in Bristol. However, although such understandings are important to the development of a milieu, what this does not address is the issue of decentring of place within the context of global flows of ideas and products in the networked domain.

Sociologists have discussed how the democratisation of music production has led to a decentring of place-based music production (Hesmondhalgh, 1998, Tironi, 2012), this research is concerned by how it may be decentred in both its modes of production and consumption, proposing that the advent of networked information exchange and the disruption of social media to the configuration of social practices has had a fundamentally destabilising effect which is ongoing throughout the transition to digital. Meyrowitz (1985), although writing too early to address the digital transition, highlights the potential for each development in electronic media to initiate a further dissociation of physical place and social 'space'. Such decentring of the vibrancy of the locale due to digitisation and online communication is one issue that requires further investigation, eschewing narratives which either present the local/global relationship as completely harmonious or celebratory with regard to the potential of networks in the music industry specifically (Poster, 2006). This is

particularly important, as literature which supports ideas around ‘mutual embeddedness’, the idea that online and offline worlds are coherently intertwined, highlights the complexity of social relationships as a result of digitisation. The potential for both mutually embedded and decentring consequences therefore arise.

Questions over the impacts of the decentring of music from its locale are also connected with wider questions over the positive conceptions of networked communication, particularly with regard to the rise of P2P (Poster, 2006) and more generally (McLeod, 2003; Bruns, 2008; Thrift, 2008). What these accounts neglect to address are the not so advantageous consequences of the mutually embedded nature of online and offline communication, which become increasingly apparent when exploring in-depth a particular social milieu and its practices. What Castells and other network theorists fail to address are the social consequences of such social reorganisation around both physical locales and networked communication simultaneously. The central concern of this research, therefore, is to provide a more balanced approach to understanding the impact of networked facilities on social practices. In particular, of concern here is the true extent of democracy and accessibility to the internet, and whether access necessarily translates into action. There is no doubt that the increased use of such platforms has transformed modes of communication and social practices, however, it is less clear as to whether these practices are being universally adopted by consumers and producers. This research aims to provide more detail through the use of qualitative methods in establishing how such practices may be simultaneously democratic, but also constrain individuals in certain ways. In particular, the transformed relations between roles of production and consumption and the supposed ‘dethroning’ of artist status as a negative consequence of democratic access will be a significant point of focus. Wernick (1991) highlights the rise of promotional culture, in which such processes in cultural life render them absent of meaningfulness and efficacy, leading to cultural homogenisation. The extent to which the democracy afforded by the networks to enable all to transmit to all may prove problematic when understanding the potential deluge of information presented to the receiver, and the way in which relationships between producers and consumers become increasingly complex as a result of such shifts. This in turn may present problems for the artist in their ability to be ‘heard’ amongst so much other promotion.

This has much wider implications for the site of production, promotion and reception of music, and is particular to each milieu and its specific geographical and cultural make-up. However, what is clear is that such transformations are irrevocably changing relations and redrawing boundaries between traditional conceptions of the above terms. Webb (2007), adopting an analysis based on Bourdieu's concepts of field and habitus, understands the shifting conceptions of legitimacy with regard to emerging genres and social actors that take place within any given milieu. He notes the fluidity of conceptions of legitimacy and the ways in which acts representing certain genres can gain legitimacy over time, thus becoming an integral part of the milieu. This is certainly a salient point for the current study, as the very bases upon which notions of legitimacy and authenticity are constructed are reconfigured with the inclusion of online communication. This study aims to address and build upon the construction and maintenance of notions of authenticity across online and offline space, providing an understanding of how this relates to issues of democracy, space and place. Such new dimensions of communication offer much, but also open the way for much contestation. This research aims, through the utilisation of qualitative methods, to understand the precise nature of this contestation and the consequences for the operation and reproduction of the Cardiff milieu.

The use of qualitative methods for this kind of sociological inquiry is well established. Burowoy's (1998) extended case study method appreciates the need for an understanding of the research site within both a historical context, and taking into account social change, incorporating a variety of analytic considerations e.g. visual, discursive and material, which are utilised in the accomplishment of social organisation (Housley and Smith, 2010). The use of qualitative methods to gain a deeper understanding of the agency of social actors with specific locations and within specific milieu have been applied notably within Chesters and Welsh (2006) in their analysis of social movements across online and offline domains and Smith (2009) in his analysis of the regenerated settings of Cardiff Bay. At the core of this thesis is a concern with the shifts in social action and interaction within a particular economic sector undergoing significant change. As such, and with such a body of empirical research utilising similar approaches, the design for the current research is justified.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to move from high level theoretical discussions of the technology/society relationship towards identifying the gaps in sociological understanding of specific creative sectors in the era of digitisation and their placement in specific geographical locations. The first section of the chapter engaged with Giddens' Structuration Theory in providing a basis for understanding how the theoretical interrelationship between structure and agency can provide an understanding of the interaction between technology and society. Giddens' discussion of 'reflexive knowledgeability' can be used to understand the changing affordances for agents in the digital era and the mutually constitutive relationship between structure and agency. The implications for the music milieu are considerable given the social and economic upheaval experienced thus far, partly as a result of consumer empowerment to appropriate and create content.

Appreciating the mutually embedded nature and influence of these two phenomena aided in an advancement of Castells which appreciated not merely a broad stroke, technologically determinist understanding of the impact of the network society, but also the potential of grassroots movements and social actors to provide a meaningful contribution and engagement with issues of science and technology. David (2010) in particular draws attention to the importance of this for understanding the impact of individuals on enacting change, economically and socially within the music industry. It is this power from below; the ability of human agency to enact such change, and the interaction between structures of technological development which is to be further explored in this research.

In the second section, a discussion of immaterial labour and the resultant immaterial product takes issue with the sometimes simplistic and overly utopian nature of the term Multitude and the idea that it is overwhelmingly liberating to the individual and unconstrained by the tenets of capitalism. A subsequent critique of the technological determinism of medium theory mirrors the overly positive conception of immaterial product and subsequently proposes a more accurate understanding of complexity of the relationship between technology and society as simultaneously positive and negative in its consequences. This set up the final section of the chapter, which explores the possible sites of such positive and negative outcomes within the particular research site of concern here; Cardiff's independent music sector. It addresses the existing narratives of the technology/society relationship, and attempts to outline the complexity of outcomes of digitisation, pointing to the consequences of de-

centring of place, democratic access to networks and the unstable status of the artist in the digital age.

The following chapter explores, in further depth, the empirical literature which focuses more explicitly on the music industry and the implications of digitisation for both mainstream and independent economies. It discusses the implications for identity in the digital age and the mutual embeddedness of online and offline interaction; understanding how communication, production and consumption are enacted across these spaces simultaneously. The chapter is also concerned with a discussion of empowerment of the consumer as networked spaces open up the possibility for consumers to become ‘prosumers’ (Bruns, 2008), drawing upon classic cultural studies literature which advocates the agency of the consumer to produce. The potential, as well of the drawbacks of so-called ‘empowerment’ are outlined and explored further in the policy chapter that follows the review of the empirical literature.

Chapter 2

Understanding the Contemporary Online/Offline Music 'Milieu'

Introduction

This literature review aims to explore, in further depth, the empirical body of cultural studies research relevant to the current study. Through data collection, the research will aim to explore the ways in which technological development, through the emergence of the network society, contributes to and is embedded within evolving social practices with regard to Cardiff's independent music milieu. Through an understanding of the mutual embeddedness of online/offline domains as a key feature of the emergence of digitisation, the research can begin to unpack the myriad of economic and social implications for a specific milieu in a specific locale. Furthermore, through an exploration of the classic cultural studies literature around 'bottom-up' production, we can begin to understand how those principles of cultural creation apply to the creative sector in its current form, and in particular, if such practices are being enacted within and around the Cardiff milieu.

For some time, sociologists have placed emphasis on the embedded nature of online interaction and its manifestation in the physical world (Chandler, 1998; Hodkinson, 2007; Turkle, 1997). It is proposed that consumption practices, such as purchasing and sharing mp3 files (authorised and unauthorised), and identity formation occur and are formalised across both face-to-face and online spaces, rather than taking place as separate and unrelated processes defined solely through the context in which they occur. This key debate over the relationship between the digital and physical is particularly salient to current discussion of marked changes in approach to music production and consumption. Transgressive practices, such as sharing of unauthorised music, are challenging previously successful music industry business models, with suggestions that consumers are increasingly able to take control of and participate in production of content circulated within digital networks and into physical spaces.

Debates over the nature of consumer empowerment regarding cultural production are considered particularly relevant when discussing the current state of the music industry

(McLeod, 2003; David, 2010; Hargreaves, 2011). Cultural theorists have long considered the production and circulation of cultural products, e.g. fashion, photography, and most pertinently, music, as a bottom-up, piecemeal and reiterative process (McGuigan, 1992; Thrift, 2008; Willis, 1990), in which consumers are empowered and able to actively participate, instead of passively absorbing cultural output from so-called cultural authorities. The accessible nature of the internet and other such networks, and its ability to override traditional relationships of monetary exchange for goods have meant that for music fans, being able to get hold of their favourite music has never been easier, or cheaper. The rise of free to use, illegal peer-to-peer facilities have presented a challenge to the dominance and prosperity of the mainstream corporate music companies, who are struggling to maintain profit margins to pre-digitisation levels, as the popularity of online facilities grows.

These arguments appear particularly relevant for music in the digital era, as consumers are increasingly afforded agency over what to consume. The relationship between ownership and control over copyrighted works becomes increasingly difficult to define as practices around music consumption and production become ever more diverse, artists are increasingly able to break free from corporate constraints and operate on their own (Morrow, 2009). A key question is; what is the nature of social practices enacted across online and offline spaces with regard to production, consumption and distribution of music originating from a localised milieu? Commitment by the mainstream music business to established market relations and a determination to re-establish revenue streams may prove to challenge this new found freedom currently being enjoyed by the consumer. These complex relationships and the ways they may be enacted by, and affect social actors may be more fully explored through a concentration on a key milieu, situated within an urban area; in which the operation of production, performance and consumption operates across physical and networked spaces. As discussed in the previous chapter, theoretical discussions around the roles and relationships between technology and society, and in particular the power of technology to alter social practices (Lazzarato, 1996; Castells, 2000; Bruns, 2008, Thrift, 2008), inform the basis of much of the empirical literature discussed here.

There have been varying ways in which subcultural analysis has been approached historically. Classic sociological enquiry into subcultures of the 1960s and 1970s, both from Birmingham's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) and The Chicago School

have framed formation of such groups through the lens of deviancy, with varying degrees of emphasis on the importance of structural relations. Notable studies include Chicago School sociologist Howard Becker's (1963) study of jazz musicians, discussing the practices of music making and the construction of other musicians as 'insiders', and non-musicians as 'outsiders' or 'squares'. Stan Cohen, of the CCCS, studied the 'Mods and Rockers' and the media construction of these groups and public responses as a modern day 'moral panic' (Cohen, 1972). Semiotic analyses have also been applied in an attempt to interpret subcultures, which has included reference to patterns of consumption, not just of music but of style, fashion and ideological underpinnings of particular groups, most notably Hebdige's (1979) work around punk subculture and the relationship between consumption of music and identity formation. However, more recent attempts to understand the formation and practice of subcultures, or 'scenes' has critiqued these approaches for providing a partial interpretation of such groups and their values and motivations. Laughey acknowledges the huge impact of the CCCS in this area, but critiques such over-emphasis on tropes of resistance, an approach which receives uncritical currency in subcultural analysis (2006: 52). He also critiques semiotic approaches, such as that of Hebdige, for oversimplifying subcultural practices, ignoring the wider historical and cultural context in which subcultural formation occurs, and downplaying the links to the parent culture out of which such groups emerge (2006: 15). What is proposed is an interactionist approach which moves away from resistance and class as central concepts of understanding, and pays more attention to the voices and actions of those occupying subcultures and ultimately incorporates an understanding of how music interacts with individuals' everyday lives (Toynbee, 2000; Laughey, 2006).

Turning away from a resistance based analysis and advocating a more interactionist perspective, this study is concerned with the located nature of a particular genre of music, which may provide a lens through which the relationship between the physical and digital spaces may be further explored. As Toynbee highlights, genre is a necessary departure for creative action and a conceptual site of both affiliation and contestation (2000: 103); but more than this, it is a social process which can aid in elucidating processes of formation and reproduction of subcultures, or in this case, milieux. Furthermore, the ways in which contemporary music milieux engage with, are shaped by, and act upon digital facilities for consumption and promotion of music are important in understanding changing practices of

consumption/production. The social practices in which they engage and their negotiation of wider debates about the future sustainability of the industry are of interest in understanding the impact of digitisation on small-scale musicians and consumers.

The site of interest is therefore focused on an 'indie' milieu operating within a major British city. It is hoped that, through the utilisation of a qualitative approach, the character of the milieu and the nature of the interaction between these multiple dimensions will be revealed. Academic attention into the influence of the internet on contemporary music subcultures and the relationship between the offline and online in relation to consumption of music and style has been sparse to date, particularly with regard to British urban spaces. This chapter will therefore review the literature around digital music and the changing landscape of engagement with popular music in making the case for an ethnographic study into this particular milieu and its usefulness in highlighting contemporary issues around subcultural groups, music and the changing relationships of production and consumption.

(1) Online/Offline: Identity, Consumption and Mutual 'Embeddedness'

The speed of development of the Internet and subsequent synchronisation of associated online facilities, including the development of online capabilities in mobile phones, saw the explosion of 'networks upon networks' in the late 1990s (Castells, 2000; Hassan, 2004: 15). This proliferation of networked facilities brought with it not only the reshaping of the economy, focused around the privileging of information as a commodity, but also revolutionised methods of communication and exchange of information within society and culture. These new forms of communication included the development of online forums for communication and identity creation, found within the rise of chatrooms, forums and multi-user domains (MUDs), in which virtual selves could be created and used as conduits through which identity construction could take place, removed from everyday life (Turkle, 1997: 177-86).

The Internet, seemingly removed from the restrictions of physical reality, has allowed users to experiment with the constructions and reconstructions of self in the increasingly heterogeneous, flexible and fragmented world in which they live (1997: 178). Turkle's research into identity experimentation within these spaces revealed that for those who use MUDs, the Internet represents a space in which many identities or facets of the self can be

created and modified; this was characteristic of an increasingly common endeavour to mix and match individual identities. In addition, Turkle also proposed that MUDs not only facilitated the creation of new selves in online spaces, but that experimentation with self and identity had inevitable effects on users' conduct and decision making in real life (1997: 186).

Turkle's research suggests that MUDs offer the user experimentation with identities which may become a parallel identity in the offline space. Many of those she studied used MUDs and role playing to engage with important issues in their offline lives. This and other research increasingly points to a connection between identity formation in the offline and online worlds. Rather than considering these spheres as separate entities, with one having no influence on the other, those using such networks to communicate are increasingly being considered 'glocalised' (Robertson, 1992). That is, participation in the globalised and networked space is high in the developed world; however, the consequences of such online activities are grounded by an existence in their locality (Wellman et al, 2006: 6). This emphasises the importance of considering the internet as an embedded world; inherently connected, influenced by and influencing physical space. This is important to bear in mind when exploring the impact of the internet on other forms of cultural output, such as the consumption of digital music, as literature which supports the 'mutual embeddedness' idea emphasises the importance of the offline world as a key anchor for interaction which takes place online. The interconnection between the physical and the digital in the identity formation of MUD users has important implications for music fans and their increasing capacity to exchange and enjoy music within and across these spaces, their geographical location remaining important within this relationship.

The mutually embedded nature of the offline and the online spaces has been of further interest to sociology in the intervening years since Turkle's study. These studies have served to further emphasise this relationship and its relevance to other forms of internet practices (Nip, 2004). Chandler (1998) explored how the construction of personal homepages on the internet helped to maintain the connection between identity creation and the physical world. This was emphasised through the fluidity of such pages and the evolution of content posted, such as blogs, photos and links with their origin and grounding in real life events. This was indicative of users' attempts to make sense of their offline world through their online activities. Similarly, Hardey (2002) demonstrated that relationship formation and online

dating affords the user an anonymity which allowed them to construct an identity in alignment with their offline selves. They did not use the Internet for creation of 'fantasy selves' (2002: 570). The mediation between the physical and networked spaces can also be made use of in the organisation of global protest. Chesters and Welsh (2006) noted the importance of networked communication in reaching a multitude of activists with different interests and from different countries, and the amenability of the networked infrastructure in organising a coherent and peaceful protest in Prague prior to the event, and providing a communicative facility in its aftermath. CMC was vital in mobilising diverse interests and in shaping social action in the 'real world'.

This research contradicts previous commentary that voiced fears about how individuals' involvement with the internet would detract from their 'geographically placed lives' (Nip, 2004: 410) and contribute to the gradual 'virtualisation of everyday life' (Doheny-Farina, 1996: xiii, in Nip, 2004: 410). However, there has been no statistical evidence in the US that community participation rates have lessened in the age of the Internet (Katz and Aspden, 1997, in Nip, 2004). The wealth of evidence around online practices and identity construction in the digital age appears to support the view that the offline and the online spaces are mutually embedded. Participation in either domain will have an effect on practices and identity formation in the other, and that to attempt to separate the two domains, or claim that participation in one will lead to neglect of the other, is to ignore the full extent of engagement with certain groups or activities which occur in both spaces. In a context in which the knowledge and information has come to feature predominantly in economic, social and cultural life, the effect on the growth of networks and the subsequent digitisation of information cannot be ignored, particularly within the media industry. Within this sector are contained products deemed most amenable to digitisation and circulation online, and in which music is a key industry in which debates around how this process is unfolding may be understood. What will be explored here are the particular trajectories of the music industry with reference to the online/offline relationship, and the consequences of such trajectories, accounting not just for the gains, but also the losses for the sector.

The music industry has perhaps been one of the first forms of media to undergo the transformation to a digital format. The initial rise of illegal peer-to-peer filesharing facilities in the early 2000s, most notably Napster and KaZaa, allowed for the convenient and free

exchange of mp3 files from user to user (Knopper, 2009; David, 2010). This effectively removed the requirement for payment, as the system was based on a strengthening of the service through garnering as a high a number of users as possible. This development was received negatively by the industry, who argued that such services were damaging to legitimate services due to the losses in revenue i.e. CD sales. The industry has since attempted to apply a legitimate supply chain infrastructure; the most notable being Apple's launch of the online store, iTunes, in which mp3 music files may be bought, stored on a user's hard drive and uploaded onto the accompanying portable hardware device, the iPod. Disputes over the legality of such filesharing facilities and the protocols it uses to make music available to its users has continued throughout the first ten years of the century, the most recent legal wrangle centred around the Swedish based site, The Pirate Bay. Arising from the prosecution and trial of the site's creators in 2009, the founders of the site, the Pirate Party of Sweden, have gained a significant notoriety and also seats in the European Parliament, demonstrating not just the rise of P2P practices, but also the formation of a politically coherent movement advocating democratic and open access to content. These disputes serve to highlight the growing problematic relationship between the industry, its consumers and its performers around the evolving ways networked facilities have disrupted traditional modes of production and consumption.

The relationship between online and offline forms of communication and identity building are also of relevance to the current debates and conflicts occurring within the music industry. The rise of networked communication of music in the form of the mp3 file and the multitude of practices around this activity, such as the use of social networking and blogging to promote acts and share music, has helped develop a base for fans and musicians to promote and express themselves within this space. This has spilled over into the promotion and consumption of music in the live space, in which modes of digital exchange and marketing have become an integral part. Wilson and Atkinson (2005) have emphasised the intertwining of the online and offline modes in expression of musical preference and consumption choices in the Rave and Straightedge subcultures, and the importance of understanding this relationship in gaining a holistic perspective on the experiences of those involved in such movements. There has been much research conducted into a host of other online practices, such as the construction of personal webpages, blogging (Chandler, 1998; Nip, 2004) and online dating (Hardey, 2002), as well as a variety of research looking into young people's

experiences of the internet, finding that online and offline relations are mutually embedded (Leander and McKim, 2003; Bryant et al, 2006; Tutt, 2008; Leppanen et al, 2009) and which have significant implications for identity, presentation of self and relationship formation across these spaces (Oksman and Turtianen, 2004; McMillan and Morrison, 2006; Livingstone, 2008). However, this research is concerned with uncovering the experience of ‘mutual embeddedness’ of young peoples’ practice within a specific locale which is a part of much wider economic and social shift, and tied their participation in a specific cultural sector. It is this gap in the literature which forms the justification for this study of indie music subcultures in the UK. The research provides further understanding of contemporary youth subcultures in Britain and the ways in which musicians, consumers and distributors use both of these spaces to promote and advance the popularity of these subcultures in a given locality.

(2) Culture as Production

A focus on specific groups or milieux and how they may be evolving as a result of the increased involvement of digital products and facilities turns attention towards a specific network of individuals and events in a specific locality. Hebdige (1979), in his research into punk subcultures, captured the symbolic work that goes into the production of culture; namely style of dress and musical preference. This symbolic work, says Hebdige, was tied to certain values that constituted being a ‘punk’. The production of the punk subculture originated from musicians and fans who constructed their own aesthetic around their music consumption. The study of the symbolic work of subcultural groups represented an entirely new lens through which to understand cultural production; most importantly as that which originated from those practicing it, as well as acknowledging associated influences on style from established cultural producers. This consideration of cultural production is a dramatic departure from the traditional conceptions of production of physical, mass-produced goods by a fixed separation of producers, consumers and distributors; towards an understanding that it was indeed possible for consumers to co-construct cultural meaning. This creative potential with regards to meanings became something very different in the digital era; the possibility of not only producing meaning, but also digitised products, as ‘prosumers’ (Bruns, 2008: 9) in the global, networked, information driven economy.

Initial sociological work into the productive capacities of the everyday music consumer emerged within several notable ethnographic and semiotic analyses of the 1970s. Those who

engaged in structural analyses of such groups as part of the CCCS considered culture as a bottom-up, organic and constantly evolving entity, not bound or dictated by elite distinctions of so-called 'high' culture. Sociologists affiliated with the CCCS countered claims made by Frankfurt School critical theorists such as Adorno, who proposed that mass produced music causes the manipulation of taste and the pretence of individualism, increasing as the individual becomes more immersed in mass culture. This eventually leads to a decay of the facility to critique music or any other form of cultural output (1992: 40-5). Similar critiques of mass culture have accused the rise of mass-production of art and culture as a depreciation of the quality and value of the 'aura' of the product, contributing to its decay (Benjamin, 1992).

These conceptions of culture were challenged by the Birmingham School on the grounds of elitism. Paul Willis, cultural sociologist and member of the school, attacked the privileging of 'high art', arguing that the distinction was a myth maintained by the establishment and which ignores and even stunts the development of 'symbolic creativity', which can originate from a variety of sources (1990: 1). 'Symbolic creativity' can be found in everyday life, and there are a multitude of ways in which individuals can invest their lives with meanings which are crucial to the creation and maintenance of individual and group identities. These meanings, he suggests, become the basis for subcultural group formation around music, fashion and style. This approach to analysing cultural production emphasises the aim of cultural studies as acknowledging the vital impulses of the ordinary people and their 'organic past' (McGuigan, 1992: 10). In a similar, and yet distinct argument, McGuigan suggests that subcultures are read politically as symbolic, class-conscious challenges to the dominant culture and the origin of creativity 'from below', in which youth could win space within and against the dominant hegemonic order (1992: 90-6).

The creation of culture as originating from those who practice, reinterpret and reiterate it in everyday life, as coined by Raymond Williams in the phrase 'culture is ordinary' (in Gray and McGuigan, 1993), reflects the changing focus on the consumer as an active participant in cultural production. This is discussed with reference to Willis's notion of the 'grounded aesthetic'; the attribution of meanings to symbols and practices, in which meanings are constantly selected, reselected, highlighted and recomposed in order to resonate further meanings (1990: 21). The use of the word 'grounded' emphasises the ordinary aspects of

common culture, in which the control of meaning making and value judgements, and the refinement of these judgements over time, are constructed through the performance and consumption of cultural practices. Willis uses music as one example through which consumers give meaning to popular music; including the symbolic work involved in selecting and listening to records, the use of grounded aesthetics to make their own mix tapes and the circulation of these tapes among friends as a 'bottom up' process of communicating their own grounded aesthetic to a wider audience (1990: 59-82). Symbolic creativity, says Willis, bridges the distinction between consumption and production of popular music, as value judgements are now made by consumers as producers (1990: 59).

Although invaluable to understanding the precursor to current reconfigurations of the producer/consumer relationship in the context of digitisation, the work of the CCCS is nevertheless outdated and focused on particular conceptions of class distinction, which it is argued, have less salience in the context of globalisation and 'postmodernity'. The CCCS's has been criticised heavily for its over emphasis on class as a basis for understanding subcultural formation (Laughey, 2006), its denial of agency, choice and diversity (Hodkinson, 2002), its sole focus on youth culture, and the assumption that this particular demographic is the only one which can elucidate these issues in sufficient detail (Fine and Kleinman, 1979; Hesmondhalgh, 2005) and its pre-occupation with de-coding homologous styles (Hesmondhalgh, 2005). The proposition of homology, made by Willis (1978) in *Profane Culture*, refers to the inherent relationships between collectivities of people and cultural forms, such as music. In his study of the biker boys and their musical preferences, he contends that the relationship between the boys and the music was more than an arbitrary relation; and instead that there existed a real 'dialectic of experience' based on their relationship with their musical preferences and their selection of the music. However, Hesmondhalgh (2005) highlights that this simplifies what is a very complex interaction, and makes the relationship between the group and the music appear closer than it is. This over-emphasis on homological relationships in understanding subcultures requires revision if we are to understand the multiplicity and complexity of such relations. Semiotic analysis, such as that of Hebdige, go beyond the working-class analytical frame of the CCCS, but did not attack the resistance thesis, nor did it acknowledge potential associations to its parent culture (Laughey, 2006: 25). What is required is a reconsideration of the use of the concept of 'subculture' within cultural studies generally, and a construction of analytical frameworks

which take into account processes of globalisation and technological developments in communication.

Bruns offers a more nuanced approach to understanding the development of the relationship of consumers, producers and content which takes account of online practices. He proposes that the incorporation of consumer feedback into increasingly flexible production techniques allowed the consumer increased interaction with purchased goods; a process he refers to as 'prosumption' (2008: 12). This model perfected the feedback loop between producer and consumer and still considered their roles as discrete and unidirectional. However, Bruns suggests that the popularisation of networks and global communications has allowed the consumer to bypass traditional chains of production and sale, now able to exchange content directly with each other in a digitised form, which can be easily modified. He terms this second development 'user' activity, in which a more active and expressive role than that of a consumer is implied (2008: 14-15).

However, Bruns adds a third and final development to this process of increased participation; the emergence of the 'produser'. The 'produser' concept emerges out of the prolific use of networked technologies and the development of 'communities' whose activities emerge not from one central authority but through community's own protocols of interaction. Such networks gather round the rapid exchange and modification of information and take the modification of information into their own hands. Users therefore also become producers, and can move seamlessly between these roles; participation is considered on a continuum spanning from mere use of content to active and sustained content creation. The concept of produsage therefore is not defined by discrete roles of production and consumption but through 'collaborative and continuous building and extending of existing content in pursuit of further improvement' (2008: 21). The model he proposes is therefore defined by, beginning and ending with, content, with an endless string of users contributing to its production incrementally with the prospect of never having a 'finished' product, due to the rapid and continuous improvements that are made.

The conflation of the production/consumption and the increasing emphasis on content continues to be relevant, particularly within the context of the knowledge economy and the increase in cultural content amenable to digitisation; such as books, film and music.

Communications are now instantaneous, simultaneous and networked; facilitating a complex web of information exchange (Urry, 2003: 50-1), of which digitised, cultural product or immaterial product, including the mp3 music file, is an integral part. Thrift too discusses the importance of the fluidity of networked communication and its role in the increase in innovation and invention from below (2008: 30). The networked domain allows those previously considered 'consumers' the opportunity to engage and contribute to innovations and changes to cultural production. Consumers are afforded reasonably easy access to these facilities, bearing in mind issues of the digital divide along line of social class (Lee, 2008), rendering the 'consumer' an active 'producer' in the process and causing the boundaries between these two processes to be redrawn. This is evident in the process of immaterial labour exchange that takes place amongst youth on social networking facilities such as MySpace. Not only are these spaces a facility in which young people can experiment and create their own identities, but they can also contribute to networked formations, resulting in an 'exponential expansion of discrete nodes of both affect and affinity and of potential surplus value' (Cote and Pybus, 2007: 88). The role of digital media thus transforms cultural objects and the subject position of the consumer, resulting in online consumption becoming an active practice in which users become engaged in valuable cultural creation, producing modified content which is easy to circulate in the networked environment (Poster, 2004).

However, there are consequences to the ubiquity of production amongst traditional consumers within the music milieu. The lack of distinction between producer and consumer aligns with Huyssen's (1986) de-demarcation thesis. Huyssen notes that the gradual dilution in binary distinctions between the modern and the postmodern, or the producer and the consumer, has led to a re-framing of central markers of cultural distinction, quality and value. The extent and nature of his theory to this particular research site is of interest, as the impact on digitisation on traditional boundaries and roles around cultural production is one of the central research questions. Wernick (1991) also discusses the disruption in established roles as a result of the 'dethroning' of the artist in his discussion of promotional culture. Emphasis on promotional culture in such settings can render reproduction of social settings less meaningful, and thus the danger of cultural homogenisation' and lack of established boundaries and roles presents itself. The nature of such occurrences will be of interest to this research.

These changes in the positions of the traditional 'consumer', and their deeper engagement with cultural production as a result of the ease of access to networked facilities have important implications for live music promotion and consumption. Widespread activities such as filesharing have enabled audiences' cheaper and more varied choice in their music consumption. Additionally, peripheral facilities, such as social networking, blogging and a host of other communication strategies have allowed individuals to work on their own identities, but have also contributed to re-editing and modifying the platform which they use to achieve this; all the time being grounded within physical scenes of music consumption to which these activities are connected (Chesters and Welsh, 2006).

The dynamics of cultural production and the conflation of the consumer/producer distinction are of particular salience in contemporary debates about the effects of the digitisation of music on the empowerment of the consumer. Much has been written about the presence of consumer empowerment within geographically located music scenes which reflect national or international music trends. One of the most notable is the 'Do-it-yourself' movement, which emerged out of punk music scenes in the mid 1970s. The 'DIY' movement encouraged fans of punk music, mainly originating from the UK, Europe and North America, to become producers of cultural content and contribute to the scene; whether through joining a punk band, setting up a record label or distributing their own fanzine. Moore, in his ethnographic study into punk music as a field of cultural production in San Diego, highlights the act of DIY as empowering to fans of punk, where success is measured not in terms of 'economic capital' i.e. how many records are sold, but rather the 'symbolic capital' in 'making good art that is recognised by peers and critics' (2007: 468). Similarly, Strachan also highlights the prevalence of DIY record labels operating in the UK, their values dialectically opposed to mainstream record labels in justifying their approach to small scale, DIY production and promotion of music, in which the musician is afforded greater creative freedom, however small the profits may be (2007: 261).

Methodologically, Moore's (2007: 439) work is important as it signals a departure from previous studies of subcultures (Cohen 1972; Hebdige, 1979), which focus on the political consciousness of youth through the analysis of 'style', which, although useful to the understanding of subcultures and their modes of resistance, neglects the process of production and participation. Moore claims that only through ethnographic work and through

ascertaining the views and practices of those who participate in a scene can its empowering potential be understood. Laughy (2006) is also critical of classic subcultural research and its failure to address social interactions between young people that form membership of such groups, advocating an understanding of how subcultural capital is transmitted through members in everyday contexts is yet to be understood sufficiently. This approach to exploring the changing roles of producers and consumers may be fruitful in understanding how consumers, performers and distributors engage with music through networked facilities and in a digitised form. Ethnographic approaches may shed light on the connections between DIY movements as operating within and across offline and online spaces. Music is ubiquitous across these domains; and enquiry into its increasing presence within localised live spaces the relationship between the live and digital spaces can begin to capture the lived and empowered experiences of those youth who are active within certain scenes (Wilson and Atkinson, 2005). It is from this basis that the importance of locally placed milieu becomes important for this research.

(3) 'Subcultures', 'Scenes' and 'Milieu': Live Music in the Digital Age

The importance of understanding the effect of digitisation on the operation of music production, distribution and consumption around a specific genre of music, active within a particular geographical area, will be the main focus of the research. Taking the same principles as that of Becker (1982) in his exploration of art worlds and Finnegan (1989), in her exploration of 'music worlds' in the town of Milton Keynes, it will map the social systems and contexts in which musical activities take place; exploring the interpersonal, material and economic patterns of co-operation of those studied, networks of co-operative activity, the plethora of occupations related to the reproduction of a music scene and associated division of labour. It will attempt to outline the embeddedness of networked production and exchange of music in relation to the production and promotion of live music, and the increasingly intertwined nature of their relationship. Echoing the literature which advocates the embedded and stable construction of identity across offline and online spaces, it will be argued that the operation of a geographically placed subculture or scene can be understood in terms of the embedded nature of the associated practices taking place in the online environment. The rise of semiotic enquiry into subcultures and their resistance to the dominant hegemony through alternative methods of consumption and style creation has been vital in understanding how 'bottom-up' cultural processes provide a way in which we can

understand the motivations behind such practices. However, in the late-modern period, conceptualisations of subcultures and scenes and the nuanced differences between them are given more consideration within the context of globalised communication and digital production. Through understanding the development of subcultural research in the 21st century, the study can begin to address the nature of participation in a music subculture or scene within and across live and digital spaces.

Until this point, the terms ‘subculture’ and ‘scene’ have been used interchangeably; however, it is important to define and outline the development of ‘subculture’, followed by ‘scene’, and the reasons for development of different terms. Late modern commentaries around the concepts of ‘subcultures’ and ‘scenes’ has led to a reconsideration of what definitions to attach to such terms and how to study such groups in terms of music consumption and style. The criticisms of the approach to studies of subcultures have been outlined previously. The particular usefulness of the notion of ‘scene’ in accounting for the relationship between the different musical practices unfolding within a given geographical space has been highlighted (Shanks, 1988, in Straw, 1991: 373). Straw emphasises the point of departure of the concept of musical scenes from older conceptions of a musical community, such as those conceived under the banner of subcultural analysis. A scene is a;

...cultural space in which a range of musical practices coexist, interacting with each other within a variety of processes of differentiation, and according to widely varying trajectories of change and cross-fertilization.

(1991: 373)

Within a scene, the sense of purpose is not dependent on the relationship between musical heritage and the contemporary activity appropriate to the context; rather, it is articulated through forms of communication upon which musical alliances and boundaries are built. The importance of spatial location and local distinctiveness is also important. Sara Cohen, in her exploration of the ideological and practical operation of music making in Liverpool, highlights the importance of the local context in which music is produced and circulated. The strong musical identity that has developed in the city is a result of the characteristics of the scene itself, and is a result of the social conditions that shape its development (1991: 224). Finnegan, in her study of Milton Keynes, also sought to understand the organisation and means of sustaining amateur grassroots musicianship in a local context. She highlighted the centrality of performance and interaction of different ‘music worlds’ in the reproduction of

musical practice in the town and the use of the term 'pathways' to describe individuals' experience of music making, which was often part-time in nature, comprised varying levels of commitment and characterised by constant change (1989: 306).

These studies highlight the need for a re-conceptualisation of the term 'subculture', as proposed by Bennett (1999). Using Maffesoli's (1996) concept of the 'neo-tribe', Bennett argues that subcultures previously considered coherent and stable are in fact better understood as a series of temporary gatherings with fluid boundaries and floating memberships (1999: 600). The term 'subculture' may therefore be problematic as a concept which attempts to draw boundaries around practices which may in fact be more fleeting. Therefore, the relevance of the concept of 'subculture' as defined by the Birmingham School may not be useful in a late modern context in which individualised consumption of a 'lifestyle' more accurately reflects the construction of identity in late-modern society (1999: 607). The fluidity with which individuals move between sites and adjust their identities may mean that the use of the term 'scene' can be more useful to sociologists in understanding the formation of contemporary musical alliances and practices. However, the term subculture remains useful to others when referring to well defined genres of music and their associated style within ethnographic work, such as Wilson and Atkinson's study of the Rave and Straightedge subcultures (2005). The concept of 'subculture' also remains useful for Hodgkinson in his study of participation in production and consumption of the Goth subculture, who argues that terms such as 'scene' and 'neo-tribe' serve to over-state the diversity of the grouping, although he agrees that there is a degree of internal diversity, despite a clear overall group identity (2002: 30).

Bennett suggests that the concept of 'tribalisation' is useful because it encompasses the 'deregulation through modernisation and individualisation of the modern forms of solidarity and identity based on class occupation, locality and gender' (Bennett, 1999, in Hesmondhalgh, 2005: 24). Instead, cultural sociologists should explore the interplay between local and global resources used by promoters, performers and consumers to form localised, collective music practices (2008: 420-4). The importance of understanding the production and circulation of music in its everyday context is vital in appreciating the subjective process of musical production and the pivotal position of the audience as a reflexive and creative agent (Frith, in Bennett, 2008: 424-5), as well as acknowledging the importance of locality in

the production, consumption and interactive practices of a scene. This has, to some extent, been recognised in individualised expressions of music consumption; as users of mp3 players use such devices to organise their music collections, allowing them to 'recompose' their physical landscape whilst commuting through urban areas (Beer, 2007; 2008). However, what is of interest here is examining the extent to which production and consumption of digital music impacts upon consumption of live music, and the particular practices which constitute a relationship between virtual and physical, geographically placed music scenes.

Despite the development of such terms as a replacement to the rigidity of 'subculture', the concepts of 'scene' and 'neo-tribe' have also been problematized within cultural studies. Hesmondhalgh finds conceptual binaries between subcultures and scenes as rigid v. fluid to be unhelpful. Furthermore, the conceptualisation of scene has been many and varied, which has added confusion to its use as a concept within sociological analysis. It suggests local boundedness and stability (Cohen, 1991; Shank, 1994), but has also been used in reference to more complex flows of musical affiliation in relation to a wider, global music industry (Straw (1991). The use of the same term in such disparate ways has increased its ambiguity within academia (2005: 28), added to which, its common use amongst those classified as scene members, as well as in the media has also added to confusion, rendering the term almost meaningless. Hesmondhalgh proposes that cultural studies abandon the search for an overarching form of analysis and instead assemble an array of theoretical tools to investigate such issues. Citing Toynbee (2000), he cites genre as important for the theorisation of the relationship between social groups and musical styles. Although media technology means that music is widely distributed, musical communities still provide basis for genre markets, and this may be an important way of understanding relationships between music and the social. Furthermore, in his use of the term articulation, Toynbee builds on Willis's *homology* in understanding the relationship between symbolic practice and social process which allows for adaptation and re-interpretation over time, and of multiple links, or articulations to be considered. Toynbee is therefore advocating a differentiated approach in which a range of analytical tools are used to understand youth cultural practices and affiliation (Hesmondhalgh, 2005: 34).

Previous sociological enquiry has explored emerging practices of key actors within the context of digital production and exchange, and the ways in which this has led to increased 'consumer' participation in production and circulation of remixed content on the internet.

These activities have been documented in a variety of music scenes and movements, such as in the 'mash-up' culture; an online music scene where practitioners use audio editing software to splice and combine pop songs in an mp3 format, which can then be used in DJ sets at live venues (Shiga, 2007: 93). This scene has allowed for the rise of amateur musicianship, based on a reorganisation of the relations which comprise musical recordings and easier access to software needed to create these mixes (2007: 95). This capacity for greater consumer ability to contribute content to a music subculture is also present within other genres, such as Rave music, in which technological engagement is embedded within its philosophy (Wilson, 2002b, in Wilson and Atkinson, 2005: 285), and within which the remixing of tracks is dependent on digital equipment, which is also used at live events. There is a clear relationship between the use/consumption of technology by members of the subculture and their lived experiences as members of that subculture.

Wilson and Atkinson also note the ways in which the corporeal resistance of the Straightedge subculture, associated with the punk and hardcore music scenes, is associated with and mediated by the pursuit of protest online (Shields, 1996, in Wilson and Atkinson, 2005: 294). Much of the promotion of Straightedge values (including rules such as abstinence from drinking, drug taking and sexual activity) take place in online forums, in which members can disseminate information about the history of the movement, details about upcoming shows and releases and debate issues, such as other members' authenticity claims to a Straightedge identity (Williams, 2006). Although not as central to the movement as with Rave, the internet has become a vital tool for members to promote and discuss relevant issues within their local scene and beyond (Wilson and Atkinson, 2005: 297).

Such studies have highlighted the importance of global networks, particularly the internet, in the late modern operation of music subcultures and scenes. Increasingly, members of such scenes are using dedicated forums, such as those involved with Straightedge music, social networking sites, blogging (Williams, 2006) and technology designed to manipulate digitised music to enable mixing, in order to disseminate their music to wider audiences but also to strengthen the live scene. Studies of music consumption and style in the digital age have pointed to the beginnings of an entwined relationship between global platforms for producing and promoting music and the importance of this facility for building a geographically placed following, particularly in urban areas where there are established promoters, performers and

venues in which live events can take place. The embedded nature of local scenes and global communication, in which all aspects of involvement within a scene are present across both spaces and which are both part of a coherent, yet fluid operation of participation and consumption, has transformed the nature of participation in local scenes for its members. Those previously considered merely consumers are now increasingly able to obtain software, communicate with promoters and performers and enter into debates with other members over the operation of local scenes; thus participating in a more productive capacity.

Webb's (2007) discussion of music 'milieu' in the context of globalisation, local music production and the increasing importance of technology, is a further extension of the literature on subcultures and scenes which challenges the notion that music milieu are in any way stable; viewing them instead as amorphous entities. The notion of community within a music milieu as inaccurate, proposes Webb (Finnegan, 1989; Cohen, 1991; Bayton, 1998; Hesmondhalgh, 2005; Webb, 2007). Webb uses the term 'milieu' to reflect the fluid nature of production and consumption of music across local, national and international boundaries, which is characteristic of the operation of the creative industries in the digital age. Webb takes account of the ways in which local milieux coalesce around certain genres of music and style, and if become known well enough nationally and further afield, the origin of the music becomes a key marker of identification. Here, we witness the continued importance of provenance of musical styles in their global export, but also the complex formations of professional and consumer connections and involvement with such milieu characteristic of CMC.

As present as such studies of music scenes and the increasing 'embeddedness' of the internet and other networks within them are sparse and underdeveloped. Wilson and Atkinson (2005) highlighted just how differently members of Rave and Straightedge scenes utilised the internet to strengthen the scene and reach more people. These nuances in approach are inevitably affected by the type of music concerned and the locality from which the scene originates. As a city, Cardiff has been known for its thriving 'indie' scene in recent years, due to a combination of active promoters, performers and venues working loosely within this genre. The introduction of the internet and its potential for strengthening such scenes has yet to be explored in depth. The exploration of this particular form of music, its key features and character as a distinctly Welsh genre, located within a major Welsh city; may offer insights

into the relationship between the online and the offline not discussed in previous research. This is where Webb's discussion of the milieu becomes important and is a concept through which the independent music sector in Cardiff will be examined. This combines Webb's concept of milieu with an appreciation of the cultural and economic specificity of Cardiff, as appreciated in other studies of music making in particular localities (Finnegan, 1989, Cohen, 1991), as well as being aware of the influence of genre that adopts an interactive approach to understanding the dynamism of subcultural formations across time and place. The aim therefore is to examine the impact of digital music and communication within this milieu, the nature of embeddedness of the virtual and the real, and the possible newfound productive capacities it offers to its consumers.

(4) Empowerment: The Potential and the Limitations

Despite discourses of empowerment emerging from media reports and sociological commentary, heralding a new age of control of cultural output in the hands of the consumer (Bruns, 2008), there have inevitably been attempts by lawful owners of copyright content to reclaim control in both physical and digital domains. The control of cultural output, despite indications that cultural goods may be freed from the constraints of copyright law and circulate unrestrained within the public domain, remain tethered to market interests. Keat (2000), also comments on the tension between the integrity of cultural practices and free market interests. He questions whether cultural practices can ever have integrity when circulating in a free market, and if the subjection of culture to the desires of the market may serve to debase the value of its content, increasingly created to satisfy consumer demands rather than the truthfulness of the practice itself. The shift towards consumer driven production, he claims, may challenge the authority of producers and create tensions between consumers and market integrity. This has been demonstrated within the filesharing controversy of recent years, in which there have taken place many legal wrangles between the industry, peer-to-peer services and individual consumers over the legalities of the practice and ownership of creative content.

This perspective on the relationship between consumer and the market has been criticised as elitist, as acknowledged by Keat himself (1994: 23). It is argued that those who consider culture as separate from the market have a hierarchical perspective on cultural authority and a contempt for the contribution of everyday consumers towards cultural output. In response,

Keat argues for an acknowledgement of the pluralisation of knowledge claims, suggesting that there are a multitude of sources from which value judgements can be made and culture can originate, not just from a 'higher' authority. He calls for clear boundaries around the market which foster a flourishing of cultural practices which can be sustained by non-individualistic and autonomy-enhancing patterns of authority (1994: 39).

The acknowledgement of this plurality of sources has however largely been dismissed by the music industry as they strive to reassert control over their output. The unrestrained circulation of digital content has threatened their long-established business models, and the industry has been criticised from many corners for aggressively attempting to preserve these modes of operation when they should be making efforts to adapt their ways of thinking to accommodate changes in consumer behaviour (Keegan, 2008). The filesharing controversy and the growth of digital music highlights the tension that exists between the cultural authority that the industry are attempting to maintain and the increased sovereignty afforded the consumer in the digital domain.

The embedded nature of the online and offline domains, as discussed in earlier sections of this chapter have served to highlight the practices of identity formation and consumption as continuous and co-ordinated across these two spaces (Turkle, 1997). The impact of digitisation on the music industry has been undeniable in terms of its presence online and the increased use of such facilities by consumers and performers. However, despite the increasing accessibility of digital music, available sometimes at little or no cost, the industry which owns the rights to such content continuously strives to protect it using strategies developed for physical product, such as CDs and cassettes. These attempts to maintain control over content have been viewed as out of step with current practices of production, promotion and exchange and the open-source perspective on access to intellectual property that has gained credence amongst user/consumers (Filby, 2008).

Gillespie (2006) highlights the use of Digital Rights Management (DRM); a digital encryption technology designed to protect copyright, as an important case in point, illustrating the tensions arising between the industry and consumers. The employment of such protection over copyright material prevented free exchange and duplication between consumers, the source of many complaints from music fans. Gillespie argued that the

employment of such restrictive technology prevents the consumer from thinking about ways in which they can innovatively use technological tools to both create and consume digital content (2006: 664). Although DRM encryption was eventually removed from digital music files by record companies (BBC News, 2007, 2008), there have been other challenges to the supposed consumer empowerment the digital age has offered. These have included lawsuits filed against American college students by the RIAA (which were eventually dropped due to the costs involved), legal action against peer-to-peer facilities such as Napster, and more recently, the formulation of UK government policy to involve Internet Service Providers (ISPs) in policing content moving through their networks and even to ‘squeeze’ the bandwidth of those who persistently illegally download music (The Guardian, 2009). By employing such ‘push-back’ strategies to curb the level of user interactivity and appropriation of copyrighted content, author/owners of such work are clearly reasserting their control over content and the ways in which it may be used, suggesting that consumer empowerment of production of content has by no means gone unchallenged (Cover, 2009: 154)

It appears that, rather than embracing of the open-source philosophy that consumers are adopting in their online activities, industry interests lay firmly in preserving control over cultural output through traditional legal boundaries. McLeod argues that the way in which copyright law is deployed in Western countries serves to limit the production of mass produced music and leave little potential for intertextual cultural practices, putting the owners of copyright material at an advantage. Although loosening copyright restrictions may encourage the claiming of intellectual property by one group to the detriment of the other, making laws more flexible will prevent IP owners claiming over their own output as well as claiming others’ work as their own, and restricting access to such content (McLeod, 2003: 250). In combination, the efforts of the UK government in preserving the restrictions over IP, such as the production of *Creative Britain* (2008) and *Digital Britain* (2010) documents by the DCMS, and pressure from the music industry to clamp down on such activities to preserve their businesses has emphasised the sustained market interests that remain tethered to physical content. This is despite the increased levels of interactivity afforded to consumers as content is increasingly available in a digital format. This is indicative of the ongoing struggle between producer/consumer and author/audience, intensified through the development and dissemination of digital, interactive content (Cover, 2009)

Van Dijck acknowledges this increased interactivity of digital content and calls for a more nuanced approach to the understanding of user-generated content and its social and economic, as well as technological implications (2009: 54). The growth in the participation of production by ordinary consumers has been acknowledged since the 1980s; the term 'prosumer' regularly being used to describe how users' activities fall somewhere between the producer/consumer distinction (2009: 42). However, this analysis is too dualistic to fully account for the multitude of roles of users, requiring a multidisciplinary approach to understanding user agency. This approach would take into account the cultural role of the participant as a facilitator of participation as well as the economic meaning of their activities as producers and consumers. Approaching the issue in this way may provide an understanding as to how increased consumer agency may enrich cultural output and steer thinking away from restrictive strategies which discourage creative thinking and active participation in both networked and physical spaces.

The precise ways in which consumers may be participating in the creation as well as the consumption of digital music within their geographical and cultural context, and the extent to which such claims to exclusivity over restricted content are hampering creativity will be of importance throughout the course of the research. Focusing on one music scene in Cardiff will allow the exploration of creativity within both the live and digital domains. This will reveal the extent to which networks and the process of digitisation have allowed the consumer/producer increased freedom to participate in the creation, re-mixing and recirculation of music with likeminded consumer/producers in their locality and beyond. Using qualitative methods, the multitude of ways through which this is being achieved will be recorded, providing an understanding of the social, cultural and economic implications of such practices for the local music scene. The contextualisation of these changes, using Cardiff as a case study, will highlight the particular individuals who are most active within the scene and the particular issues and problems it faces in the digital age. This contextualisation may also bring to light the presence and nature of such restrictions to creativity with owned and controlled product, and the extent to which such assertions of ownership are being challenged by those participating and contributing to the local scene.

(5) The Research

This chapter has explored three main areas of literature of relevance to this research; firstly, the growth of the online space as a mode of information exchange and communication of a variety of media and digitised product. The increasing trends of communication and interaction in networked, online spaces has lead not to the production of ‘fantasy selves’ (Hardey, 2002), but increasingly towards a co-ordination, or ‘embeddedness’ of practices and perspectives across both offline and online spaces. Secondly, these emerging practices and perspectives were contextualised through an explanation of current changes occurring within the localised music subcultures or scenes. The increasing importance of the growth of digital music and supporting online communication facilities, such as social networking, blogging, websites and discussion forums, but also the more technical activities associated with music production and mixing, are crucial to an understanding of online practices and their ‘embeddedness’ within specific, local milieu. Through an examination of the literature around such groups, the impact of networked spaces and their increasingly ubiquitous presence within live music spaces can be understood (Wilson and Atkinson, 2005; Williams, 2006).

Finally, the third strand of literature explored the rise of immaterial product, online communication and its meaning for those who came into contact with it. The concept of ‘consumer empowerment’ was used to explore the increasing participatory potential the internet and other network forms have in allowing the consumer not only to passively receive, but also to contribute to a continuous re-iteration of digitised content. Bruns labelled this phenomenon ‘produsage’, describing the creation and communication of content as assessed on a continuum of participation rather than through defined roles of production and consumption (2008: 21). The emergence of participatory production and freer accessibility to music has been marked with the rise of the internet and peer-to-peer filesharing facilities. However, the music industry has been eager to maintain a hold on copyrighted content increasingly available through such facilities for free. These restrictions potentially pose a threat to the creative capacities of those active within working within live music. The extent to which music subcultures are active within creating as well as merely consuming content, and the obstacles to participation in the ‘creative commons’, is also of interest to the research.

Together, these three relevant bodies of literature provide both the context and justification for the present study. Employment of ethnography as a key methodological approach which

aims to fully understand the lived experience of the milieu and its inhabitants through observing face-to-face and online interaction, alongside accompanying interview data from promoters, performers and consumers will also explore the potential for participation in creative processes in and between live and digital spaces, and the extent to which participation is questioning the credibility of traditional boundaries of production and consumption. Furthermore, the presence and extent to which such participation in content creation is restricted within local scenes by rights holders is also of interest in determining just how empowered those active within such scenes really are.

The research arises out of notable gaps in the literature when considering the social practices of contemporary music subcultures and the effect of digitisation on its members. There is a lack of research which considers the changes occurring within such groups given the advent of digitisation and the increased creative and participatory potential afforded users of such facilities. Earlier research has highlighted the emergence of a more individualised engagement with music scenes based on a construction of identity and lifestyle (Bennett, 1999). However, the literature that focuses on the development and reproduction of a music scene in a specific locality in the context of networked communication has yet to be explored in any depth. The aim of the ethnographic work is to understand comprehensively the relationship between live and online spaces, enriched through discussions with key actors within such scenes, in order to paint an accurate picture of the impact of networks, digitised music and other related content on the social practices of a geographically located scene. As previously mentioned, existing studies which touch on these issues have been predominantly focused on American or Canadian subcultures, with little consideration of the music scenes within European countries. This leads to a specific interest in Cardiff, as a major British city, and its dominant music scenes as a focused site of interest, taking into account not only the relationship between the physical and digital spaces, but also the specific contemporary issues facing live music in Cardiff and the way in which they shape production and interaction, both online and face-to-face.

Finally, the research site and qualitative methods of data collection will not only determine the presence and extent of creative participation and re-circulation of music, but also the extent to which creative engagement online for users or ‘producers’ is restricted by the efforts of content creators to reclaim authority over how such content is received and treated. The

research will attempt to explore the extent to which key actors are experiencing a ‘pull-back’ from content owners (Cover, 2009), and how this is affecting their engagement with the online participation in music production and distribution. Additionally, the research will attempt to understand if participation is as comprehensive as suggested in the theorisations of Bruns and others; and exploring the full implications of participation, both democratic and restrictive.

A focus on the ‘indie’ music milieu within Cardiff is therefore the starting point for the study, with a combination of ethnographic participant observation at live music events in Cardiff, semi-structured one-to-one interviews with promoters and musicians and ethnographic interviews with consumers as the selected methods of data collection. The study will aim to encompass key promoters, musicians and consumer/producers within the milieu, defined as encompassing those who promote, play or are fans of local music within Cardiff. The milieu will comprise of those attending and participating in the local ‘indie’ music circuit; those who promote bands within this genre and consumer/producers who regularly and actively participate in consuming and purchasing music in both material and immaterial form, along with other associated merchandise. Ethnographic work will involve regular attendance at live music events across the city for a set period of time, gaining the opportunity to discuss experiences and perspectives of engagement with live and digital spaces with those in attendance. The research will therefore attempt to highlight changing modes of participation, the changing relationship between the local and the global with regards to the consumption, production and distribution of music and changing dynamics of ownership and control which are currently being re-negotiated within this milieu, and which may have wider implications for other independent music sectors, and indeed the creative industries more generally.

Chapter 3

Creative Industry Policy in the UK 2005-present: Contextualising Government Concerns Regarding the Creative Sector

Introduction

This chapter comprises of two aspects. Firstly, it provides a policy context to the thesis; outlining the major policy initiatives and other significant reports that have been published since the inception of the Creative Economy Programme (CEP) and its progress to date. The evolution of creative industry policy in the digital era, and the particular implications of such shifts in production, consumption and distribution for the legislative agenda are of interest here. This chapter provides an analytical account of the development of creative industry policy relating to the distribution, circulation and exchange of digital products in the UK between 2005, at the inception of the CEP, and the present. Secondly, this chapter aims to place policy discussion in a wider context, justifying the use of Cardiff as a case study for understanding illegal filesharing in the context of much more wide-ranging sociological shifts which are occurring within small scale music milieu.

Recognising the importance of policy development pertaining to the creative industries (CIs) had been high on the New Labour agenda from 2005 until the end of their third term in office in May 2010. Acknowledging the challenges of the sector in reaching its full economic potential in terms of GDP, and the value of its digital product under earlier policy frameworks, was the rationale behind the CEP, which was designed to foster growth for all industries within the CIs. The CEP, initiated by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), proposed a comprehensive review of the current state of CIs in 2005, and outlined a programme through which the sector could achieve its maximum potential in terms of economic growth and innovation. This proved to be the starting point of the programme that has developed over the intervening seven years, with notable analytical reports and legislative documents produced, including; *Staying Ahead: The Economic Performance of the UK's Creative Industries* (2006), *Creative Britain: New Talents for a New Economy* (2008) and *Digital Britain* (2009). The culmination of this programme resulted in the passing of the *Digital Economy Act* (DEA) (2010), originally a white paper that was passed with the primary focus on preserving IP and reducing illegal activities, such as the setting up and use of host services to share unauthorised material, notably mp3 music files.

This chapter will deconstruct the arguments made in the report and eventual legislation; taking issue with the objectives of the DEA and critiquing its approach to IP preservation in the digital age. The first section provides context to this legislation; detailing business models that functioned in the pre-digital era and how they came to be threatened by the rise of networked communication and exchange. The second section examines commentary and critique from within the media and other sources to the DEA. This will form the basis of criticism made by this thesis, central to which is the proposition that too intense a focus on illegal filesharing within policy has been to the detriment of providing a full understanding of the sociological significance of digitisation and the network society. The DEA constitutes a regressive regulatory stance, which protects the interests of those already in positions of economic dominance and which does not align with the social and interactional shifts afoot within both mainstream and independent music operations. This thesis also contends that in its consultation process, it has predominantly ignored the interests of anyone operating outside of the mainstream, and has failed to engage them and seek out their perspectives on the issue of copyright.

With this issue in mind, it is pertinent to address the perspectives of the independent sector in the final section. Understanding the needs of the independent sector, and the adaptive strategies they are using to adjust to a combination of physical and virtual spaces is an important counterpoint to explore given the draconian approach of the mainstream. The ways in which changes in the production/consumption relationship have resulted in increasingly robust attempts to monitor and punish such ‘transgressive behaviour’ is of key concern here. This chapter will make the case for the relevance of examining an independent milieu in order to establish the full range of implications for those working within the sector; economic and social. Policy’s focus on illegal filesharing constitutes but one small part of the wider shifts taking place, and this research aims to shed light on a wider range of issues which impact on economic sustainability and interaction around music in the digital age.

(1) Background: Music Industry Business Models in the Pre-Digital Era

In order to understand the extent to which digitisation has transformed the economic landscape of the music industry, and the CIs more widely, a contextualisation of business models and roles that were successful in the pre-digital era are discussed in this section. This

will highlight the fundamental disruption to both mainstream and local music industries in terms of economic, social and cultural change, leading to a better understanding of why the mainstream felt it necessary to lobby government to legislate, and the ways in which the independent professionals sustained themselves. In addition, the purchasing habits of consumers and the changes that have taken place since the invention of the mp3 file are also relevant. Here, we will examine the effect on promoters, musicians and distributors in an effort to understand the problem from the perspective of the mainstream industry.

For creators seeking sustainability and some measure of profit from their work, the advent of digitisation has presented new challenges for musicians at every level; although responses to such changes have varied widely between mainstream and independent sectors. The ability of consumers to appropriate and disseminate content freely, whether it is audio, audio-visual or textual, has posed significant challenges to the industry in their attempts to control their output and be remunerated in the manner in which they have previously been accustomed. The architecture of the internet has challenged the established contract of content in exchange for payment. Content can now be freely shared between users unbeknownst to rights holders, as there are no concrete or effective method of policing this exchange online. The resultant decline in profits represented a significant threat to the status of mainstream record labels (McLeod, 2005; Knopper, 2009).

Whilst such a decline in profits was damaging for both parties, the implications for large record companies was considered far more serious considering the amounts of money at stake. Distributors of the 'Big Four' (up until 2011) (Alexander, 2002; Bishop, 2005; Knopper, 2009) record companies; EMI, Sony BMG, Universal and Warner, began to lobby government in the USA and Europe to take action on the issue of illegal filesharing as the Napster case was reaching its conclusion in 2001. They stated that such a threat to their income would fundamentally damage expansion in terms of signing new artists and marketing them successfully. Their argument stated that, as revenues continued to fall, they would have to tighten their belts, which would lead to a reduction in new signings, reduced investment in acts already on the label, and a fundamental impoverishment of creativity and innovation in the music industry. A notable trend witnessed in the last decade concerns the widening gap between a small amount of very successful artists, who are 'safe' in terms of securing revenue, in conjunction with the attitudes of record companies who are increasingly

risk-averse and unwilling to invest in acts whose ability to increase profit margins is uncertain.

Musicians within the mainstream were polarised on such issues, with divide over support for copyright law reform, and those who were interested in exploring more innovative avenues of revenue creation. Narratives of musician exploitation within the mainstream industry in the pre-digital era have been widely peddled, and the effects have been exacerbated through decreased record company investment for artists already on the books, in conjunction with it being significantly more difficult for unsigned acts to attract the interest of labels. It can be argued that the corporate interests in increasing revenue streams have always overridden a large label's concern for musician interests, and in this way, the labels appear to some to be pursuing their own economic interests above claims that they are trying to safeguard the sustainability of those they sign. This has always been an issue, with music label business models being accused of disproportionately loading the costs of the production, marketing and distribution of an album onto artists before they are permitted to receive any profits resulting from sales. With control of revenue streams having always been in the hands of the corporation, the disadvantage of mainstream artists has arguably also been pervasive in the pre-digital era.

In contrast, these issues have not been as salient for musicians operating within the independent sector. In this context, issues of profit loss have not been as keenly felt, although there is frustration as to the effects of illegal filesharing felt within smaller music economies which refer to the ethical and artistic disadvantages of unauthorised material being shared. With the impetus for legislation on illegal filesharing originating from the mainstream, the analytical concern for this thesis is in understanding the relationship that such shifts are having on the independent industry. How do professionals operating within this sphere react to such changes and what is the impact on their roles within the milieu they inhabit?

The following section details the progress of policymakers within the DCMS to address the threats to the mainstream outlined above, and to safeguard the economic and innovative capacity of the creative industries. Understanding the orientation and sets of discourses present within such documents will provide a basis for critique of such aims and objectives.

(2) The Creative Economy Programme

This section summarises the trajectory of policy development as lobbied by the mainstream industry from the inception of the CEP, enacted under New Labour. It will outline the publication of a set of key policy documents which set the agenda for the discourse on protection of IP and copyright within the CIs of the UK. This culminated in the controversial DEA, an attempt to curb economic losses within the mainstream industry, which met with much criticism from with the media, open rights groups and the industry itself.

The second part of this section outlines sources of lobbying to legislate on illegal online activities, and the nature of opposition to this approach. Finally, this section will outline the terms of the DEA which came under scrutiny, and offer an analysis of the key issues of contention; in addition outlining three key flaws of the DEA, which question its democratic rigour, draconian punishments against consumers and the extent to which independent music operations are considered within the legislation.

2.1 The CEP and the Protection of the UK Creative Industries

The concern expressed by the industry over notable cases of illegal filesharing host sites, in conjunction with pressure from the mainstream labels and industry bodies was the impetus behind the creation of the CEP in 2005. Cases such as that of Napster (2001), and more recently, The Pirate Bay (2009), a torrent host site which continues to operate despite a controversial legal battle in which its owners were fined and given jail terms (Johnson and Kiss, 2009), brought into sharp focus the potentially damaging effect to the CIs for the UK government.

Impetus for action was informed by a wealth of documents which assessed the current state of the CIs, notably *The Gowers Intellectual Property Review*, commissioned by the Labour government to establish whether the current IP system ‘was fit for purpose in an era of globalisation, digitisation and increasing economic specialisation’ (2006: 1). The report identified the threat to the CIs posed by the unauthorised sharing of digital product and here began a focus on ensuring that copyright law was fit for purpose in the digital age. Recommendation 39 of the review stated that the Government should;

Observe the industry agreement of protocols for sharing data between ISPs [Internet Service Providers] and rights holders to remove and disbar users engaged in

'piracy'. If this has not proved operationally successful by the end of 2007, Government should consider whether to legislate. (2006: 8)

The three main stances advocated by the mainstream were that firstly, the economic damage inflicted by illegal filesharing was significant, with one in four (28%) users across the globe accessing P2P services on a monthly basis, with only 35% US customers paying for music (IFPI, 2012: 16); secondly, that education about appropriate treatment of IP was required, and thirdly, ISPs should monitor and be responsible for any illegal traffic passing through their network.

Staying Ahead (2006) was an economic analysis of the CIs as they stood at that point, noting the disruption that immaterial product was causing to established business models designed to govern physical products and concluded that a new set of strategies would be needed to address this issue. The strategy, based on the information collated in *Staying Ahead*, was used to form the basis of *Creative Britain* (2008), which aimed to provide a comprehensive plan for enhancing success. This shift in discourse from both of these documents places responsibility for protecting IP not just with the record companies, but as embedded within the educational curriculum as the onus shifts onto the moral regulation of the consumer. This formed part of the proposal for increased regulation of consumer activities around illegal filesharing, as well as a discourse of making them responsible for their actions in this regard. This approach reiterates the belief that creators of works must be fully remunerated for what they produce, and to standards commensurate with that of the pre-digital era. The process making both consumers and ISPs responsible was the clear steer throughout the policy output. This paved the way for *Digital Britain* (2009), which provided more specific strategic direction for strengthening the CIs and was the precursor to the *Digital Economy Act* (2010).

Digital Britain also advocated the protection of due reward for creativity and ensuring sustainability for creators. With this in mind, the DCMS set a target of reducing illegal filesharing by 70-80%, with the responsibility for delivering on this target falling to Ofcom, who would require ISPs to notify account holders if they were found to be accessing infringing content, and in the case of repeat offenders, pass their data onto rights holders (2009: 111). Although ISPs remain reluctant to undertake such action, the discourses constructed throughout the course of the CEP clearly demonstrates a commitment to preserving the value of digitised creative product, particularly music, and in building a

coherent system of regulation. Its realisation came with the passing of the DEA; this act, although aiming to preserve revenue streams and the future viability of the CIs, has been severely criticised from a number of corners.

2.2 Reactions to the CEP: Lobbying and Industry Division over Intellectual Property

The flurry of policy activity described above came as a result of both new government priorities regarding the CIs, but was also an attempt to appease the music industry at a time when record labels were struggling to come to terms with the implications of digitisation on the music market. The global nature of digital music exchange meant that the mainstream industry lobbied for action on illegal filesharing on the grounds that the threat was more widespread than copying on physical formats, such as cassettes and CDs (McLeod, 2006; Knopper, 2009). Until this point, the industry had brought cases against the architects of filesharing sites, such as Shawn Fanning of Napster (David, 2010), or taken prolific sharers to court; on occasions suing for large amounts of money from individual consumers. In addition, the failure of Digital Rights Management (DRM), an encryption program applied to legitimately purchased tracks by iTunes and other major online retailers of mp3, to be accepted by the market had forced its removal from tracks from most providers by the end of 2007 (BBC News, 2007; 2008). The government considered moves to legislate the most favourable alternative in tackling the problem.

The Digital Economy Bill (DEB), as it was known before its passage into law, aimed to tackle this issue much more effectively than through the use of costly lawsuits, by making responsible both regulators and ISPs in policing and managing the problem within a legislative framework. These proposals came with a significant amount of opposition from many quarters, such as the Open Rights Group and ISPs. ISPs objected to the discourse within the Bill which took their status as responsible for policing content as assumed. A requirement of the act stated that ISPs were to monitor customers who persistently accessed unauthorised material and report on this illegal behaviour to the rights holders, as well as inform their customers of the illegality of their actions in a ‘three strikes’ system. The ‘three strikes’ referred to the amount of times consumers would be notified of their illegal behaviour before ‘technical measures’ were applied; namely, a restriction of paying customers access to the internet for an indefinable amount of time, with bandwidth supposedly ‘squeezed’ in order to reduce the amount of content which could be downloaded (Arthur, 2010a).

As well as ISP opposition, division in attitudes towards the DEB came from the musicians themselves. There emerged two major factions; the first headed by umbrella organisation, UK Music, and its then CEO, Feargal Sharkey, and the second comprised of a group of mainstream musicians headed by Billy Bragg and Dave Rowntree of Blur, collectively known as the Featured Artists Coalition (FAC). These two groups often diverged in opinion over the best course of action, and highlighted the divergence in opinion over how best to deal with the issues from a musician's perspective (Allen, 2009). These disagreements over the degree to which ISPs should be responsible, in addition to division amongst musicians as to the best course of action, has highlighted the varying proposals for solutions to the problem and the increasing ability of musicians to be heard above, and in opposition to, their record labels. These examples, although restricted to mainstream artists, make problematic the established notion of paying premium rates for music and enable musicians to creatively explore other revenue streams more suitable for digitised product (Morrow, 2009; David, 2010). The passing of the Bill into the DEA raises questions about the extent to which its terms are compatible with these shifts. The next section offers an analysis of the legislative approach surrounding the DEA and the limitations it poses to professionals and consumers, as well as addressing its suitability for economies and music scenes in various forms.

2.3 The DEA: Criticising the Act's Efficacy

Discourses espoused by the DEA favour the preservation of IP and the galvanising of copyright laws to prevent the unauthorised sharing of digitised works circulating online. Although wide in its remit, this research raises a variety of concerns over the passage of the Bill into an Act, as well as the broader aims of the CEP which have led to this emphasis on draconian measures to reduce illegal filesharing.

This section will outline three fundamental flaws of the Act, and outline how this research can help shed light on the areas of the music industry which this legislation ignores, namely, the small scale independent operators which contribute much to the cultural milieu of a particular locality such as Cardiff. Firstly, it was not adequately debated at the reading stage and potentially has not been treated with the same democratic rigour as other bills. The Bill passed into law controversially in the run-up to the 2010 General Election, and as such, it was argued by many that the trade-off of clauses which took place during the 'wash-up' process

made it unconstitutional and lacking in feasibility and effectiveness. Its hasty passing left no attention paid to ironing out these issues, which had potentially huge ramifications for all concerned.

Secondly, that the clauses within the Bill, particularly those which encourage sanctions for persistent illegal filesharers, have the potential to infringe on civil liberties. Campaigners took issue with the ‘three strikes’ proposals, a set of warnings issued to consumers regarding their illegal behaviour, which could potentially lead to the ‘squeezing’ or removal of internet accounts. Ethically, this was criticised for denying essential democratic access to knowledge provided by the internet, ultimately violating human rights and free speech (Arthur, 2010b). This approach is considered problematic within this thesis, as it appears to contradict earlier policy initiatives which aimed to foster the growth of CIs through innovative methods to protect digital content. This legislation adopts an opposing tactic in imposing sanctions on account holders, and in the process, ignores the plethora of original aims to provide optimum conditions for SMEs to flourish.

Finally, Digital Britain and the DEB have increasingly focused on issues of copyright preservation at the cost of the wider objectives of the CEP, such as the focus on developing opportunities for SMEs. It has also de-prioritised building opportunities for young people within the creative industries through educational initiatives, as highlighted in previous policy documents, in favour of focusing more intently on the identification and punishment of the consumer base of ISPs in the UK. Current legislation not only ignores the earlier policy objectives, but also favours and increasingly regulatory and punitive discourse whilst neglecting its commitment to promote growth within the sector. The nuanced approach to local music milieu has thus far been excluded from policy considerations in favour of the preservation of pre-digital copyright models.

This thesis proposes that these criticisms indicate that such legislation focuses disproportionately on draconian punishment. Employing more adaptive and creative solutions to the problem, acknowledging the place of freely circulated music within the network as a promotional tool, as well as an increasingly integral part of the process of consumption, is the key to understanding how the market has shifted with the rise of digitisation. Taking account only of the priorities of the mainstream in policy formation has left wide knowledge gaps in

the perspectives and strategies employed by the independent sector. Important concerns have been raised with regard to the clauses of the Bill, after it was shown that they referred directly to recommendations made by lobbyists such as the British Phonographic Industry (BPI) (Johnson, 2010). Exploring such strategies, as this thesis does, will make the case for acknowledgement of the diversity of musical and promotional operations and their particular needs. It provides a powerful argument for increasing the amount of adaptive, rather than draconian responses to illegal filesharing, as well as putting the issue in context of the wider socio-cultural shifts in communication and consumption. This thesis, like *The Hargreaves Review* (2011), calls for reconsideration of the values upon which the Act is based and to acknowledge the wider and more fundamental changes facing the creative sector, as outlined in earlier documents. Attention to these and more recent assessments of the DEA may provide more innovative solutions to the challenges of recouping value from digital content.

The starting point for this study aims to illustrate the particular ways in which an independent music milieu are interpreting and adapting to the plethora of changes and issues described above. Understanding its nuances is central to appreciating the limits of current legislation regarding issues of regulation and innovation. The DEA, in its focused attempt to enforce its own form of regressive regulation, has ignored the irrevocable shift in production and consumption so central to the operation of mainstream and independent sectors. Such shifts encompass illegal filesharing, but this is not the only issue at stake. Communication between key social actors is indicative of fundamentally altered modes of interaction which are transforming the independent sector across online and offline spaces. The final section of this chapter will outline the relevance of policy discussion for particular actors within the independent sector, using relevant literature to illustrate the transformation in roles of production and consumption, and with particular regard to the affordances and limitations of the internet in empowering ‘prosumers’ (Bruns, 2008) within an independent milieu. This will make the case for a focus on the research site and subsequently the incompatibility of policy thinking in relation to the independent sector.

(3) Implications for the Independent Milieu: Dynamics of Control and Ownership

The following section will deal with the issues affecting significant groups of actors within the research site of this study, proposing gaps in knowledge and understanding of their needs, and identifying how this research may address such shortcomings. Whilst the potential of

networked platforms is unrivalled in terms of the accessibility and capacity it offers through various communicative and creative tools, this is sharply contrasted by the attempts of the music industry to stifle potential in order to preserve its economic interests in the digital era. Furthermore, the insistence on preserving digital output under pre-digital copyright laws increasingly places the 'prosumer' within a system of draconian monitoring and subsequent punishment should they be non-compliant. This section will address such changes as experienced by each group of people within the independent sector and draw upon the literature around the wider implications of regulation, consumer empowerment and control to outline the key changes and potential limits.

3.1 Promoters

The advent of digitisation has altered the remit of promoters within an independent music scene such as Cardiff's. The expansion of their presence into online spaces through social networking platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and MySpace offers a new set of possibilities for engaging with local, national and international music fans in order to promote music originating from Cardiff to a wider audience. Not only do social networking sites allow increased potential to promote to audiences, but have the additional benefit of being able to engage with a wider network of other promoters and musicians, thereby extending the knowledge and reach of promoters in the diversity of acts that they are able to attract to Cardiff. This has offered industry professionals to market Cardiff and its musical brand to a wider audience, as demonstrated through the growing popularity of the annual Swn festival, which has gained a good reputation for staging shows in the area all year round in towns and cities across Wales. Here, in practice, we can see how a 'network of networks' (Hassan, 2004) affords access to global flows of information (Urry, 2003) which can enhance and widen accessibility to information and products within a locality. This provides potential for consumption and production for social actors based in Cardiff, with significant long term implications for economic and social relations.

As part of this transformation, social networking offers a plethora of multi-modal promotional tools, including the dissemination of photos, audio-visual material, blogging facilities, event pages and the ability to comment via messaging and posting. These tools provide continuous and enriched methods of communication and knowledge exchange which significantly further pre-digital capabilities. This has enabled new ways of communicating

whereby music and associated information can be shared, sometimes without payment and legitimately as promotional tools. This is increasingly considered the norm in conditions where a certain amount of free sharing will enable a return on the loss incurred by not charging for songs. This may be evident through increased attendance at shows, purchasing of merchandise at shows and the accumulation of a loyal fanbase. The very nature of the online domain has fostered an open and unrestricted access to content, in which those who consume it are increasingly free to exchange with others and find the capacity to innovate with digital content (Thrift, 2008). This suits small scale independent operations, such as those within Cardiff; the relevance of the corporate music industry rendered irrelevant by the increasingly diverse ways in which music is being marketed and profit generated. Increasingly, the corporate model is viewed as irrelevant in a context where music is less the source of income. The threat to the established industry oligopoly (Alexander, 2002; Bishop, 2005) caused by such availability and widened ability to produce and consume simultaneously has led to a fundamental reorientation in the dynamics of ownership and control. The particular ways in which the independent milieu are interpreting and reacting to such changes, and the attitudes of promoters to such changes, are an important component of the study.

The pursuit of profit as the main goal, and its particular centrality in the corporate sector, has long motivated the operation of pre-digital business models. However, independent sector attitudes may present a different set of motivations for making music and engaging with audiences. The emphasis of free promotion over profit may result in a more realist perspective for the large number of musicians who do not have large record label contracts, as independent promoters value the highest possible engagement with their music over monetary concerns (McLeod, 2005: 529). This may seem a romantic notion; however, some studies have demonstrated that peer-to-peer services, such as Napster, often serve to boost sales of music in both physical and digital formats due to the ease with which users can download and pass on tracks (Filby, 2008). These changes have fostered an alteration in thinking amongst consumers as well as promoters, within which they find themselves increasingly empowered to promote music outside of large scale corporate channels, within which the values they abide by are not compromised.

This claiming of control is possible for all social actors within a given milieu. Increasingly, there appears to be an emergence of independent distributors and artists seeking to reclaim autonomy over corporate routes to 'success'. The practices of the DIY movement and more established independent labels in the UK, such as Rough Trade (Hesmondhalgh, 1997; Strachan, 2007) serve to illustrate the vast differences between the mainstream and independent sectors. In shunning the pursuit of 'economic capital' sought by large labels, independent promoters strive to enrich the 'informal symbolic capital' (Strachan, 2007) of music. This creates a dialectical relationship between mainstream and DIY labels, in which the values of independent promotion are justified, allowing creative freedom and the discovery of new acts. These practices are enacted with the emphasis on enriching production and promotion of music in an ethical manner and retaining the control they feel is lost through making music with a mainstream label, rather than for monetary gain (2007: 254).

Promotion in the independent industry takes on a very different character to that of the mainstream, not only in its attitude to illegal filesharing, but also in some of its core values which steer the direction of promotional activity. The empirical material has illustrated some of the observations of sociologists regarding the fundamental differences in values, particularly due to the impact of digitisation, as important in shaping the contemporary landscape of promotional activity. It will be useful firstly, to understand how the emerging direction of policy impacts upon independent sector attitudes to free sharing of music and other digital content. However, this research seeks to explore the wider economic and social implications of such shifts in order to understand both the potential for free circulation of digital content and the unintended negative consequences. The reorientation of motives highlighted in the literature is potentially liberating for promoters and other social actors, the global reach of promotion through networks seemingly presenting never-ending possibilities beyond the confines of the geographical location. However, the resultant decentring of place, as explained in chapter one, presents a set of social consequences which can negate, or even counteract the potential of such developments. Equally, the acknowledgement of sustainability as opposed to long-term profit generation from music goes against the fundamental premise of capitalism. One of the questions for this research is; who subscribes to such principles and how widespread are these values within Cardiff's independent sector? The need for income may remain desirable, and reconciling two such divergent perspectives is the challenge that this research is concerned with. This thesis combines a critique of policy

and emerging business models with an exploration of social impacts of illegal filesharing and other online practices, and the ways in which innovation and creativity can be simultaneously created and stifled by such practices.

3.2 Musicians

Like promoters, independent musicians are a diverse set of artists with varying perspectives and requirements. They are equally aware of the realities of operating within a smaller music economy, and are realistic about the milieu in which they operate; its opportunities and limits in comparison to mainstream operations. It is not only the economic differences that have been highlighted between musicians across the two sectors; much of the literature also suggests that independent musicians have more romantic notions about which focus on being true to their art as opposed to profit generation (Hesmondhalgh, 1997; Strachan, 2007). Much like promoters, this is slightly different in that the focus is on maintaining authenticity above monetary concerns.

Authenticity has been identified as a key concept in the creation of art (Benjamin, 1936) and maintenance of authenticity is seen to be crucial in the garnering of respect from fellow artists and audiences (Dashuk, 2011). The age-old binary distinction between making money and staying true to their art is one that is classically made by independent musicians. However, there is a complexity to this, often simply expressed, binary which emerges in the context of digitisation. Despite seeking artistic fulfilment, musicians find themselves increasingly compromised as their desire to be sustainable, or even seek profit from their music, is also keenly felt. Digitisation has added further to the complexity of this binary, as increasingly prevalent are views that sharing of free content is beneficial to the independent sector. Such views on these transgressive acts are at odds with their desire to make a living, and to some extent, threaten the degree to which they could be considered authentic.

Much the same as with promotion, views on illegal filesharing amongst independent musicians may adopt a less stringent approach to regulation of the circulation of digital music. This study is concerned with exploring the complexity of perspectives on acts of illegal filesharing within Cardiff's independent milieu as musicians attempt to come to terms with the specific effects of sharing on independent scenes. It is worth exploring the possibility that musicians, less focused on making profit, may be more interested in utilising

the viral effects of online dissemination, both with regard to the reach of their promotional efforts and the innovative capacities it may offer their fans. Understanding the ways in which the wide range of media can be used not only to disseminate their own output, but also to encourage ‘prosumption’ (Bruns, 2008) behaviour from their fanbase has demonstrated the ability of the internet to promote creativity and innovation from those traditionally thought of as consumers. An adoption of a more liberal attitude to such practices, and an acknowledgement that the creative ethos extends beyond those who consider themselves professional artists allows for an adaptive mindset, unconstrained by draconian approaches to regulating digital music. There is evidence that mainstream musicians are also breaking away from traditional contractual obligations and taking steps towards independent control over their own music production; Madonna broke with her label in 2007 to sign a lucrative deal with concert promoter, Live Nation (Allen, 2007; David, 2010). The same month saw Radiohead split with their label and release an album exclusively online, allowing consumers to decide how much to pay for it (Brown, 2007). Autonomy around production and distribution was increasingly becoming a reality across the entire music industry, to some extent.

Whilst this is relevant, this research also seeks to understand the changing nature of social engagement between actors, online and offline within the Cardiff milieu which contribute to the prevalence of such attitudes. Whilst a maelstrom of economic shifts is occurring, what is particularly interesting for this study is the interaction between technology, its social uses, and the shift in attitudes that result. Examining this complex interaction goes beyond the singular priorities of mainstream lobbyists in attempting to understand the consequences for social interaction within music milieu, as much of the impact of digitisation in these areas has thus far been left un-investigated. In moving away from a mainstream-dictated policy focus, the wider complexity facing independent musicians can be explored.

This research aims to address issues relating to three broad areas. The first of which is to re-examine notions of authenticity in the digital era. The key questions posed in relation to musicians are concerned with how the emergence of online communication transforms ideas around authenticity for musicians, and what are the gains and losses in this respect. This research outlines the ways in which traditional notions of authenticity are threatened, and new ideas around authenticity are being constructed across online and offline spaces. Secondly,

the concern with the consequences of prosumption is of interest. Prosumption has been highlighted as increasingly prevalent amongst consumers, and subsequently beneficial for musicians. However, in an independent context, the precise extent and nature of prosumption is under-examined. This research aims to shed light on whether such practices are as widespread as currently thought and whether there are in fact barriers to such practices as well as unintended consequences. Finally, it will also be of interest to understand musicians' perspectives on the value of music, both economically and socially, in the digital era. Of concern is understanding the impact of prosumption and changing perceptions of the artist by other social actors, and if such shifts in the creation and distribution within the milieu have had any lasting impact on artists' status as a result of changing ideas around value. The final part of this section considers salient issues for consumers with regard to policy, and wider social implications.

3.3 Consumers

Consumers are a somewhat different group in comparison with professionals, and in many ways their changing listening habits around music have provided the catalyst for much of the upheaval currently being experienced within the industry. However, as with the professionals, this research is concerned with this, but also with the wider sociological significance within which such practices are taking place; the association of filesharing with the multitude of other practices, and the consequences of this for social actors within the Cardiff milieu.

It is anticipated that consumers perceive the changes taking place in the industry very differently to professionals. It is suggested that attitudes to illegal filesharing may not be particularly sympathetic to concerns of improving sustainability for independent musicians through payment for content. This may be compounded by the possibility that consumers, particularly those who are very young, may not be experienced in distinguishing legitimate websites from those who are transmitting copyrighted content. Distinguishing between legal and illegal sites is becoming increasingly difficult, as many offer the same services. This thesis argues that educational initiatives remain very important as part of the development of policy frameworks which aim to adapt and incorporate digital products and modes of communication. Current legislation, through de-emphasising the importance of consumer education, applies the more punitive measures without first laying the foundations of

appropriate use of the internet amongst the consumer base, and this may lead to uninformed use and undue punishment.

The research into audiences will aim to unpack to what extent users understand what is defined as legal or illegal and their attitudes towards use of such facilities. This aims to firstly understand the degree to which the aims of the DEA and the perspectives of audiences diverge and in what ways, in order to understand where the DEA has fallen short in terms of understanding the realities of using online facilities to consume music. It is suggested that the divergence will be significant, as users, who are largely unaware and not extensively knowledgeable about the status of all facilities in their everyday use, largely treat such facilities as if they were legal. This could potentially lead to significant misunderstandings if the DEA in its current form were to come into full effect, as many may fall victim to punitive measures without having the advantage of education with regard to legitimate services.

Despite the importance of policy and legislation, this study is also concerned with the wider implications of ownership and control that digitisation raises. The advent of digitised compression technology, as well as the increased participation in the production of music online, has fostered a climate of uncertainty around the structure and profit margins of the sector (Alexander, 2002). Since the creation, and subsequent dissolution of Napster in 1999 (Giese, 2004: 343), as well as the emergence of a host of other P2P services, the music industry has been struggling to make sense of the growing threat to its oligopoly (Alexander, 2002; Bishop, 2005). As the use of such services increases, established dynamics of ownership and control are being renegotiated between musicians, promoters and consumers (Jones, 2002). The immaterial product (Lazzarato, 1996), the mp3 file, at the centre of such upheaval, and the networked architecture which makes its transmission possible have become both useful tool and a major cause of concern for the sector. The easy duplication and communication of mp3 files has indicated that restrictions over music in tangible formats are no longer compatible with the ability to produce unchecked content in the digital age (Giese, 2004: 357). The increasing ability of those who consume this music to control how it is appropriated and exchanged with others has meant that the strict control over content previously held by major labels is deteriorating. Decisions about how content is used increasingly falls to the consumer, proving detrimental to the mainstream industry (Freestone and Mitchell, 2004; Chiou et al, 2005; Filby, 2008; Bonner and O'Higgins, 2010).

The downsides to consumers' access to P2P for the mainstream industry are contrasted by the open and unrestricted access to content online. Consumers are free to exchange immaterial product with others and, in addition, find within such networked spaces the capacity to innovate with digital content (Thrift, 2008). This results in possibilities for remixing and re-editing of content in which consumption is thus transformed into a productive act and cultural product has become interactive; consumers' intellectual labour utilised in the innovative process (2008: 31). Prior to this, the mainstream sector was dominant in terms of its control over the means of production (McLeod, 2005: 31); copyright law allowing them to reap profit at every stage of the production process. However, says McLeod, the explosion in filesharing has forced the industry to face up to the realities of the digital marketplace. As a result, smaller scale, independent labels are offered an opportunity to use such networks to promote their music.

Thus, rapidly shifting habits of consumers represent a breakdown of the unity of traditional relationships of ownership and control, resulting in the beginnings of a divergence of interests between owners and managers of content circulated. The voice of ownership becomes less and less significant as the influence of increasingly powerful consumers becomes more prevalent (Berle and Means, 1968: 116). Picking up on Willis's exploration of music consumption and production practice amongst youth provides us with an understanding of how 'symbolic creativity' bridged the gap between these two practices. Through understanding the symbolic work that went into selecting, purchasing and listening to records, DIY recording, mixing and performance of remixed content, he began to better understand the production-consumption link and the sustained engagement of consumers with music (1990:81). This research therefore goes beyond a focus on consumer activities and their impact on piracy towards understanding in detail the wider implications of the breakdown of pre-digital conventions of ownership and control upon the production and reproduction of the Cardiff independent milieu.

This research hopes to capture both the newly discovered potential for consumers in terms of prosumption, but also the limits, and even losses that result from access to networked facilities. As mentioned in the discussion of musicians, the extent to which such communication has been extended from a local to a global scale and the associated rise in

practices of prosumption raise critiques around the extent to which consumers are actually adopting such habits, and whether such proposals hold any weight within small-scale independent operations. The nature of relationships between artists and audiences are also of concern, but importantly, so are relationships between fans themselves. Also of concern are changing notions of value attached to digitised music; how has the de-commodification of music in physical form, and the subsequent re-commodification of the mp3 file, coupled with the ability to more closely interact with artists from both the local milieu and beyond, shifted relations and with what consequences? Through examining such practices, the gains and losses in terms of democratic access, authenticity and the value of music in the digital age will be addressed.

(4) The Current Research

Drawing attention to the nuanced approach that actors within this scene take to digitisation will provide the basis for making the case for equal consideration of small-scale operations and a more tailored approach to specific issues facing different types of businesses. The predominant focus on piracy has been criticised in documents dating back as early as 2006. An Economic Research Council paper entitled *Creative Destruction in the Music Industry: The Way Ahead* (Dodge, 2006) considers the current corporate approach to controlling online dissemination of music as out of date with the current realities of the sector and the perspectives of consumer, as well as musicians signed to record labels. The report highlights the ubiquity of free music online as a key tool in the promotional process, and the futility of suing customers for illegally downloading, highlighting the drain on revenue that this causes through legal costs and the negative press this generates for the record company (2006: 16). The report called for a more adaptive response from the industry, investing in methods to work with musicians and consumers in adapting their models to the business age. This research also advocates a re-orientation of policy discourses which discourage draconian measures, and which promote adaptability as the best move going forward.

This thesis uncovers significant divergence between policy and legislative objectives, but is also concerned with the practices of independent professionals and audiences across online and offline domains, both with regard to the method through which illegal filesharing is approached, but also in addressing the wider social changes which are occurring. Although this thesis will argue that piracy is but one element in a collection of wider shifts, it has

become increasingly difficult to ignore through virtue of its prioritisation within the legislature. This skew in the policy focus highlights the fact that government is losing focus on their earlier, broader objectives in favour of an approach which privileges the priorities of the mainstream. This will eventually prove detrimental to all areas of the music industry as it gradually loses its focus on wider shifts and policy objectives.

Understanding the importance of illegal filesharing, but also its context relative to the wider changes taking place, is the priority for this research. Through looking at Cardiff as a case study, it aims not only to examine the applicability of current legislation to this milieu, but also to make the case for re-orientation of focus to examine wider social shifts which have fundamental impacts on relations between professionals and consumers. Without an understanding of these, a solution to the economic problems facing both mainstream and independent sectors cannot be addressed successfully. The sociological implications can inform next steps, and move away from approaches which are ill-informed and potentially ineffective.

Chapter 4

Doing Ethnography in a Networked Music Milieu

Introduction

This chapter aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the rationale and approach to data collection throughout the course of this research. The central rationale of the research design aimed to underpin the theoretical concerns outlined in the literature; firstly, it aimed to understand the melding of traditional and digitised media in the reproduction, and the extent to which ‘mutual embeddedness’ was enacted within and between these spaces. Secondly, it was concerned with the ways in which online communication enabled activities which could fall under the banner of ‘prosumption’ and the extent and nature to which such activities took place and their resultant social effects. Thirdly, it was also interested in documenting the presence of so-called ‘transgressive’ online activities and the reactions and effects of these actions within an independent milieu. Because of the nature of the research site, the potential respondents and the social settings which they inhabit, it was felt best to adopt a multi-method approach to address my research questions. A combination of in-depth qualitative interviewing, both face-to-face and via email, participant observation at live music events throughout the city, focus groups and audience interviews, along with informal discussions with others active within the milieu, formed the basis of the data collection.

Adopting a social constructionist approach to sociological enquiry, the epistemological and ontological underpinnings of the study will be explained in the process of interpretation that took place in my fifteen months in the field. The use of qualitative data as a means of theory generation will aid elaboration of the lived experiences of those operating within Cardiff’s independent music milieu and their negotiation of promoting, performing and participating in the online and offline domains of this milieu. In the process, it recounts the progress of the fieldwork, the successes and problems that occurred along the way, and the way in which these issues were resolved. As a study of online networks, it details the key role online communication had in recruitment and maintaining relationships with participants throughout the research process. In addition, the importance of the role of researcher in a field where I was not an embedded member of the community was also an important aspect of the fieldwork experience and in shaping relations with respondents. Researcher position with regard to gender, perceived knowledge about the milieu were also important; as were the implications of these issues in terms of access and development of rapport with respondents.

(1) Rationale and Research Questions

As discussed in the policy chapter, legislation currently being worked through in the UK and the criticisms made of this legislation in part underpins the rationale for this research. One of the key arguments made in the previous chapter was that the DEA currently only serves the interests of the mainstream music industry, ignoring both the diversity within the broader music sector and the existence of vibrant local circuits. This study aimed to address those gaps in policymaking through illuminating the experiences of working and participating in a local music milieu, considering the specific issues and problems that characterise local music economies and the attitudes of some of its members to the changes occurring within the music industry in the era of digitisation. Through an understanding of how networks are formed across and between online and offline domains in the maintenance of the milieu and the live events which sustain it, it was hoped that different perspectives would be uncovered on the meanings and significance of digitisation for the independent sector. It was hoped that this might bring about a broader consideration of the music industry and consumer responses to filesharing, and suggest ways in which a more representative approach may be considered, particularly in light of the watering down of key elements of the current legislation and its delay in coming into force as the result of a judicial review.

The aim of the data collection process was therefore to gain insight into the world of the Cardiff independent music milieu, gaining knowledge of the networks and relationships which operated within it and the way in which the growth of online communication was augmenting and altering these relationships. The independent music sector has been an area in which little research has been conducted with regard to digitisation; much academic and policy attention has been rigidly focused on the issue of piracy. These studies have not only been concerned predominantly with statistical instances of illegal filesharing and its effect on the mainstream, but also have taken clear moral stances on the issue through an approach which discusses how it can be reduced. This research addresses the gap in academic knowledge with regards to the experiences of those working within an independent milieu; discussing their perspectives and practices. However, the approach taken focuses specifically on issues germane to Cardiff, and is not focused solely on illegal filesharing. Neither does it take account of all forms of illegal filesharing practices; it examines instances of piracy as it

arises within the context of the milieu and the manner in which it is embedded in specific social and cultural networks.

Cardiff's independent milieu was selected as a research site primarily due to the researcher's familiarity with its operation, having been a follower of live music in the city for a number of years. Previous postgraduate study, which involved interviews with a number of promoters and musicians locally, had provided a degree of enlightenment about the context and issues facing the city's independent milieu, and thus it seemed appropriate and timely to explore these issues in more depth.

In reminder, the central research question was therefore;

What is the relationship between the practices, perspectives and interactions of the production, consumption and distribution of independent music in Cardiff across networks and face-to-face domains?

This main questions can be split into a further three sub questions, each dealing with a different aspect of the research, and which will be dealt with in each of the three empirical chapters;

(i) What constitutes the Cardiff indie scene 'milieu' and to what extent, and in what ways, do online and offline spaces work in conjunction to reproduce it?

(ii) How is the shift towards digitisation, the rise of filesharing practices and the changes occurring within the industry more generally viewed by those operating in the independent sector? What are the key social and economic issues arising from such changes?

(iii) How are filesharing practices, both legal and illegal, made sense of by all milieu members in the wider context of their participation within the local milieu? Can filesharing be distinguished from wider practices of participation in an independent milieu?

Whilst the main research question provided the central point of reference for the construction of the research design, the development of the supplementary questions occurred whilst in the field and through the examination of policy documents throughout this period. In this

particular research, a specific approach to data collection was taken which did not rigidly impose pre-conceived hypotheses about the social field. An interpretivist, qualitative approach was taken, adopting a mixture of qualitative methods in order to achieve this, and therefore the two principal research methods used were participant observation of the music milieu and interviews with prominent actors, as well as secondary analysis of social networking activity, as part of a 'network ethnography' (Howard, 2002) approach which has been a key part of this research.

Schwandt, (in Denzin and Lincoln, 1998) highlights that the aims of those who follow interpretivist or constructionist traditions is to understand the lived experience of those they are researching from their point of view, otherwise known as *Verstehen* (Weber: 1962). As Rock notes, interpretive research is not passive or value free, it is interactive and creative, and illuminates the social world, giving meaning for those who inhabit it, but also those who study it (in Atkinson et al, 2001: 30). Throughout the course of the research, I was conscious that I knew relatively little about the research site compared to some of my respondents, who had been active in the local music milieu for many years in various roles, whereas my experience was confined solely to being an audience member. As a result, it is clear that my accounts of the milieu and those who operate within it are not authoritative ones; they do not cover the full extent of the networks operating in Cardiff or the issues present within the scene, they are my interpretations of the salient issues based on my interactions within social settings and with milieu members. This point is emphasised by Gilbert, who notes that when conducting good social research, we must realise that the empirical reality is the source of theoretical understanding about the world, but that we must also acknowledge that the way we bring our own ideas to bear on the research will also impact on the data collected and the emerging theory (1993: 20). With this in mind, I was keen not to impose theoretically on the social setting throughout the data collection process, but to observe inductively interactions, relationships and networks in order to generate theory from the data, adopting a grounded theory approach to data generation (Strauss, 1987; Charmaz, 2006).

(2) A Multi-method Approach

This research adopted a qualitative multi-method approach to data collection. The importance of triangulation of data collection methods has been identified as useful in establishing convergence in research findings (Hesse-Biber, 2010: 466). In-depth interviews were used in

order to firstly gain firsthand accounts from prominent members of the research site; promoters, musicians and audience members, to examine their wider perspectives on germane issues. However, as Atkinson, Coffey and Delamont point out, these accounts may not be sufficient in order to gain ‘completeness’ of data, as these accounts are can be distorted by perspective (2003: 100). Therefore, employing participant observation of live music events in this case appeared to be appropriate in order to achieve a more holistic approach to data collection. In addition, thematic analysis of online social networking sites and other online resources relevant to the events and acts performing in the city over the course of the fieldwork period was also carried out. This would provide the source of information for key interactions and networking taking place online, alongside accounts of such interaction discussed in the in-depth interviews. Here, a discussion of the specifics of conducting such networked ethnography (Howard, 2002) will be outlined.

2.1 Social Network Analysis and Network Ethnography

These activities formed part of a ‘connective ethnography’ (Hine, 2007) or ‘network ethnography’ approach (Howard, 2002), which provides a more detailed understanding of a community of practice which operates across both online and offline spaces, and which not only identifies contextual networked relationships, as social network analysis (SNA) does, but also explores the nature of social relationships within those networks (2002: 559). It is important to draw a distinction between SNA and connective ethnography and the ways in which they were useful in this research. SNA is the visual mapping of a particular social grouping and seeks to understand the actors within this social context and their relationship to one another (Serrat, 2010). This was an important part of this research, and was employed in the mapping of the field as detailed in appendix G. This network visualisation details key actors in the milieu (including individuals, businesses and organisations) and their relationships in terms of centrality, density, closeness and number of connections. This was an important contextualising tool, and a key part of making sense of the numerous references to other actors in the milieu made by respondents in qualitative interviews. It also gave a picture of their relative position in relation to the connections detailed by other respondents and overall, the inclusion of both sources of data were mutually enriching to an analysis of the milieu.

However, the concept of ‘networked ethnography’ becomes more appropriate for this research as a method which reveals the complexity of the milieu beyond the descriptive visualisation provided by SNA. Networked ethnography adopts traditional ethnographic techniques, but moves them beyond the geographically placed field and examines the relationships between actors across online and offline domains using Geertz’s traditional concept of ‘thick description’ (Wittel, 2000). Others have employed a mixed-method ethnographic approach whilst adopting network ethnography, notably Biddix and Park (2008) in their exploration of a student networked activist campaign around the living wage movement. Employing a network analysis of hyperlinks to uncover the nature of the online network, they then used this to shape their qualitative interviews with members of the network. Not only did this bring to the fore organisations key in the network and elicit information from individuals around their relationship with such organisations, it also served to guide and ultimately strengthen the quality of the interviews (2008: 886). It was felt that the incorporation of such network mapping would aid the data collection process and the researcher in immersion in the milieu, as well as enriching the qualitative data.

2.2 Qualitative Research and Networked Ethnography

In-depth qualitative interviews with local promoters and musicians provided the majority of my data, in addition to ethnographic interviews with audience members at live shows. The selection of these particular groups comprise the three main roles members of the milieu adopt, allowing for a certain amount of crossover between musicians and promoters in terms of promotional tasks, and increasingly allowing for audiences to adopt roles akin to production as they more actively contribute to reproducing the milieu. Flick (2002: 229) discusses how the use of multiple methods, social actors and materials within one study is a process that adds depth, richness and rigour to the representation of the research site in question. It was important to gain professional and audience perspectives over the issues at stake in this thesis in order to gain a representative perspective, as far as possible, from as many different kinds of social actor. A sole focus on the professional milieu would have rendered the research skewed in favour of their concerns, and with inadequate attention paid to consumer views and practices, and the true extent of their productive capacity would not be revealed. The inclusion of such diverse roles of these actors provides a more accurate snapshot of Cardiff and directly addresses the research questions as fully as possible. This adheres to the concept of a multi-methodological approach as crystal. Like the crystal, which

grows, changes and adapts, refracting multiple representations and realities, so too does multi-method qualitative research. Seeking as many perspectives of the milieu in the mould of the 'crystal', allows the researcher explore multiple realities and texts, become more immersed in the field and understand that it is constructed by both respondents and the researcher (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005: 5-6).

However it was necessary, in order to gain a fuller picture of how the scene operates and how the relationships within it are managed, to conduct participant observation and secondary analysis of web pages and social networking to understand how these online interactions supplement and reinforce participation from industry professionals and audiences. One to one or group interviews can provide narrative accounts of individuals' experiences, but as Atkinson, Coffey and Delamont (2003: 120) explain, these accounts are subjective, often only offering the 'truth' as experienced by those being interviewed, and may often be skewed through intentional or unintentional distortions. Therefore, as a social setting available for me to observe, with regular events occurring on a daily basis, it seemed logical to attend and observe the live event in progress in an attempt to marry physically placed events and analyse online communications and networks. The network ethnographic approach aligned well with this strategy. As a study of 'mutual embeddedness' in the milieu, what was required was a contextualisation of new media in the offline world. The networked ethnographic approach allows for a distinct community to be identified, significant analysis of social networks and prominent actors using traditional SNA to be utilised, and for clusters of actors worthy of study for more in depth data collection to be identified. This approach expands upon the contextual function of SNA to examine more closely the significance of social relations across online and offline spaces. This allows for the changing nature of social relations across online spaces to be acknowledged, whilst adopting traditional participant observation to offline space in order to interpret meaningful social action and social organisation through social activity (Atkinson, 2003: 113), but also to adapt ethnographic approaches to understand online fields of practice (Hine, 2007).

As the literature suggests (Turkle, 1997; Chandler, 1998; Hardey, 2002; Wellman, 2006), the notion of online and offline spaces as 'mutually embedded' is an important school of thought which understands the relationship and interdependence between these two domains. This research is interested in understanding the nature and extent of this relationship as it relates to

an independent music milieu; does the existing body of literature accurately represent the social action taking place across these domains in a particular creative industry? The decision to undertake online analysis of social networking sites and other relevant online sources emerged out of early fieldwork experiences. At the core of the research was a desire to marry the online and offline spheres, understanding how participation across these two spaces with reference to the local music milieu was enacted and maintained. Simply interviewing prominent individuals and attending live events was not enough to understand the dynamics and mechanisms of individuals' online communication. Online analysis attempted to understand which facilities were popular, how they were used and what key interactions took place and their effect on participation. These analyses were worked into the fieldnotes taken from the live events in order to build up a picture of the online and offline interactions, as well as elucidating my own experiences of participation as an audience member in the local scene. In addition, and as part of the networked ethnographic approach, social network analysis was undertaken as far as possible to identify both core and peripheral actors, but also to inform next steps in sampling of professionals. Analysis of the network in such a way (see appendix G) was both informed by, and informed this process, but is by no means complete in its coverage of the milieu.

(3) Validity and Reliability

The multi-method, qualitative nature of the research meant that considering validity and reliability in the way that they are applied to quantitative research was not relevant in this instance (Seale, 2004). Qualitative research requires a modification of such terms in order to understand its merit with regard to these issues. In the case of ethnographic research accompanied by semi-structured interviews, perspectives are considered important, and breadth is often sacrificed for depth of knowledge of a social site or groups of people. Such concepts of internal validity are often considered irrelevant to the objectives of the research, which acknowledges the existence of the 'multiple constructed realities' of researcher and researched. This research thus adopts a social constructionist epistemological position, and that 'credibility' should replace the search for 'absolute truth' in research findings. Lincoln and Guba (1985) in *Naturalistic Inquiry*, propose that the concepts of trustworthiness and authenticity are appropriate alternative criteria to use within a constructivist paradigm. They propose that trustworthiness consists of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, which act as alternatives to the constructs of validity, generalizability,

reliability and objectivity. Credibility was assured in this study through thorough engagement with the music milieu, gathering detailed accounts in order to identify salient concepts and also through techniques of triangulation (Denzin, 1978); including *data triangulation*, where the researcher seeks out examples of a concept in many settings; *theory triangulation*, where several different hypotheses are considered throughout the process of analysis, and finally *methodological triangulation*, in which multiple methods, in this case ethnographic observations and interviewing, are used to capture the nature of Cardiff's music milieu most accurately. Credibility was further assured through the continued engagement and probing of meanings throughout the course of the interview and in an on-going sense through my immersion in the field. This helped test and modify emerging analytical themes in order to test their applicability and ground them in empirical data. Dialogue with respondents was crucial in ensuring interpretation of the data was correct. These 'member checks' (1985: 314) were important not only for maintaining good relationships with respondents, but also for upholding the credibility of the data. Furthermore, the use of grounded theory in the approach to data collection and analysis in this research was a way of measuring the rigour of the data collection and analysis process, in order to ensure concepts are well supported by a variety of examples in the data. During data analysis and assessment of the suitability of concepts with regard to the data, it was important to assess the data to its fullest, acknowledging where data fitted existing concepts, but also where deviant cases became apparent. In such cases, this led to the re-alignment of existing concepts relative to the prevalence of cases which contradicted the concept, leading a more inclusive and accurate reflection of the data in the thesis.

The other three concepts; transferability, dependability and confirmability, refer to the importance of providing a basis for which judgement on the utility of the data in reference to other research. Transferability was achieved through the multi-method approach, in its attempt to provide the widest range and depth of 'thick description', upon which other researchers could judge the applicability of this study to their own work. Dependability and confirmability can be achieved through a process of 'audit', in which the materials collected and used in the research process could be amassed and catalogued as evidence of rigorous data collection processes. This can be accounted for in this research through collection of raw data (interview transcripts), data reduction (written-up fieldnotes), data reconstruction (use of analytical software and coding frames), process notes (accounts of the methodological

process), materials relating to intentions (post-fieldwork notes and reflective accounts) and instrument development information (interview schedules and consent forms) (1985: 319).

This research sought to maintain the highest standards of credibility and authenticity in the research process. However, true to the tenets of constructivism, what was also central to this research was the understanding that under subtle realism, it is acknowledged that the social world cannot be known in its entirety (Hammersley, 1992). Knowledge of this particular milieu would always be incomplete, and its structure and the social relations formed within it would be constantly changing, rendering the research absent of complete credibility.

(4) Ethical Considerations

In any sociological research project, the issue of ethical responsibility to respondents is of paramount importance. Bulmer, in Gilbert, points out that these issues are all the greater when carrying out qualitative research due to the increased freedom and creativity the method offers (2001: 55). Issues of researcher interaction and the building of relationships with informants raises important issues of trust and rapport and an increased responsibility to protect them from any consequences arising from the data collection process. Oliver also points out that the way we refer to those from whom we collect data have consequences for the way we view and treat them (Oliver, 2003: 5). In this case, and in view of the interpretivist approach to the project, I will refer to them as respondents or interviewees in order to recognise their parity of status and authoritative voices in recounting their experiences. This particular research had a couple of prominent ethical issues arising from the data collection relating to disclosure of identities and admissions of criminal activity; namely, illegal peer-to-peer filesharing. There was a small risk that disclosure of illegal activities may expose those involved to attention from the authorities, and so it was imperative that, for the sake of their privacy and for the collection of accurate data, that their right to anonymity and to withdraw data given at any time was respected. Here I will recount the experience of these issues and their solutions, amongst other more minor issues which concern fieldwork relations which require ethical attention.

The ethnographic element of the research highlighted issues of privacy and informed consent of those being observed. However, this was also balanced with more practical concerns of the research and the ability to gain relevant and useful data. In many of my fieldwork accounts

which took place at gigs, the majority of them were not aware that I was observing them. Gatekeepers, such as prominent promoters or musicians that I spoke to or interviewed were aware of what I was doing; however, this still raises issues of informed consent and privacy of participants. Fountain (in Hobbs and May, 1993) discusses her fieldwork and justifies her use of covert methods in the field. She highlights a quote from Bulmer, who weighs up the benefits of concealing information from respondents;

Complete concealment of the research...may rarely if ever be justified, but the converse - that total openness is in all circumstances desirable or possible - does not follow (Bulmer, in Hobbs and May, 1993: 165)

In the case of this research, informed consent was gained from all interviewees, as this was a precondition for formal participation. These individuals were given an information sheet with details of the study and were required to sign a consent form (see appendix D). Those who were mentioned in fieldnotes by name were also aware of my research and my observation in live spaces, as this was mentioned in the interviews they had taken part in. However, for those who were occupying the social setting, it would have been too time consuming, impractical and inappropriate to approach every single person and acquire consent, as some gigs were incredibly well attended. In this case, total informed consent was not desirable, and may have resulted in my being too visible in the setting, resulting in unreliable observations.

A second issue concerned the protection of privacy for those who took a more active part in the research as a respondent. In interviews with all groups; promoters, musicians and audiences, the issue of piracy and peer-to-peer filesharing was a key component of the interview schedule. Many individuals openly admitted to taking part in these activities and were tape recorded as saying so. Each respondent had been assured that their responses would be confidential, and they were anonymised and given pseudonyms to protect their identities. Although this activity is not particularly contentious in the grand scheme of things, I felt it was still important to protect their identities as a matter of course, in case these data were ever contested. There is an issue here of possible harm to respondents, and the British Sociological Association's *Statement of Ethical Practice* (2004) highlights the importance of preventing any harm to respondents through disclosure of personal data which may adversely affect them (2004: 5). To prevent this, all professionals (promoters and musicians) were given pseudonyms, and the identities of audiences were not collected.

Another issue related to anonymity arose during the research and was unanticipated at the beginning of fieldwork. As I will elaborate in the empirical chapters, Cardiff is a small city and those working in the local music industry are in most instances well known to one another. Oliver points out that small scale qualitative studies such as this one are more likely to reveal the identities of respondents (2003: 10). Some respondents were conscious that some of the more contentious things they had said, which referred to the Cardiff milieu, may be attributed to them unintentionally through revealing their role in the local scene. This was particularly true for one female, who was apprehensive that her multiple roles would easily identify her, as there are only a small number of people active within Cardiff. Through careful negotiation, we agreed that whatever data that would eventually end up in the thesis would be carefully anonymised or removed at her request if necessary. Many others would also say something in the interview and then withdraw it, saying that they did not want that information to be used in the final draft of the thesis. This right to use certain information was carefully negotiated with each respondent, and all respondents were given copies of their interview transcripts to read and the opportunity to remove passages as they wished as part of the 'member checking' process mentioned above (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

In accordance with the guidelines set down by the School Research Ethics Committee at Cardiff University, all respondents were given an information sheet and consent form attached upon the initial approach from me requesting them to take part in the research (see appendix D). This assured them of their anonymity throughout the process, their right to withdraw their data from the study at any time and invited them to ask any questions about the research. Consent forms were for the most part signed and returned at the interview, with the exception of the one email interview conducted, in which the respondent read the consent form and made a statement via email stating his understanding and agreement.

The ethical implications of online recruitment were also an important consideration. When contacting potential respondents through online facilities, it is important to note that respondents may consider such approaches intrusive, or may be wary of discussing participation in public fora, such as social networking sites. Such publicly available evidence of interaction may compromise promises of confidentiality and anonymity (Barratt and Lenton, 2010) made by the researcher. I was careful to avoid this by contacting individuals only by private email or chat facilities, using my university email account, Facebook email,

MySpace email or Facebook chat. None of these conversations would have been publicly available, therefore ensuring confidentiality.

A final aspect of the research that became increasingly important to note as the fieldwork progressed was the use of the tape recorder in both interview and ethnographic data collection. Duneier, in his study of deprived and homeless black men in New York, noted that the use of the tape recorder is closely linked with levels of respondent rapport achieved (1999: 336). His use of recording equipment was based on respondents believing that he was not an authority figure and would not compromise their trust. I felt that this was to some extent relevant in this research; respondents accepted the recorder in interviews as a matter of course, but its use became more contentious when conducting audience interviews in live venues. The sociability of the event did not lend itself well to a cold approach from a researcher hoping to interview groups of gig-goers, and I had to carefully gauge who was interested in taking part before using the dictaphone. In these cases, I would always explain my reasoning for using it and if they consented, would go ahead, always ensuring that a flyer was given with my contact details and information about the study (see appendix C). This was necessary given that I often took personal details about them, including age, gender, place of residence and occupation, and fostered a degree of trust, despite being somebody they had only just met.

(5) Access

As with any other piece of research which employs ethnographic methods, there were certain considerations to take into account when entering the field, interacting with key informants, building contacts and then eventually leaving the field at the end of the research. The inclusion of the internet in building rapport and contacts was also a key part of this process; using social networking and other relevant websites to initially contact and arrange interviews, as well as approaching respondents face-to-face, and the way that these could be used in combination was an important component of gaining access and establishing rapport. This section firstly deals with access to professionals (promoters and musicians) and then access to audiences.

5.1 Access to Professionals

As Reeves notes, building and maintaining access and rapport is key to successful ethnographic work (2010: 321). As someone with only experience as an audience member within Cardiff's live music milieu, I had little detailed knowledge of professional connections and networks that operated within the city. In the spring and summer of 2009, whilst forming my research design, I held informal chats with individuals who had such connections, either as musicians, managers or promoters. This served to establish a rough outline of key players and helped form a strategy for whom to approach initially when the fieldwork began in the autumn of that year. With little prior knowledge, these interactions formed the basis for the formation of the network studied.

Whilst approaching those most well-known within the Cardiff scene first, I also made two very useful contacts in the initial stages. These were with one musician-turned-promoter and one independent label manager. The former was recommended to me as a useful contact by another promoter; the other was introduced to me by a mutual friend. They both proved to be useful gatekeepers in different ways throughout the course of the fieldwork, both for facilitating the data collection with audiences and gaining access to other musicians for interviews. Gatekeepers were crucial in shedding light on the organisation and network connections which constituted the milieu, as well as providing details of key contacts that may be willing to take part in the study. I was aware, as Fountain notes with her gatekeepers, that those chosen will inevitably shape the research in terms of networks and contacts made (1993: 150). However, their initial willingness to participate and offer relevant contacts made them indispensable to data collection.

As Pitts (2007) notes, rapport does not occur overnight and the process of achieving trust is a challenging one which must be maintained over time. This was particularly true when approaching promoters and musicians as, although open and interested in my research, were slightly wary of my being an 'outsider' as far as membership to the milieu goes, something that will be discussed later. I felt it important not to exploit them by badgering them for interviews and giving nothing in return. Initial attempts at building rapport included offers to help with various distribution or promotional tasks that they might need doing, as a thank you for participating. I also made sure to speak to those who had taken part if I saw them out at a gig afterwards, to catch up with them but also to give them progress on how my research was going and when it would be available for publication. I felt this allowed them to see how their

data would be used but also keep in contact should they have any questions. After the interviews had taken place, I also returned the completed interview transcripts to them, asking them to read and omit any comments they did not want included. This not only improved the validity of what was said through respondents' appraisal of the transcript, but also acknowledged the importance of their reflection on what was said and respecting their desire to withdraw or edit statements made.

Some professionals were willing to be interviewed upon initial approach via email, Facebook message or face-to-face. However, there were some who were more cautious as to my motives and seemed apprehensive when I first told them about my study. Pitts also talks about how continuous contact over time may lead to a 'turning-point' in researcher-respondent relationships, and this was certainly true for a few of my interviewees. I was conscious to maintain friendly interest when encountering these people in the research site in order to facilitate trust and to appreciate what I was trying to achieve with the research, This fieldnote extract recounts the moment one promoter agreed to be interviewed a few months into the fieldwork;

...I asked if she was still ok for an interview and she said this was fine, and whenever was good for her. After exchanging contact details she said that it would be good if I came down to XXX in the daytime, as she's working there Monday to Friday at the moment...she seemed more enthusiastic about this than before, which I was pleased about as she hasn't seemed that happy about doing the interview when I asked her before...

(Fieldnotes, February 2010)

This demonstrated the varying nature of relationships with respondents in the professional arena and highlights rapport as being a complex and continuous process. Whilst some respondents were happy to be interviewed within a relatively short time of knowing me, others were more apprehensive and required more information about myself and my motives, as well as what I would use their data for.

Once initial contacts had been established, they provided me with additional professional respondents through their contacts and sampling proceeded from there using a snowballing technique. I would also ask them to identify who was part of their immediate social network, and this also helped inform my choice of who to contact, noting if names were recurring amongst different respondents and this was crucial in identifying core and peripheral actors.

This research makes no claims to representativeness, and instead focuses on Cardiff as a specific case through which the research question can be addressed. Therefore, the strategy was to recruit as many people working within the local industry, either as musicians or promoters, and interview until the issues covered in the interview schedule had been discussed to saturation point.

Another significant issue related to access for this particular research was gender. The make-up of the milieu in terms of those who participate in it as audience members and as professionals is predominantly male. I was aware that my position as a female researcher may be to a certain extent a barrier in gaining the appropriate access and rapport in a male dominated arena. I was mindful that the fact that I was female, coupled with the fact that I was not well-known within this small network of individuals, may lead to my credibility being questioned by those I approached. Fletcher (2002) highlights the importance of a reflexive approach in ethnographic research in understanding how identity and social position impacts upon fieldwork relations. She focuses on gender in her study of the workplace and how it can be a marker of difference in a male dominated environment. It is impossible to tell to what degree gender had an influence on access or rapport with participants, but there remained an element of gender difference marking me out as distinctive within the field. This will be expanded on further in the next section which focuses on the ethnography itself in more detail (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

5.2 Access to Audiences

Access to this particular group was very different and in many ways more problematic, due both to the lack of apparent 'gatekeepers' and also due to the changing strategies adopted when attempting to collect data from this group of people. Unlike professionals, audiences were an amorphous group with no central operator that may act as an 'in'; composition of audiences varied from show to show, although there were what could be described as 'regular' attendees. In addition, professionals were more willing to engage with the research due to their ongoing interest in music in Cardiff, audiences had considerably less incentive and so initial access was a difficult and carefully negotiated process (Burgess, 1984).

When recruiting for the focus groups, and later when seeking audience members to take part in on-the-spot ethnographic interviews, respondents were approached cold during gigs,

usually in between bands or at the bar where it was usually quieter and the atmosphere more conducive to conversation. These were often difficult exchanges, not least because a cold approach from a stranger claiming to be a researcher is not a usual conversation to have with someone when out socially. Additionally, my position as a lone female researcher was often problematic (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983), and responses were often mixed; from friendly, to bemused, and even in some cases openly dismissive. This range of reactions were in part due to the unsolicited nature of contact, as well as the dominance of men in such spaces (Fonarow, 2006), who were often not used to the presence of a great number of females at shows, let alone ones interested in interviewing them on the spot. Better facilitation of conversation was brought about by the introduction of flyers giving information about the study (see appendix C) and contact details should they want to discuss the interview with me. The use of the Cardiff University and ESRC logos seemed to legitimise approaches made and responses were more understanding when these were given out. A fuller account of the process of data collection with audiences is given later on in the chapter.

Method

(1) Ethnographic Fieldwork: A Year in Cardiff's Independent Music Milieu

1.1 Aims and Rationale

The original research design outlined how the majority of data would be collected through a combination of in-depth interviews and ethnographic fieldwork. The ethnographic method has long been used in studies of music scenes and milieu since the inception of the CCCS, with regard to issues of deviance (Cohen, 1972), the presence of a common culture (Willis, 1990) and cultural style (Hebdige, 1979). However, this research draws upon more recent ethnographic works which deal with the impact of online communication on the organisation of music milieu. The inclusion of ethnographic observation and interviewing aimed to observe live events and provide an alternative interpretation on the milieu and gigs in particular which went beyond those evoked within interviews. As these events were so frequent and accessible to me, the aim was to attend and observe the contemporary gig in attempting to build up a picture of the distinctive character of Cardiff's live music and those who were instrumental in creating and sustaining it. In order to capture the essence of the scene in terms of both online and offline communication, as well as the myriad soundscapes, material culture, language and geography of the gigs, it was necessary to use the 'thick

description' adopted by Geertz (1973). This approach helped ground the research in a locality and provided the basis for the study of a specific case, which would address the research questions. This section explores the aims and rationale for this study; the central theoretical and empirical concern of the online/offline relationship being of principal importance.

1.2 The Importance of Place

It was important to base the research within a physical space in understanding the how online social media has contributed to the production and reproduction of both physically placed music milieu and that activity which takes place online. Casey (1997), in his philosophical exploration of space and place, *The Fate of Place*, elaborates on the importance of place, and the appreciation of the particularity of place in the construction of identity, character and history, both for the individual and society. Although we are experiencing new 'places' as the virtual domain grows and becomes a space in which identities are formed, we must renew our considerations of physical space within this changing context. This is particularly germane with regard to the strong body of academic literature which advocates construction of social relationships and personal identity across online and offline spaces (Turkle, 1997, Chandler, 1998; Hardey, 2002; Wellman, 2006). It is felt important to understand the interaction between online and offline spaces within this music milieu, in order to assess to what extent each sphere is mutually beneficial, or in what ways they may not be aligned in their purposes and mutual furtherance.

What was central to this research was the acknowledgement that although virtual spaces were becoming central to the operation and maintenance of the scene, this must be considered in conjunction with the ongoing face-to-face interactions and events which remained central to the reproduction of the independent music milieu within various bars and clubs in the city. Classic ethnographies, and some more recent ones (Fonarow, 2006; Moore, 2007) obviously deal with the offline domain; however, in the internet age, many ethnographers have noted the fruitful primary and secondary data that can be elicited from the Internet in the form of website content, web chats and forum posts (Williams, 2006). Whilst these have been enlightening, this research is predicated on the idea that studies which seek to accurately understand contemporary music milieu must be understood from both online and offline perspectives (Wilson and Atkinson, 2005) and the ways in which they interact (Chesters and Welsh, 2006) in order to be accurately represented. Additionally, the research design must

take account of the complexity that arises from wider processes of globalisation and communication that impact on these cultural milieux (Webb, 2007). This is therefore the approach of this thesis. Through this process, the specific character of Cardiff's scene could be elaborated, and the specific issues and problems which have become salient to the sector as the internet had become more integral to its operation. Furthermore, this approach would provide a context through which issues of digitisation of music could be explored as embedded in the social milieu of a local setting.

1.3 The Fieldwork

The fieldwork itself was carried out over of 18 months from August 2009 until January 2011, and included attendance at various gigs in bars and clubs in Cardiff city centre and the surrounding districts, at shows held as part of an annual festival, seminars and events which were held regarding the local music industry and informal meetings and chats held with prominent members of the milieu, including musicians, bloggers, promoters, studio owners and audience members. Loose criteria were sketched out before the commencement of fieldwork as to the events I would attend and the type of music focused upon. The networks and diversity present with regards to genre were a lot smaller in Cardiff when compared to other major British cities, largely owing to its size. With this in mind, I decided to focus predominantly on the broadly defined guitar and electronic based music that was most commonly put on in various popular locations. This decision was taken partly because this was the most accessible milieu to me, and one which I had participated in as an audience member since living in Cardiff, as opposed to other genres of music popular in the city, such as the hip-hop and drum and bass scenes. Although I was aware that the selection of live shows based, to some extent, on my own musical preferences would dictate the direction of the research, those selected to participate in interviews and my perspective on the networks, the fact that these were the most common types of shows put on throughout the week also meant that they seemed more representative of what was popular in Cardiff. Other types of music, although popular to an extent, were not as available due to lower demand and were less frequent.

The decision to explore independent music as opposed to mainstream music genres, apart from my own personal enjoyment, was important in presenting a representative picture of the musical talent originating from, and attracted to Cardiff. Mainstream music, although

prevalent at larger venues (being well established on larger touring circuits), was not covered in part due to its lack of relevance to the geographical and cultural specificity of Cardiff, but also because concerns about the mainstream and digitisation are framed very differently i.e. often through the singular issue of illegal filesharing. This was not what this research was concerned with; it wanted to understand the experiences digitisation more generally within smaller sectors, placing illegal filesharing *in context*.

1.4 In the Field

I aimed to attend around two shows per week, which would usually showcase a mixture of touring bands who had been booked as part of their national circuit and local musicians who would be drafted in to support these acts, which would increase their profile and fanbase in Cardiff. Most of these shows would take place on a weekday, as many of the venues attended would reserve Fridays and Saturdays as clubnights (devoted not to live music, but DJs playing more mainstream music within the rock/indie genre), which would bring in significantly more revenue. Attendance varied depending on the popularity of the headlining band; although in some cases the local popularity of the supports would increase the crowd for a headlining band that was relatively unknown. These events were attended and I observed the musicians, audience and professionals within this setting, noting significant interactions between them within the space. I also took note of the spatial organisation of the event through noting floor-plans and the use of materials in order to promote and engage people in the scene. These events were also an opportunity to encounter people I knew in the audience as friends, but also promoters and musicians who I was interested in interviewing. Sometimes potential promoters or musicians (and later, audiences) were approached cold, and other times I may have already contacted them by email about my research. In either case, these setting were opportunities to meet them in person and talk more with them about the study in the efforts of establishing rapport and gaining consent.

1.5 Observation and Mapping the Milieu: Network Ethnography

The observation comprised of two elements; the first was attendance at the live event itself and the recording of the event; the interactions, use of space and materials, relations between musicians, promoters and other professionals and audience within this arena. The second element of the observation included analysis of secondary data of online presence of musicians or other professionals both before and after I attended the live event. This included

recording my discovery of the event through social networking sites and also through physical promotion, such as magazines and flyers and also some additional research into the promotional methods of the promoters and musicians, which included content analysis of social networking pages, relevant media and their own websites (if applicable). As I soon discovered, there is more than enough content posted on such sites, and it was clear I would need to establish some parameters in order to make effective use of time and not become too overwhelmed with data. It was decided that only posts and exchanges which had been made within the past month would be included in the analysis, in order to cut down on the amount to be analysed, yet still provide a representative picture of the promotion and interaction which took place.

I used the top five Google results that came up for the artists who played, usually using the name of the artist as a primary search term. Such artist-focused searching has implications; usually the same social networking sites came top of the result. This means that most of the data discovered will focus on the musicians, but not the event that they played, rendering the geographical space less salient in the analysis. This was tied in with the account of gig attendance where appropriate; this included analysing the ways in which promoters and musicians promoted the event but also releases, merchandise, media attention and interaction with professionals and audiences. When the data had been refined down to a manageable amount, it was analysed primarily taking into account the following;

- particular facilities used (Facebook, MySpace, LastFM etc),
- content of textual, audio and audio visual data,
- nature of interactions with others (professionals or audiences),
- references to gigs and other offline activity and the relationship between these activities,
- evidence of innovative online techniques for promotion and ‘prosumption’ and general interaction related to the Cardiff milieu

This aimed to capture the way in which these individuals promoted themselves online and the ways in which the Internet had added another dimension to their communication practices, employing multi-modal content in order to achieve this. It was hoped that this analysis would provide an illustration of the discussions from the in-depth interviews and the observations around the effects of digitisation on their networking, promotion and also their perspectives

on digitised content and the issue of piracy. Notes made from such analysis were incorporated into the common coding frame used to analyse interview data (see appendix F).

These analyses were introduced slightly later than the commencement of fieldwork. Initial attendance at gigs had provided some level of detail as to the live event, but it was felt that this observation did not accurately capture the connections I felt were being made between the online and offline domains in interview discussions. As an audience member at these shows, I felt it made sense to analyse the online content I had access to, both before and after the event as a record of my participation as an audience member but also to show the depth of detail and effort that goes into online promotion and communication through many different media and platforms. After the event, I would log on and conduct a thematic analysis of the promotion that I had seen for the event, as well as researching each act in more detail and also the promotional outfit, if they were unknown to me. This would involve ascertaining the type of content transmitted by musicians to fans, paying particular attention to multi-modality e.g. textual, photographic, audio-visual material that was being used, and the references made to gigs and other offline events. Also of interest was the nature of reaction to such output from other professionals and also audience members, and the forms of interaction which were stimulated by this output. Not only was textual communication of interest, but also evidence of users' prosumption habits in contributing their own content to further the endeavours of their favourite artists. The ways in which these interactions referred to and bridged the online and offline spaces were of paramount importance in understanding the reproduction of both dimensions of the milieu.

As well as taking the top five results from Google, I also searched the main social networking sites for evidence of a profile, but these predominantly appeared within the Google results. Therefore, most of the material analysed came from social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace and LastFM, where the level of communication was rich and enduring. The analyses took the form of noting the information displayed, promotional activities and interaction with others, taking particular note of any innovative strategies which fell under any of these categories. This information would then be merged into the fieldnotes of the live event to give a perspective of both online and offline practices of independent professionals and audiences.

1.6 Building Networks

Creating and maintaining networks was very important throughout the course of the fieldwork. As Coffey notes in *The Ethnographic Self* (1999), the key to successful fieldwork within settings is managing and maintaining relations with social actors who populate the field. Rapport is created over time and effort is made in maintaining good field relations in order to gain the best quality data. This research involved analysis of live music once or twice a week, and so the possibility of creating and maintaining successful relations was difficult when relying only on face-to-face interactions. Therefore, social networking became particularly important when trying to build rapport and increase the level of contacts. This was particularly important when not at gigs, in order to remind people that I was still actively researching and interested in what they were doing. Being able to befriend some individuals on Facebook and follow them on Twitter was an advantage which allowed me to keep up with their daily promotional practices and the developments that took place. It also allowed me to easily contact them without having to wait to see them face-to-face at a gig in order to request an interview, and was at time even more instantaneous than sending an email, as social networking was utilised so well in their promotional role.

Social networking was also an essential tool to plug into the local scene, but also to understand how local professionals used the internet to foster links both nationally and internationally. Through befriending key informants and following the activities of local artists, promotional set-ups and venues, it was very easy to see what was going on over the fieldwork period. This informed my contextual knowledge of the milieu, and this proved invaluable in building rapport with respondents, with whom I could discuss what was happening in Cardiff their role within it. This will be elaborated upon further in the section which discusses reflexivity in my research. Use of the internet for contacting and arranging face-to-face interviews, focus groups and other follow-up issues, such as sending transcripts for checking, proved invaluable for maintaining contact with key informants and was integral to reflection on my own experiences in the field.

1.7 Material Culture

In addition to the clear advantages social networking had for building contacts and analysing online exchanges, what was equally as important was to examine what was going on within the physically inhabited spaces of clubs and pubs which showcased live music. As well as

taking detailed floor plans of the venues I visited, what was also important to note was the presence and use of material culture. As Atkinson, Delamont and Housley (2008) highlight, the analysis of visual and material aspects of culture are as important as examining the action that takes place within a social setting. This work is concerned with recording the production of material culture and the way it is employed by social actors in the field and embedded in social relations.

Bearing this in mind, I began to collate evidence of the material culture through my participation as a fan, but also recording others' engagement with objects and artefacts in the field as observed at live events. This encompassed the collection of flyers, magazines, stickers, badges and other objects, which acted as promotional methods for promoters and musicians, but were also circulated for fans to display as evidence of their participation in the milieu. In this sense, we could witness the continued salience of the traditional embodied element of participation, and its manifestation in engagement of social actors in material culture. This has been particularly important in studies of social movements (Chesters and Welsh, 2006), in which the organisation of events in the offline domain have been organised through a 'network of networks'. Each domain is mutually reinforcing and dependent, and it is this relationship, within the context of a prominent cultural industry at a time of significant social and economic flux, which is of central concern to this research.

In addition, particular attention was paid to the layout of the space, the design and aesthetics of these spaces and the use of material culture to generate revenue for bands, for example, the selling of merchandise at a gig, which could include music, clothing and other items. Through examining the material culture of Cardiff's music milieu, a researcher can tell much about the belief systems, values, attitudes and assumption that circulate within the social setting within a particular time frame (O'Toole and Were, 2008: 617). This analysis was integrated into the observation and explores the relationships between the online and offline spaces, elaborating on how the offline space can remain central to promotion and consumption of independent music.

1.8 Reflections and Reflexivity in the Field

Throughout the process of the fieldwork, I came to learn much about the way I perceived those operating in the field, but also the ways in which I was perceived by those I approached

and interviewed. I was aware that the multiple roles (including that of researcher, audience member, fan and networker within the milieu) I adopted throughout my fieldwork would influence respondents' opinions of me; my position as knowledgeable about the scene and whether I was considered an insider or an outsider. Matt Hills, in his book, *Fan Cultures* (2001), discusses the distinctions between the role of fan and scholar whilst conducting research on fandom and fan culture. This text was useful to me in the consideration of my placement within this field, and the interplay between my role as someone who enjoyed participating in the local milieu, but also as an early career researcher who aimed to observe and analyse that same culture for purposes of academic debate.

Hills notes the complex relationships and subjectivities which form around the roles of 'fan' and 'scholar' and the difficulties which arise when trying to negotiate these roles simultaneously. He notes the ways in which academics construct subjectivities around their role as a scholar, which may serve to create power distinctions and legitimise their authority as analysts of a fan culture, which may lead to tensions between scholar and those studied (2001: 5). I was aware that my status as a researcher would form respondents' perceptions of me from the start; not being a well-known member of the milieu in a professional capacity from the outset meant that I had to work harder to build rapport and contacts, whilst convincing them of the importance and relevance of the research. This was also true when approaching people online; my research had to be explained fully, but I also had to be careful to convey my enthusiasm about the music milieu in order to be taken seriously. This was more challenging when communicating online, in the absence of visual cues, particularly for someone, like myself, who was not already prominent in this network. Coffey (1999) discusses the long standing issue of insider/outsider status in the field through the ongoing process of successful negotiation of social relations between researchers and their respondents. She highlights that the formation of good field relations comes with time and must be carefully crafted. These ongoing interactions can simultaneously constitute the researcher as having both insider and outsider status. This was certainly the case here, as part of the audience I often felt an 'insider' in my role as a fan; this could be addressed quite easily through dressing similarly to audience members and professionals to achieve trust (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983: 84). This and other acts of impression management (Goffman, 1959) promote a sense of commitment to the field through the carrying of 'symbols of membership' (Van Maanen, 1991: 37-8). However, there were other moments in

which my lack of professional expertise or contextual knowledge rendered me an outsider, this was particularly apparent when talking with promoters and musicians.

Divisions and contestations can also occur as a result of academic analysis of fan cultures, which Hills suggests can lead to accusations of academic discourse being unable to capture the essence of the fan experience. Fans can accuse researchers of having distorted perceptions of their experience (2001: 7), through their use of scholarly jargon and an interpretation of their fandom from a 'high culture' perspective. I was conscious of my positioning and the possible repercussions of displaying my identity as a researcher too explicitly in encounters with respondents. The preference was to take an interpretivist approach which emphasised my willingness to allow respondents to present their perspectives without imposition from me regarding academic interpretations of music subcultures. Over time, it appeared fruitful to display a certain amount of knowledge about the music milieu as someone who participated as a regular audience member, but not an interpretation which was overly technical or too much credence to knowledge that I possessed about fan cultures originating from academia. In doing so, rapport could be built within the context of the milieu without alienating those I spoke to by appearing to invoke analytical language about music and fan subcultures. This was important in gaining common ground as a fan and not appearing as though my data collection was attempting to impose interpretations on the scene, although it did not necessarily mean that I was not considered an 'insider' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983; Coffey, 1999) in the fullest sense. However, this status ultimately had its positive points in that this allowed me to move more easily between my roles as researcher and fan without compromising my research had I been professionally involved with those I was studying. This too, however, came with its own issues. This experience of moving between and appropriately displaying both my fan and academic subjectivities highlights the multiple roles taken on throughout the course of my fieldwork.

Whilst conducting fieldwork, it was important to make clear the role of the researcher for ethical purposes, but not to take on this role too frequently and to draw predominantly upon my identity as an audience member and fan, whilst downplaying the purpose of the research. This was important, particularly when talking with audiences members, in order that they felt at ease discussing these issues with me. Questions would be answered about the research if asked, but the aim was not to display the researchers academic identity too often for fear of

alienating those spoken to and make them feel as though they were being ‘studied’. This helped fieldwork relations immeasurably, particularly as some relations were fleeting and not sustained over a long period of time. This was especially pertinent for those interactions with audiences. In turn, these encounters would help form opinions about the researcher which would then be transmitted to others within the scene; word of mouth was a powerful determinant of reputation within such a small community. However, this liminal position, between that of researcher and ‘involved fan’ (Coffey, 1999) also meant that it was more difficult, and took longer, to gain credibility when dealing with respondents; researcher status as knowledgeable and interested had to be established in subtle ways when founding field relations. This ultimately led to a certain degree of acceptance from respondents, but also dismissal due to my non-professional status. Often, when approaching respondents initially; telling them about my research and tentatively requesting interviews, responses were on occasions flippant or avoided commitment to taking part, as this fieldnote extract illustrates;

I went out to introduce myself and explain the purpose of the research, and to ask if he would be willing to meet up in the day to discuss participating further in the research. He asked if I had already tried to contact him, which I had (over Facebook). He explained he never really checked his emails on the site as he received so many. He took my name and promised to get in touch in reply to the email next week. He also then mentioned to me that it would be his last gig ever, because he ‘hated the XX’, to which the bouncer on his right smirked. I tried to ask him why, but he continued to half jokingly slag off the club and I thanked him and left...

(Fieldnotes, November 2009)

This extract illustrates one of several attempts to engage a promoter in conversation and gain his interest in the research. However, his flippant comments and repeated ignoring of e-mail and Facebook messages indicated a disinterest and dismissal which came across in interactions with him. This may have had something to do with the fact that, as an unknown individual to him and within the scene more generally, he was reluctant to disclose information for the purposes of research. This may also have much to do with how what I was trying to do was presented to the promoter, but I also felt a major problem with this conversation was that I was not considered credible as an insider and thus the research did not seem worthy as a result. As Coffey (1999) notes, good field relations are the result of ongoing negotiation, and approaches to respondents were modified over time. This, it was hoped,

would facilitate trust in the researcher as an individual rather than the discipline they represent (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983: 83).

Field relations initiated online were as carefully negotiated as they were in a face-to-face context. When recruiting individuals online for interviews, I was careful to clearly state who I was, the purpose of the research, assure them of their right to privacy and confidentiality and that they were under no initial obligation to take part. Such messages were often accompanied by a copy of my information sheet (see appendix D) and an offer of a face-to-face meeting prior to the interview. This seemed to reassure most, and a number of successful interviews were set up in this way. With regard to the content analysis of online interaction, gaining consent to use such data was far less practical. As with the difficulty in gaining informed consent to observe from audiences at gigs, gaining such consent is challenging and time consuming due to the sheer number of contributors to online fora. Therefore, where screenshots have been included in the empirical chapters, identifying data has been censored so as not to identify individuals.

Gender relations also had a significant part to play in others' perception of me as a fan and researcher, which also informed definitions of my knowledge and credibility as an 'insider'. On several occasions I felt my position as an audience member and music fan was being tested or questioned, and that my position as a young female had much to do with the perceptions held by those within the field. This manifested itself through the observational and interview work that took place. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) also comment on the ways that key characteristics, such as gender, age and ethnicity may shape perceptions of researchers in the field. Fletcher (2002), in her reflexive account of ethnographic work in a small factory, discusses the experience of feeling different throughout the process of fieldwork, and the gendered nature of her interactions as contributing to this difference. Participant observation involved attending a large number of gigs, and my very presence within this space as a lone female researcher rendered me, to a degree, 'out of place' from the outset.

In terms of attendance, many professionals and audience members are male, and so this exacerbated my presence as a lone female researcher within a male-dominated space, as Fonarow (2006) notes in her ethnography of a British indie scene. Although no-one explicitly

commented on my presence, I did feel as an audience member that my experience may be separate from theirs, not only for the fact that I was there in a research capacity, but also because my experience was not social in the same sense, which may have marked me as distinctive. More importantly, I was aware of this positioning as a researcher conducting my observations and audience interviews.

This has obvious implications not only for observation but also in terms of relations with those in the field. Enmeshed with issues of gender, other aspects of identity such as age, class, appearance, manner of speaking and knowledge of the field were also very important when managing my interactions with respondents. Aspects such as age and dress were not so much of an issue; however, what became most problematic in interactions over musical preference knowledge and authenticity. As Wilson and Atkinson (2005) note in their study of Straightedge subcultures, participation within the scene is based upon contested notions of authenticity. These contestations were also present in conversations with those I interviewed, and even became significant when accounting for my own authenticity as a 'fan'. My own musical preference was often asked about in initial meetings with those whom I hoped to interview, and in one fieldwork extract, assumption were made about such preferences, as this extract with a local blogger illustrates;

As we sat down to talk about my research, and what would be involved if he chose to take part, we got talking about the local scene, the charity gig he had put on and his favourite local artists at the moment, recommending one to me. He then asked me what my favourite kind of music/bands were, and before I could answer, he quipped; 'Oh, I bet you like Lady Gaga, don't you?'

(Fieldnote extract, June 2010)

Although said in jest, this revealed much about the way in which I was perceived by others who were active within the local scene. Rightly, he perceived himself as more knowledgeable than myself about music in Cardiff. However, this assumption was based on first impressions of me as a woman and outsider to some extent. Mann (in Rynkiewich and Spradley, 1981), in her ethnography of a cocktail bar in a US college town (Spradley and Mann, 1976), discusses the ways in which she, as a relative novice to bars upon being hired as a waitress, has to be socialised into the role and the knowledge of the social milieu which accompanied it. She thus went, over time, from a novice researcher and participant observer, to a researcher who was thoroughly socialised into her role and thus became, increasingly, an informant. My own novice status in the field had to be carefully negotiated with those who were wary of my

interest in them and the research I was doing. In another incident, this time during an interview with a musician, I found my knowledge and interest being subtly tested by my respondent;

We got onto the subject of bands he was into and the style of music his band liked to emulate. He mentioned that 'We like to play like Math Rock [a sub genre of rock characterised by asymmetrical or 'mathematical' beat structures].' He then added uncertainly, 'Do you know what that is?', as if expecting me not to. I had a fair idea, and explained in the way I understood, which seemed to be satisfactory to him. Clarification questions such as this occurred on a couple of other occasions over the course of the interview."

(Fieldnote extract, July 2010)

Passages such as this demonstrate the perceived and actual differences in expertise of the respondent and the researcher, and the way in which first impressions of the researcher were formed based on physical characteristics and other markers of identity (Coffey, 1999). This, on occasion, proved a barrier when interviewing some, as they may have viewed me as an inauthentic or unknowledgeable member of the milieu. However, this was advantageous in some respects, as most respondents were keen to tell me of their involvement and impart knowledge, which aided my own expertise.

In these instances, the feeling was that as a female ethnographer, alone in the field, I had a certain amount to prove and account for in spaces and places which were male-dominated, this is also highlighted by Mann as an issue for her as a participant observer and informant (Spradley and Mann, 1976). Fieldwork is a relational process, and in recognising that we are constructed, shaped and challenged in the field we can become more attuned to what is going on within it (Coffey, 1999; Gill and McLean, 2002). This was certainly true in relation to gender issues. Through my interactions I realised this was certainly a factor in perceptions of my knowledge and credibility as a fan and the appropriateness of my lone presence at gigs.

(2) In-depth Interviews: Promoters and Musicians

2.1 Rationale

As part of the ethnographic work, eighteen in-depth interviews were conducted with musicians and promoters based in the city. There were eleven promoters interviewed in total; nine men and two women, and twenty-three musicians; twenty-one men and two women. Group interviews with musicians (i.e. those in the same band) were conducted, thus

accounting for the disparity in numbers of interviews and numbers of respondents (see appendix E for more information on all respondents). Their ages ranged from 18 to ‘mid-forties’ (one respondent did not want to give their exact age). The aim was to engage those most active within the milieu professionally in telling their own stories about their involvement in independent music and their perspectives on the issues the sector was facing. As Warren points out (in Gubrium and Holstein (eds) 2001: 84), qualitative interviewing is conducted in the social constructionist epistemology and treats respondents as ‘meaning makers’, putting the meanings they attach to their narratives and experience as central to the data collection process. The qualitative interview is a guided conversation; the meanings of their accounts can be derived through semi-structured talk which allows an amount of freedom for the respondent to direct the account in order to make it meaningful. This was the preferred approach to take in conjunction with the observational work. Although the qualitative interview privileges what people say over lived experience, it can be combined successfully with ethnographic observation in order to enhance insight into people’s social worlds (2001: 85). It was decided that in order to understand the social world from the perspectives of the professionals which inhabited it, interviews which allowed respondents to tell their own narratives about the scene and their involvement in it. This would also reveal their perspectives on the changes that the internet, digitisation and social media had brought to the industry, and would be a useful enhancement of the observational work and a vital insight which would not have been obtained in detail had the study relied only on observation. Through interviewing, the situation could be discussed more fully; covering issues of performance, recording, promotion, online communication and the challenges facing the industry in the 21st century, covering both mainstream and independent sector issues.

2.2 Operationalising Interview Schedules

The interviews themselves were carried out over the course of a year, from September 2009 to September 2010, in conjunction with the ethnographic observation. The focus groups sessions were also attempted during this time, but with limited success (see below for further details). As Kvale (1996) points out, the model of conversation should be the model for interviews; the common seeking of knowledge and understanding. Therefore, the open ended interview schedules were designed to be conversations with a purpose, to allow for a certain amount of structure, but also allowing the interviewee to digress and take the conversation in

the direction they wished. This allowed for long in-depth conversations to take place and for respondents to take control of the accounts they were giving, privileging what was important to them within the broad topic area.

Interviews were mostly conducted face-to-face, with the exception of one, which was conducted via email at the request of the respondent, the dynamics of which will be explored below. They either took place in a designated interview room at the SOCSI postgraduate offices within Cardiff University, or within the places of work or homes of respondents. Numbers of respondents within each interview ranged from one to five, with interviews with multiple respondents usually with musicians. They lasted between 75 and 116 minutes and were tape recorded and transcribed to enable analysis. The email responses to questions were collated and pasted onto a word document in the order of response. All transcripts or collated responses, in the interests of appropriate auditing and ‘member checking’ (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), were emailed to respondents once completed to establish any corrections, omissions or issues of anonymity which needed to be addressed. These would be negotiated individually with each respondent.

There were two separate interview schedules devised for musicians and for promoters. The decision to interview using different schedules was required because of the different roles which promoters and musicians occupied within the milieu. Due to the varying nature of their roles, questions needed to be adapted to reflect this (see appendix A). Both schedules however, contained the similar broad areas of enquiry; basic information was collected in all interviews, in which respondents’ age, gender, occupation and provenance would be noted. Initial questions would ask for a narrative on their roles currently and the events which had lead to this role, requesting background information on previous involvement and major decisions which had lead them to this point. Promoters would then be asked about their views on the indie ‘scene’; asking them to describe Cardiff’s independent scene as they saw it, taking into account all of its characteristics, strengths and weaknesses. This section also asked about their role as a promoter in locations other than Cardiff. Secondly, promoters were asked about how they created networks in Cardiff, both locally and further afield with professionals; this included asking about how they organised live music events, how these events were promoted, relationships with industry professionals and relationships with audiences. Finally, promoters were asked about how they used digital means specifically to

create a network; covering the role of digital music in their work, using the Internet to promote, interaction with professionals and consumers online and finally, their perspectives on piracy and the changes taking place within the wider music industry. Each interviewee contributed to the construction of the network visualisation, and was asked the following question at the end of each interview;

- *Could you list, or visualise on paper, giving as much information as possible, your key contacts/connections within the Cardiff music scene; these could include*
 - *Musicians, promoters or other music professionals*
 - *Journalists, DJs, or any other media connections*
 - *Sound technicians/engineers, producers*
 - *Any other relevant individuals*

These would either be written down by myself or the respondent and recorded for cross-checking with written evidence post-interview. This formed the data for entry into NodeXL.

The schedule for musicians followed very much a similar structure, but was tailored with their different roles in mind. The section covering their role in depth focused much more on performance, their history as musicians and their progress to date. The third section, which covered creation of networks, aimed to discuss in much more depth the relationships with their fans and audiences at gigs. The importance of these differences became apparent at the pilot stage (one interview each with a promoter and a band) which highlighted the different issues musicians and promoters talk about. It was clear allowances would have to be made within the schedule and in the conducting of the interview to reflect this.

The aim of the sampling process was to involve as many musicians and promoters as possible, and to conduct interviews until saturation point in the data was reached (Strauss and Corbin, 1988; Charmaz, 2006). Potential respondents were mostly emailed or messaged over Facebook as an initial approach, with a follow up introduction at a gig if a reply was not immediately forthcoming. Some needed more reminding of my contact than others, and so I found this dual approach to be fruitful as a way of reminding the participants who I was and as an opportunity to tell them more about the research in order to persuade them to take part. This was a way in which the online and offline modes of communication were useful.

2.3 Sampling Strategy

Due to the nature of the study, it was not practical to seek any form of representative sample of professionals and audience members. The case study approach, and the impossibility of knowing who exactly was part of the milieu, meant that sampling was conducted using a snowball approach, which was informed by the SNA conducted with each respondent. Before or after every interview, I would ask them to name or illustrate their professional network. By using this information to map the 'milieu', I could assess who was core, or peripheral in their role, thus making decisions about who to approach next for interview. This was by no means a comprehensive understanding of all social actors, but was a useful tool in enabling me to ascertain relative positions of respondents, identifying diversity in genre and those who were part of that genre. For more information on the network, see the NodeXL and accompanying explanation in appendix G.

2.4 Email Interviews: Comparison with Face-to-Face Interviewing

An interesting outcome of the fieldwork came when one respondent requested, upon my initial approach, to conduct the interview via email. As this was a specific request, I felt to refuse would adversely affect the quality of the data collected face-to-face, and may also damage rapport with the respondent. None of the other interviews had been conducted in this way and I was unfamiliar with this method of carrying out an interview. There have been concerns voiced that such an approach to data collection does not count as 'proper' interviewing (Burns, 2010). This section will recount this experience and offer an assessment of the experience in comparison to face-to-face methods of interviewing.

As McCoyd and Kerson (2006) point out in their comparison, the dynamics of an email interview are very different from that which is conducted in person. Although useful in accessing hard-to-reach groups, this particular type of asynchronous interview talk has been highlighted as being problematic due to loss of bodily and facial cues between interviewer and interviewee, lack of fluency and continuity in the discussion and problems with slow response times between the two parties, making data collection a longer process. However, it also has its advantages; enabling the respondent to think more carefully about their responses which can produce richer and more considered data, and the comfort of being removed from a face-to-face discussion which may inhibit the responses of some. It was for these reasons that this particular respondent chose this method, citing that it felt more comfortable and truthful to compose considered answers in prose.

We agreed that I would start by sending out three questions at a time, to which he would respond via email. If I had follow-up or clarifications to ask, I would refer to them clearly using the appropriate question number and indicate it was a follow up question before moving onto the next question. However, I did not send more than three at a time, so as not to bombard the respondent with too much to complete, as I feared withdrawal from the research. I also resolved that if I did not receive a reply within a week then I would provide gentle reminders in order to encourage further correspondence. After the interview was complete, the entire transcript was sent for verification and editing, if the respondent wished.

Overall, the email interview was a success, and although responses were somewhat shorter and more to the point compared with responses in a spoken face-to-face interview, it still provided a rich source of data, although this owed much to the co-operation and enthusiasm of the respondent and his timely replies. This experience of data collection supports the idea that using new media technologies to interview do not diminish older forms, but expand the nature of investigatory tools available to the researcher (Burns, 2010).

(3) Accessing Audiences

The third and final component of data collection concerned accessing audiences of the local scene in order to understand their uses of online and offline modes of communication and participation. This proved the most difficult group to access and the data collection strategy became a process of trial and error as several different methods were used in order to collect data with varying levels of success. The initial strategy of using a combination of focus groups and respondent diaries; its rationale and application will first be discussed, then moving onto the second strategy, which involved conducting ethnographic interviews at live music venues.

The initial strategy for accessing audiences early on in the data collection period involved a series of focus groups conducted over a number of weeks, with respondents keeping field diaries in between. A total of three focus groups were proposed; the first would serve as an introductory discussion with regular audience members about their participation and would introduce the research diaries. A series of two more focus groups over the following five

weeks was proposed, which included further discussion of the diaries and an interactive session in which audiences would discuss and demonstrate their online participation.

The aim of this mode of data collection was to engage audiences both in groups and also to examine their participation at an individual level; this would be achieved through the combination of focus groups and diaries. In addition, any gendered aspects of participation would be highlighted through the discussions in the focus groups. As Colucci (2007) highlights, focus groups can help bring attention to a specific topic in order to make data comparable, and can be enjoyable and productive for participants. Munday (2006) also points out that they can be particularly useful for the study of collective identity and social movements; the study of the sustenance of a local scene appeared to be suitable for the method in this sense. However, they are not an easy option, and a careful approach needs to be made in order to gain good quality data (Colucci, 2007).

There were several problems with this strategy, and this predominantly concerned recruitment and retention of respondents. Early on in the data collection, I began to recruit potential participants through approaching groups of people at shows, explaining the aim of the research and giving out small information flyers and collecting email addresses and mobile numbers if audience members were interested. This was relatively easy to do, what was more difficult was getting potential respondents to commit to attending the first group, subsequent groups and keep the diary for over a month. This design proved to be too complex and time-consuming, with many who'd expressed initial interest dropping out when they realised the full extent of the commitment. Those who did attend focus groups were audience members who had more commitment to the milieu, either through a role as a promoter, or a reviewer or blogger. Although these individuals were useful, the aim was to gain access to those who participated as audience members only. After several failed attempts at getting a representative number of people together, both in venues and at focus groups, it was decided that another strategy was needed.

The alternative was found by conducting short ethnographic interviews in venues. This offered the advantage of catching potential respondents there and then, briefly explaining the research and asking a few on-the-spot questions, using a loosely devised schedule (see appendix B). Although it is clear that this approach lacked the thorough nature of the initial

strategy, it was clear that this would be more successful in gaining data due to its immediacy. In total, twenty interviews were carried out with 34 individuals, and the length of interviews ranging from 5-10 minutes. Audience members were typically approached in a break between acts, when the sound was relatively low and the atmosphere more conducive to conversation. Introductions would bring an explanation of who I was, brief details about my research and a request for them to give a few minutes of their time to discuss live music and online use within the Cardiff milieu. These were conducted wherever the respondents were approached; usually at tables in the venue, or at the bar.

These interviews were then transcribed for analytical purposes. Respondents' age, gender, provenance and occupation were noted and flyers were given to those taking part as part of the debriefing process which took place after the conversations were recorded (see appendix E). Flyers also contained my contact details should anyone want to know more about the study than the explanation provided. I resolved to send respondents copies of the information sheet if they requested, but no-one did.

Conducting these interviews as part of the ethnographic observational work was helpful and added much to the existing body of data, as I had the opportunity to talk to audiences as well as professionals. Although not as comprehensive and thorough as the original research design, its ease and practicality rendered it a more fruitful method of data collection which added a third dimension to participation in the local scene in the context of both online and offline practices.

(4) Analytical Strategy

As the data was being collected, an analytical strategy was also being formed as the data was transcribed. As Atkinson and Coffey (1996) point out, it is imperative to work with data as soon as it is collected, both to engage with the material and begin analysis, but also to reflect on the process of data collection and recognise where adjustments and improvements need to be made. For this research, the Grounded Theory approach of Glasner and Strauss was adopted as the initial strategy for making sense of the data. However, the notion that a priori assumptions and perspectives from the researcher are eliminated in this form of data analysis is found to be problematic. Claims to complete objectivity, as Grounded Theory makes, should be treated with caution, and it was realised that my role as a participant observer who

had been an audience member for many years prior to the research, that my interpretation of the data could not be completely value-free. Although it was important to let the data speak for itself without imposing theory onto the analytical process (Charmaz, 2006), it was also impossible to ignore the imposition of prioritisation and particular interpretation that would inevitably result. Therefore, the data presented a set of themes around a multitude of issues regarding mutual embeddedness, democratisation of the internet and de-commodification and re-commodification of physical formats, amongst other things. The extent to which such themes were strongly agreed upon or vulnerable to breaking down and being re-assembled were of interest.

Data analysis involved a collation and wide coding of the dataset using NVivo, which then became more focused as development of empirical chapters became clearer. These data were then compared and collated in order to form focused and established frames of reference, which combined the data with theory generation and formed the basis of the empirical chapters. This section will explain how this approach was applied to this specific dataset to generate the analytical frames which formed the empirical chapters of the thesis.

4.1 Data Collection and Coding

The dataset, including interviews with musicians and promoters, audience conversations, fieldnotes and online analysis were all collated and coded using the NVivo 8 software programme. In total, there were eighteen transcripts from professionals (promoters and musicians), twenty audience interviews with 34 individuals, two pilot focus groups with two people in each, and 20 transcripts of ethnographic fieldnotes, each with accompanying content analysis of online data (as outlined in section 1.5 of this chapter). This was used for its ability to code both separately and in relation to other codes, and produced 116 open codes in total. Some of the codes for these data adhered to the original questions asked in interviews, and others revealed other themes that had not been considered originally in the research design, whilst others focused on emerging attitudes and actions which were not explicit within the transcripts. This provided a sound basis for analytical concepts to emerge and develop. These initial codes allow commonly used terms to be identified, and an examination of how these meanings and experiences are constructed between respondents is possible.

After this initial coding a more focused approach was taken, selecting the most significant codes in organising the data, and establishing the presence of relevant frames. From the initial 116 codes constructed within the NVivo programme, there were many linkages and crossovers between codes, from which emerged relevant themes. Gradually, these codes were refined and connected in order to link similar concepts and issues that were germane to the thesis and the original research questions. From this refinement, coherent outlines for the four empirical chapters were made. Each chapter highlighted an area of data collection which loosely correlated with the interview schedule, but allowed for prominent themes and concepts, highlighted by the respondents, to emerge. This allowed for the next process to take place before writing; that of closer examination of salient themes and the making of relevant theoretical connections with the existing literature.

One of the last stages of this process involved the construction and discussion of relevant and pervasive themes of concepts which had arisen from the data. Those themes are addressed through incorporate relevant data and theory in order to formulate new interpretations on the meanings of the data. These ideas can be constantly re-visited and reworked in order to develop the emerging theory and continually relate it back to the dataset as a whole, thus ensuring all relevant data is included in the analysis, so as not to bias the interpretation. Throughout the analytical process, notes were taken regarding prominent emerging concepts. Using the refined codes and the most relevant data, themes were constructed and related to existing theory and other empirical work which related to that particular theme, allowing for further analysis and theory generation. This was the foundation for the empirical chapters and ensuing discussion.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided a comprehensive account of the research design and data collection process. In the first section, the main research and four sub-questions were firstly outlined and the field of study identified. These questions and the nature of the field justified the undertaking of a multi-method approach to data collection, and highlighted the particular suitability of this for the field itself and those who inhabited it. Ethical considerations for this particular approach were then discussed, with particular attention paid to the issues surrounding observation in public places and the nature of obtaining consent in such circumstances. The issue of ethical treatment was closely related to issues of access and

gaining rapport with those who took part, as good field relations are essential to the collection of rich data. This section highlighted the nuanced approaches to gaining rapport with different respondents inhabiting different roles. The gender role of the researcher and how this may affect rapport was also discussed, and included some reflection on the effect of gender roles on the ethnographic work.

The second section explained in more detail how the research was carried out and provided an extended theoretical justification of the selection of the field and method of study. Firstly, the fieldwork was outlined, including the decisions for attending which gigs and how these observations aligned with the secondary analysis of online communication. This section also explored how networks and contacts were built across both online and offline spaces, and the importance of using both for gaining contacts and securing participation. The importance of analysing material culture and its continued presence at live venues and in the promotion of the music scene within the city in general was also discussed as an important part of the fieldwork. Finally, a reflective account discussed the issues experienced over the course of the fieldwork with regard to researcher position and relationships with respondents, citing gender and insider/outsider identities with regard to the scene as salient topics.

Secondly, the interviews were discussed, placing these in the context of the ethnographic work and explaining the value they added to the research, which included richer first-hand accounts and elaboration on phenomena observed. This section included a discussion on the development and adaptation of the interview schedules for musicians and promoters. Also discussed was the use of the email interview and a reflection on the potentially fruitful data collected using this method. The final section explained the more difficult process of accessing audiences, and chronicled the changes in methodological approach that had to be made once it was clear that focus groups would not work adequately; a solution was found in the form of ethnographic interviews with audiences at live events themselves, to provide immediate data and to sample a reasonable amount of the audiences at gigs in Cardiff. Finally, the account concluded with an explanation of the analysis process using the use of qualitative coding using Grounded Theory as a reference point for analysis of emerging themes. This took us through the processes of open coding, refined coding, memo writing and the construction of the empirical chapters as a result.

Chapter 5

The Online/Offline Reproduction of Cardiff's Independent Music Milieu

Introduction

This chapter explores the relationship between the online and offline domains of Cardiff's local music milieu (Webb, 2007), and the degree to which practices of interaction, production and exchange of immaterial product are contributing towards a seamless and effective existence of a mutually embedded set of relations between the social actors concerned. As previously noted in other studies of music fandom (Wilson and Atkinson, 2005; Williams, 2006), the online domain has opened up new and embedded ways of interacting and sharing flows of information at local, national and international level. The reproduction and sustainability of the milieu is now also dependent on networks of information and product exchange both in the physical and digital domains, and across and beyond the local milieux around which they circulate.

The effect of such shifts in communicative capacity has firstly contributed to a reconfiguring of previously clearly established and demarcated, 'producer' and 'consumer' roles. Bruns (2008) has proposed that such shifts have allowed for an increased capacity for consumers to create, re-edit and re-circulate music or music-related content on the web. However, the degree to which such practices are embedded within both local and wider networks, and indeed constitute dynamic and consistent examples of 'prosumption' or 'produsage', is problematised by this thesis. These issues relate to wider tensions which also challenge the thesis that the Internet is a democratised space, which will be discussed over the course of the empirical chapters.

This chapter therefore seeks to explore the nature of such practices within the Cardiff music milieu, and the ways in which they can be said to be reconstituting relations between promoters, musicians and audiences. The notion of 'mutual embeddedness' (Turkle, 1997; Chandler, 1998; Hardey, 2002; Wellman, 2006) as an accurate reflection of the relationship between online and offline domains will be examined taking into account salient issues arising from the data. Analysis suggests that these two spheres may not be as embedded as is suggested in the literature and the implications of this for the composition and operation of the Cardiff milieu is considered.

This chapter will firstly elaborate upon the organisational and contextual issues of the Cardiff milieu, with the objective of understanding the nature of professional networks and how they are formed across online and offline domains. Understanding the nature of participation with regards to established subcultural theory, and the contribution that this research can make to understanding the composition and nature of participation within this ‘milieu’ (Webb, 2007), is important for understanding the role of the internet on music within a local area.

In establishing the structure of the milieu, this chapter will then provide more specific detail about the effects of using both online and offline domains in conjunction in order to reproduce the local music scene. Issues of professional promotion techniques as well as fan experiences of using online space for both consumption and production-related activities will illuminate both the effects on those who use such facilities, but also the ways in which ‘prosumers’ can utilise or modify such services for their own purposes. In some respects, these practices lay down the foundation for innovation and creativity relatively free from pre-digital constraints of copyright laws. However, the limits of such productive activities by consumers have been highlighted, and question the embedded nature of ‘prosumption’, both online and its influence in physical domains.

Finally, the extent to which ‘mutual embeddedness’ is present within Cardiff’s music milieu is examined. Through an understanding of the way social actors within the milieu construct their accounts of online and offline participation through *experience*, *memory* and *material culture*, a picture emerges of a situation in which this notion is revealed as significantly more complex. The introduction of the internet, far from improving the offline ‘scene’, can also play a part in impoverishing it, and reveals both positive and negative consequences for social interaction and economic participation in the milieu.

(1) Organisation and Composition

This research distinguishes the independent from mainstream sectors in terms of the significant differences in organisation and networking strategies which operate within it, in comparison with the mainstream, global music industry. It is argued that these organisational contrasts; the formation and maintenance of economic and social networked relationships, have a particular composition, trajectory and set of values around the transmission of immaterial product distinct from the mainstream. This section takes into account contextual factors such as geographical location, Welsh culture, musical genre and practical provision

for live music, all of which are specific to Cardiff and has nuanced configuration, problems and requirements. Outlined in this section are some of the main features of the Cardiff ‘scene’ and its constitutive elements. It is important to outline the context of Cardiff’s independent music economy, the networks from which it is formed and the subsequent treatment of communication between its members and the exchange of immaterial product within it, in order to understand the impact of the integration of online and offline modes of communication on the independent music industry. The emerging social and economic practices, both legitimate and illegitimate, are embedded and integral to sustaining the sector as the digitisation becomes increasingly pervasive within the music industry and across the creative industries more generally.

1.1 The Cardiff ‘Scene’: Context and Issues

In order to understand the characteristics and structure of Cardiff’s independent music ‘scene’, it is necessary to provide some contextual data that is informed by ethnographic observations made in the field. This section will detail the specific configuration and cultural make-up of the milieu, including some of the economic issues highlighted as problematic by professionals working in the city. However, it is firstly pertinent to define the sociological concepts used with regard to the organisation and reproduction of the independent economy.

The concept of a music ‘scene’ (Straw, 1991), although commonly used to describe coalescence around a specific location or genre of music, constitutes a less fixed and politicised movement of people than was imagined through the term ‘music subculture’ (Cohen, 1972; Hebdige, 1979). The term subculture was defined as culture existing within the wider mainstream; a cohesive group with particular ideological and political motivations, and sometimes marked out through distinctive expression of style through fashion and music, for example. The concept of the ‘scene’ was a less rigid and formalised notion of how subcultural groups operated, emphasising ‘fluid boundaries and floating memberships’ (Straw, 1991) as a more accurate portrayal of the movement of individuals in and out of the scene, and the less rigid distinctions between subcultures and the mainstream culture. This work acknowledged both fluidity and a gradual depoliticisation of music around which such scenes formed in comparison to earlier studies of punks and skinheads, in particular, which had clearly formed class origins and ideological foundations (Hebdige, 1979; Willis, 1990). Although the concept of ‘scene’ acknowledged a lack of stable membership and political

affiliation, in the context of the rise of online networked relations of exchange, the applicability of such a concept to ‘mutually embedded’ online and offline relations must be reconsidered.

The sociology of globalisation and the significance of technology have hailed a new understanding of the formation and reproduction of music scenes as they operate simultaneously across these domains. Webb’s (2007) discussion of the music ‘milieu’ provides a more nuanced conception of the organisation of music scenes in this context, mindful of the impact of globalisation and, to an extent, digitisation, on local music organisation, and will be used here with reference to Cardiff. Not only does Webb take account of the globalised and networked nature of music milieu, but also the geographical and cultural specificity which shapes it, and the contestations which occur within it. It is for this reason that this thesis employs the term ‘milieu’ in its description of the Cardiff. Evidence to support justification for using such terms will be explored in further depth in the following section. For now, contextual detail on the Cardiff milieu and its significance will be discussed.

Cardiff is the capital city of Wales and relatively small in terms of geographical size, and for many, in terms of its night time economy and the vibrancy of the milieu. In terms of its progressiveness in comparison to other major urban centres’ music milieux in the UK, it was considered at best fledgling, and at worst, backward. There were many positive comments to be made about the Cardiff milieu, as outlined in the following extracts from professional interviews when they were asked how they viewed the Cardiff scene at present (please note: the reference after each pseudonym refers to the role and gender of the respondent and the corresponding number; for example M8M8 means that Gareth was musician 8 and male 8. This aided categorisation of respondents and made it easier to cross reference similar responses in understanding the strength of analytical categories)

...at the moment I think that the strength of the music scene is probably the best it’s been for a while, especially with the bands that are coming through, like X...all these, like, experimental bands which, in a way, Cardiff hadn’t experienced that kind of music before so I think people wanted to hear and go to gigs and see it...

(Gareth (M8M8), musician)

‘I think Cardiff is really, really lucky. It’s got a ridiculous amount of talent for such a small city, I think it’s disproportionate...whatever it is, it’s just...there’s a ridiculous amount of talent, the amount of amazing local bands and local artists and local promoters and everything is disproportionate for the size of the city.’

(Stu (P7M6), DJ and promoter)

...obviously, seeing Swn come around again and growing and expanding and getting good recognition, good praise, having the ability to draw in lots of different acts to Cardiff, into one city, and using all sorts of different venues, I think that's a real big thing as well, for the city to have this inner city festival...

(James(P5M4), promoter)

These statements sum up the main strengths of the milieu in the eyes of professionals. Some professionals viewed Cardiff's scene as improving, with the quality of the acts reflecting the current strengths of live music in the city. Gareth's impression of this strength is supported by Stu's comment about there being a wealth of musical talent originating from the city in the form of musicians and DJs, as well as support from business orientated roles such as promotion. There were significant developments in the 'scene' in recent years to justify discussing Cardiff as having made improvements in this sector, and the example of the success of the annual Swn Festival (Welsh word; meaning 'sounds'), an event to promote independent music and showcase Welsh talent as well as other noted artists from the UK and around the world. This has had a positive impact, as this male audience member also notes;

...it's the integral part of the music scene because it's the highlight in the calendar, but also, the way they promote other artists...they promote smaller shows as well as massive ones.

The promotion of small scale, local shows in conjunction with those touring from further afield under the Swn brand has aided Cardiff in developing a national reputation for staging new music, as well as helping new grassroots acts develop. The use of both online and offline platforms in developing Cardiff's reputation both locally and nationally has given the city a boost and allowed it to promote and develop in ways not possible in the pre-digital era (Chesters and Welsh, 2006). As the nation's capital, it is the main hub for live music, and Swn is viewed as having accomplished much in linking up other towns and cities within Wales in order to build its reputation and provide a platform for acts all over the country, achieved through playing live and communicating online.

An important cultural marker for Cardiff was its ability to provide a platform for Welsh language acts through Swn and within other promotional set-ups. This was an important component of the Cardiff milieu and throughout Wales, as many acts gravitate towards Cardiff and the wider audience it can provide. Here, we can see the attempts to bring a wider

listenership to Welsh language acts through Swn and the branding capability it possesses, as promoter Jake (P9M8) recognises;

Yeah, I think it's all there, definitely there's a nice cross section...I suppose as well you've got that Welsh influence, being in Wales offers that extra dimension.

Despite this feature being a potential USP for the Cardiff milieu, it is nevertheless viewed as a marginalised component of an already small scene, and this was a problem for those operating within it, as promoter Steve (P11M9) discusses;

Welsh speakers in Cardiff are a minority, so Welsh language-by-design gigs aren't often on the agenda – Clwb Ifor Bach cater to this crowd on Saturdays quite often, but that's about it.

Welsh language gigs in themselves are not universally appealing, particularly to those who don't speak the language, and so there are problems of cultural inclusiveness on both sides of the language divide. Integrated English and Welsh language acts at gigs appears to be the policy for its promotion at present, but if a Welsh language act wants to reach a national audience, they have to make sacrifices, as Steve (P11M9) continues;

Obviously if you sing in Welsh you pretty much nix your chances of getting heard outside of Wales, so some bands have to bite the bullet and sing in English if they want to reach a broader audience...

Exporting this unique element of the milieu is problematic in breaking through into national music networks, as it is not accommodating to such acts. This is part of a wider set of problematic issues facing the Cardiff milieu at present.

The majority of respondents had both positive and negative comments about the current state of the music 'scene' (as it was referred to by most respondents). As much as they could recognise improvements, there was still much to build upon in the eyes of most, and there were particular aspects which had been identified as problematic. Although Cardiff was perceived as small, yet growing, there were some key issues which were prominent in a number of accounts, highlighted below;

My opinion [of the scene] tends to vary quite a lot based on the peaks and troughs that the city seems to experience, as regards gig attendance and enthusiasm in general.

[...]

I guess [Cardiff is] a jack of all trades and a master of none. Most musical styles are represented if you root around a bit, without there necessarily being enough people involved to constitute a 'scene' defined by genre.

(Steve (P11M9), promoter)

JC: I just wanted to ask actually, you talked about Cardiff as a growing city, but I just wondered what your take was on it music wise. What's the scene like at the moment, compared to when you started?

[...]

K: I don't know if a lot of venues can support [musical diversity], really, in terms of the acts that have been coming down. Clwb can, and Barfly can, but I think the problem is, you have to catch people when they're touring and I think some of it is costing...the venues just can't afford [to book every touring act]

(Kyle (P6M5), local promoter)

I suppose maybe it's more diversity in Bristol...so while the smallness, as we were speaking earlier about Cardiff and the closely knit networks is nice, it also works against itself because there's only so many people to go round all these different live music gigs.

(Jake (P9M8), promoter)

These quotes highlight a multitude of recurring issues which were mentioned by a sizeable number of professionals during interview talk. Although Cardiff had the potential to be a thriving scene, there were a number of problems impeding such progression. The first was inconsistency in the level of interest in the 'scene' in terms of the nature of the music circulating at any given time. There was a sense that, although some, such as Stu, had mentioned the abundance of talent, that this was considered by some to come in peaks and troughs. This feeling of rising and falling demand was mentioned by five promoters during interviews. Combined with fluctuating attendance at gigs, and criticism of the attitudes of audiences which will be discussed later in this chapter, the amount of talent was something which ebbed and flowed, contributing to an inconsistent milieu in terms of demand and participation. There also appeared to be some contestation around the distinctiveness of the milieu in terms of a coherent coalescence around a certain genre of music, which are small and underdeveloped, as Steve describes. Overall, this was stated as being a significant problem for Cardiff by four out of the eleven promoters and ten out of the twenty-three musicians. Cardiff appeared to suffer from a lack of identity through which it could market itself, there was no distinct brand that it could use to promote itself further afield, based on the exploitation of one musical genre. However, there is some argument that the 'scene' is overly dependent on a certain kind of 'twee indie pop', as will be discussed later in the chapter.

A further problem presented itself in the form of the recession, which was viewed as having a significant effect on professionals in Cardiff. A consequence of this, as explained by Kyle, is that venues cannot afford to book every touring act that does the independent UK circuit. This linked to a wider problem that Cardiff had in struggling to find an identity for itself that was marketable to its own music fans, and that would make it attractive for others to travel to see bands. The recession was compounded by an earlier problem of the geographical proximity of Bristol, and the difficulty in competing with such a well-developed and nationally respected music scene there. This respect for Bristol's independent music heritage is mentioned by Jake (P9M8), and expanded upon in promoter Lisa's (P2F1) account;

...Bristol is only 45 minutes away and comparatively it's a smaller city I think, but...they're very firmly on the touring map, they get a lot more diverse artists...than we do.

As a result, the perception is that Bristol get the first opportunity, and has the provision, to book bands on the touring circuit. Cardiff is overlooked because it is close by and is considered costly and unnecessary to host another show in the same region by touring companies. This further hinders the city in building demand and therefore provision of venues, in conjunction with the shrinking on spending brought about by a more endemic contraction of the market.

Combined, lack of musical diversity and inconsistent demand are two of the main issues facing independent music in Cardiff. The most prominent frustration, discussed by ten musicians and five promoters, was the lack of attendance of audiences at gigs, or the general lack of enthusiasm for independent music coming out of the city. These quotes illustrate the extent of this problem;

...there's a lot of people trying to do stuff...put nights on and gigs...but it just seems like there isn't enough people in Cardiff, there's not the demand there...I just don't think enough people live in Cardiff to sustain that sort of level...

(Evan (M10M10), musician)

Because what's happening now is that people are doing house party shows...there's something weird going on in the scene recently over the last couple of years where people have just stopped going to shows.

(Gareth (M8M8), musician)

...I think it can be hard to get full attendance at gigs for unknown bands and things. I don't think there's much support for that, I don't know.

(Lisa, (P2F1) promoter and manager)

This result appears to be reasonably pervasive in opinion across many of those interviewed, and is attributed to a combination of the impact of the recession, competition from other, more musically developed cities and Cardiff's own inability to attain stability and dedicated participation in the milieu from audiences. Many of the reasons for lack of attendance has been linked to economic or structural factors, but there is also suggestions that this could be due to the prominence of online communication, as this audience member suggested in a focus group;

I think convenience is a big word for consuming music on the internet more than anything else, and it is just the immediacy of it, and to some extent, going to a gig is less convenient because you actually have to do something, you actually have to get up from the computer and actually go out and participate, and I think that possibly one of the downsides of, shall we say, the digital, technological kind of society, the fact that everyone is connected but isolated, there's that interaction with other living human beings which is being sacrificed for the sake of being able to do everything online, yeah.

The suggestion that online communication may in part be responsible for the perceived impoverishment of face to face participation in the milieu was not explicitly mentioned by many. However, the ways in which it may be affecting a local milieu in its physical manifestation emerged implicitly from discussion of other related issues, and will be a prominent theme within this chapter. The next section describes the effect of 'mutual embeddedness' on the development of the milieu across online and offline spaces, and the emerging issues arising from this shift.

1.2 The Cardiff 'Scene' and the Increased Salience of the 'Milieu'

The advent of the internet has brought with it a reconsideration of the ways in which roles and relationships within an independent milieu are configured across both online and offline spaces. Classic cultural theory regarding musical subcultures (Hebdige, 1979; Cohen, 1979), and even later work on scenes (Straw, 1991) and neo-tribes (Maffesoli, 1996) are all becoming increasingly inapplicable as the influence of global, networked modes of engagement rewrite the rules on communication and exchange of cultural product. Subcultural theorists of the 1960s-1980s conceived of coalescence around styles of music as cohesive, discrete and stable, with an established and distinct style of clothing associated with the music in question, for example, punk music. Alongside musical affiliation and style came distinct and countercultural political affiliations which guided members' of the subcultures thought, reflected in their lyrics and clothing. Politics, fashion and artistic expression were encapsulated in a movement which aimed to critique the establishment and highlight class

inequality through highlighting the potential of creativity ‘from below’ (McGuigan, 1992); the ‘symbolic creativity’ of the working class (Willis, 1990).

However, these idealistic conceptions of subculture were critiqued by later theorists for providing too romantic a perspective on music subcultures, failing to acknowledge their fuzzy edges and connections with other subcultures, and indeed, the mainstream. Bennett (1999: 600) conceived of ‘subcultures’ instead as ‘scenes’ to reflect the differentiation and cross-fertilisation of various forms of music, and the fluid boundaries and floating memberships which characterised such formations. It seemed that the formation and reproduction of scenes was much more complex than first imagined. Furthermore, Finnegan’s (1989) work on ‘musical worlds’ and Cohen’s (1991) examination of rock culture in Liverpool in turn highlighted the problematic nature of the term ‘scene’ and its applicability to all music making contexts.

Through the lens of 21st century technology, these critiques are being reconsidered in the digital context. Although previous conceptions of music scenes are significant, further consideration is required to understand the impact of technology on all those who are members of such scenes. It is Webb’s (2007) conception of the music ‘milieu’ which is useful in this context, taking into account the impact of globalisation, the internet and, to an extent, the rise of immaterial product on local music organisation. This takes the critiques of Maffesoli, Straw and Bennett one step further, in suggesting that music scenes are in fact more amorphous than fluid, disputing a unity of relationships and interests. Notions of community within music scenes can be unhelpful, says Webb (2007: 29); ‘milieu’ is more helpful in understanding the fluid and changing nature of the production and consumption of different types of music making, across local, national and international boundaries. This thesis utilises this concept in applying its meaning not only to these interfaces, but also to that of online and offline relationships with reference to the Cardiff situation. This section describes the state of the milieu with reference to Webb’s conception, and in using the ideas of ‘network ethnography’ (Howard, 2002) aims to analyse the Cardiff situation and the applicability of such conceptions to its formation. It aims to visualise the connections between those who populate the milieu in determining who key members are and how exactly is the assignment of this role defined by others in Cardiff.

Using the network map constructed using NodeXL (see appendix G), an outline of the Cardiff milieu can be visualised. These data were gathered from interviewees after their interview had taken place. Using this, we can see the multiple connections that make up the Cardiff milieu and the relationship of professionals to national and sometimes international operators. This map can help highlight key operators, clusters of connections within the wider milieu, and the relationships formed with others working beyond it. The acknowledgement of the Cardiff milieu and its relationship to the ‘extended milieux’ is central to understanding the impact of globalisation and technological development on flows of information and exchange (Durr Schmidt, in Webb, 2007: 33). Subsequent sections can help highlight the ways in which online and offline communication has brought such a configuration about.

The notion of a scene is still, to some extent, applicable when understanding the situation of Cardiff’s independent music milieu, as the idea that there are core members and professionals with long term commitment still holds, as the following quotes explain;

...I first started doing some nights in the X and The X, and there would be the same core of people that would be there every Friday...you always knew there was that core...and of course, it’s in flux and you get, in Cardiff, you get people coming in and out...

(Matt (P3M2), local promoter)

There’s a lot...there’s kind of like a core sort of...I don’t want to say following, but there’s a core, sort of, amount of people that seem to come to our shows or anything, or the important shows or whatever...I think we’re quite lucky with, umm, with our position.

(Dom (M15M15), musician)

Although there is evidence of stable membership or following within these quotes, suggesting the notion of the ‘scene’, at least for some professionals, still holds. Indeed, the widespread nature of the term ‘scene’ in almost all of their accounts of Cardiff indicates an aspiration to the romantic ideas of a cohesive community suggested by cultural theorists of the 1960s. It is this notion that this chapter contests, as such discussion of a core membership was rarely discussed as the norm, with many describing the issues over transitory participation as opposed to stable membership within the milieu, the problems with regular attendance at gigs being a symptom of this.

Some explanation and interpretation of the NodeXL graph is appropriate here in order to support respondent's accounts and in revealing the structure and relationships between key milieu within Cardiff (see appendix G). The inclusion of this graph is important in firstly helping to make sense of the rich ethnographic descriptions of the milieu emerging from the interview accounts, ensuring all respondent perspectives are accounted for and visualised in a holistic way. Secondly, it reveals the structure of the milieu as a whole, as well as enabling the researcher to identify key milieux within it, gaining an understanding of relationships between them. Finally, it provides an important understanding of all social actors and their relationships, taking into account not just individuals but record labels, media publications, sound engineers, venues, graphic designers, event organisers and web designers. This provides insight into the ways in which actors support each other through their various activities, and give a broader picture of the ways in which the milieu is reproduced.

The graph reveals a dense core of 'central operators', key individuals identified as such by the majority of respondents who contributed to this visualisation. This core was characterised by density in terms of their relationships with each other, the sheer number of connections between each other and with the wider milieu. These central operators were supported by a number of important local media, such as Buzz Magazine, The Miniature Music Press (music magazine), Gair Rhydd (student publication), as well as venues such as Dempsey's, Clwb Ifor Bach and the Student's Union. These supporting organisations were key actors in sustaining the live milieu due to the centrality of their placement and density of network connections. This tells us that such actors were key foundations of the Cardiff milieu as a whole, structuring not just local operations, but also maintaining links on a national level. These provided both a degree of stability within the milieu itself, but also connected the rest of the scene to national media, such as Radio 1 and BBC Introducing, and opportunities to promote their music to significantly larger audiences. In terms of maintaining a stable 'core' of activity, these individuals are still playing such a role. However, as Webb notes, it is important to take note of the geographical and cultural specificity of a milieu, as a cultural entity in its own right. These 'central operators' have an important role to play in the reproduction of the Cardiff milieu and the ensuring of its success in the national context, attempts to achieve this, such as the Swn Festival, are notable. Despite this sense of continuity, the milieu was in constant flux in terms of audiences, genre and organisation, which challenges the notions of subculture and scenes within the independent sector.

Just outside the central cluster of operators in the milieu were located another set of key promoters and other actors who were connected to the central operators through key events in the Cardiff calendar, such as Swn and other projects. These individuals were not so instrumental in establishing connections with established national media, but did have other independent connections located in other UK cities. Their involvement was much more focused within the locality, demonstrated through their links to varying clusters of locally emergent milieux; namely the 60s/psychedelic network cluster (below and to the left of the central operators), the hip-hop milieu (left of centre) and the ‘twee indie’ milieu (directly above centre) (see appendix G).

These ‘milieux’ were characterised by their peripheral position in the network visualisation, indicating their predominant immersion was in the locality i.e. Cardiff and that their connections were somewhat less established than the ‘central operators’. Much of this had to do with role of social actors; many promoters occupied a central position due to the increased requirement for networking in their job. Promoters tended to be slightly older, which also accounted for their increased connections in comparison to musicians who were trying to build a following in Cardiff. This indicates that position in the milieu is also determined by experience, age and role of individual, more detail on which is provided in interview accounts. Overall, those operating within these milieux were much more interested in fostering their own particular style of music and promoting it locally, enlisting the help of supporting promoters, venues and other actors in order to achieve this and build their following and overall identity of the milieu.

The development of one milieu in particular is perceived as dominant, although small, in Cardiff, as Lisa (P2F1) explains;

And yeah, it's quite genre specific I think, it's twee and it's indie-pop and I mean, there are little scenes on the periphery, but that's the main one...

The prominence of this ‘twee’ milieu (shown in the visualisation in appendix G), in which the style of music consists of melodic indie-pop and a particular accompanying aesthetic of the childlike and the cute in the design of advertising and style of dress, and in the style of music (Fonarow, 2006), as is noted in this field extract;

...the scene is preoccupied with the childlike and cute. This is in evidence with some of the instruments used by musicians; childrens toy keyboards and xylophones are some of the examples of this aesthetic in evidence through the performance of the music.

(Fieldnotes, January 2010)

To some, this was considered Cardiff's trademark genre, if indeed it was possible to assign it one, given how thin on the ground some considered representation of various genres to be, a one musician discusses;

Yeah, I think if you said to somebody in Nottingham 'what do you think the music scene in Bristol is like?', they'd have a distinct idea of Bristol and if you said 'what's it like in Cardiff?' they'd say 'oh, I guess it's quite sort of fey'. Like sort of fey, twee indie, I guess.

(Martin (M14M14), musician)

These extracts illustrate just how pertinent Webb's theory of the milieu has become to understanding contemporary musical organisation. Webb's concept of milieu privileges the understanding of the lifeworld for the individual through the gaining stocks of knowledge and typifications that originate from the particular social space in which individuals grow up. The development of such a lifeworld happens within specific locations, at first through face-to-face methods, and later through more unrestrained and 'free-floating' interactions mediated through technological devices (2007: 31-33). This can be seen with reference to Cardiff in the way that the city has constructed a semblance of an identity around a particular genre of music, which is recognisable both locally and nationally. As globalisation and technological development become more significant for the music industry, individuals are opened up to a wider variety of milieux within their local area and much further afield.

Taking into account the organisation of the milieu and the cultural elements specific to Cardiff, the 'twee scene' has developed out of wider trends in indie music that have developed internationally, but has become specialised within Cardiff, and the lifeworld of those who inhabit the milieu. The development of the lifeworld of individuals within localised contexts, in combination with increasingly networked modes of communication, highlights the development of unique milieu in these spaces and the ways in which it can be promoted nationally and internationally, with the reputation for possessing specialism in certain milieu based on musical genre. These data provide evidence for the 'glocalisation' of popular forms of music in specific localities within the milieu itself. The final part of this section now turns to looking at the ways in which professionals within the milieu use online

platforms to communicate with other professionals locally and further afield, and the extent to which it is beneficial to the milieu and the wider independent sector.

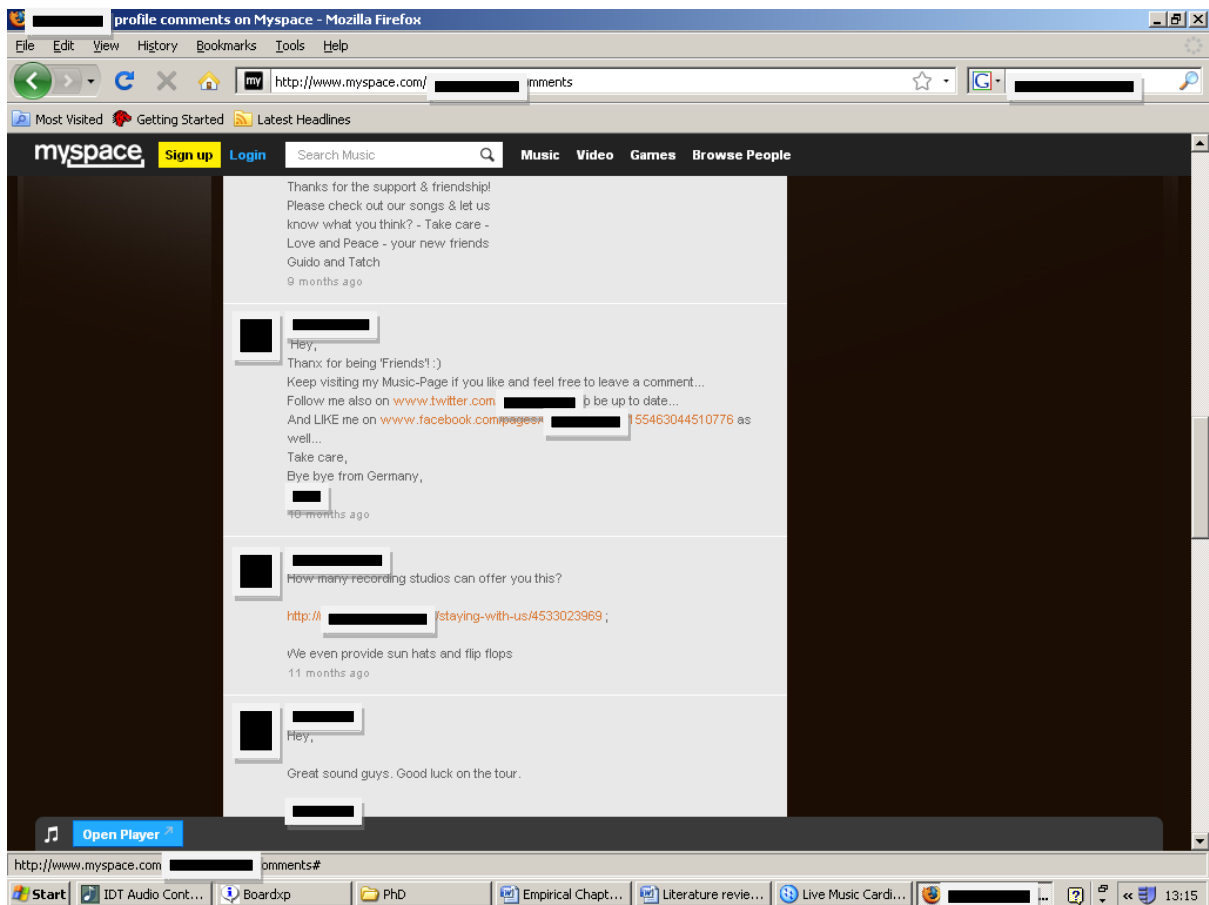
1.3 Local and Global Connectivity

For this research, it was necessary to keep in mind clear definitions of ‘professionals’ i.e. musicians and promoters, as well as other members of the milieu who adopted more of a role in consumption or contributed in an ad hoc or casual manner to production within the research site. Professionals were defined as those active on a regular and sustained basis, who were labelled either as promoters, musicians and managers, or who were involved in journalistic activity, whether that was in the form of running or contributing to a local publication, online or offline. ‘Milieu members’ consisted of those who participated in other, more minor ways; this would often encompass regular or occasional attendance at live events and engagement with social media and print publications. This may also include small scale contributions in the form of comments made on social networking sites, or submitting photos and other material to be shared with professionals and other milieu members. Although the distinction between roles of production and consumption have been questioned by Bruns (2008), it remains important to distinguish between those operating in a fully professional capacity, and those whose commitment is more fleeting and not driven by financial concerns, such as audiences, ad hoc and part time journalists and bloggers/reviewers, in both online and offline spaces.

This section is concerned with the ways in which use of online platforms facilitates contact between Cardiff’s localised industry and other independent milieux across the UK. The interplay between local, national and global individuals and milieux within the online space has transformed relations and flows of information throughout each level, creating a complex web of content exchange (Urry, 2003). Online facilities have created a deeper engagement between localised and national networks based on flows of information (as examined through a combination of ethnographic methods in physical space, as well as through analysis of online interaction between milieu members and corroborated through their own accounts in interviews) and exchange of immaterial, digitised content. This is argued, on one hand, to be of significant benefit to production, consumption and distribution in both quantitative and qualitative ways. However, there are indications that such shifts are thought to have

consequences which run counter to objectives of these groups, and could even be seen as detrimental to the prosperity of the milieu.

From a local perspective, online platforms were used in different ways depending on the purpose and the audience for the communication. The internet was used to facilitate flows of information and content exchange across local and national domains in order to co-ordinate and effectively update other professionals operating in other geographical locations. There were distinct priorities for professionals depending on whether they were intending to reach local or national recipients. Locally, the internet was crucial in maintaining links between artists, DJs, promoters and journalists. This screenshot (which has been anonymised so as not to identify contributors, and because informed consent from them was not obtained (see section (4) of the Methodological Approach for a justification of this)) displaying interaction between milieu members and professionals on MySpace, illustrates the way in which social networking can facilitate this communication;



Screenshot of a MySpace comment page; detailing comments from fans and professionals.

The scope of the online domain for opening up a two-way dialogue between professionals and audiences has transformed the local industry. Social networking forms a space in which continuous communication can be fostered, leading to stronger links between professionals and audiences and ensuring continuous networked flows of information and digitised product characteristic of the milieu. It has also facilitated a more efficient and enduring set of connections with professionals elsewhere. Connections established at both local and national levels can be useful for bringing in good acts, thus enriching the diversity of the milieu. This can be seen as a solution in addressing the issues that have plagued Cardiff as outlined previously; such as lack of attendance at live shows and attracting more diverse artists to Cardiff. The incorporation of both local and national acts on the same bill aimed to expose both musicians to like-minded artists, and audiences to wider music milieux which originated from elsewhere, as Emily (P10F2) elaborates as she explains how she and a known promoter and broadcaster select artists to play at their gigs;

...like, the headliners and they – again they're quite unknown but up and coming so they've got like a press company and they're about to release an album, but no-one's sort of – they might have read about them a bit, and [the radio broadcaster] matches them with three local bands that she's maybe played on her show...

The increased interconnection between national and local musicians via online platforms afforded a connection with complimentary milieux on a national, via the previously mentioned 'central operators' who straddled both local and national platforms. The online helped in fostering links across these domains, and between producers and consumers, as these screenshots illustrate;

profile comments on Myspace - Mozilla Firefox

File Edit View History Bookmarks Tools Help


http://www.myspace.com/

Most Visited Getting Started Latest Headlines

myspace Sign up Login Search Music Music Video Games Browse People

Hello, How are you ?
1 year ago


Click on image for facebook event



... Show more
1 year ago

Free Audio/Visual Night Sat 16th October @ Hector's House The night will feature live visuals, Award winning short films, live soundtracks performed by Nordic Giants & Phoria, The night will end with a live visual/DJ set from Breakin Bear!
FREE ENTRY
1 year ago

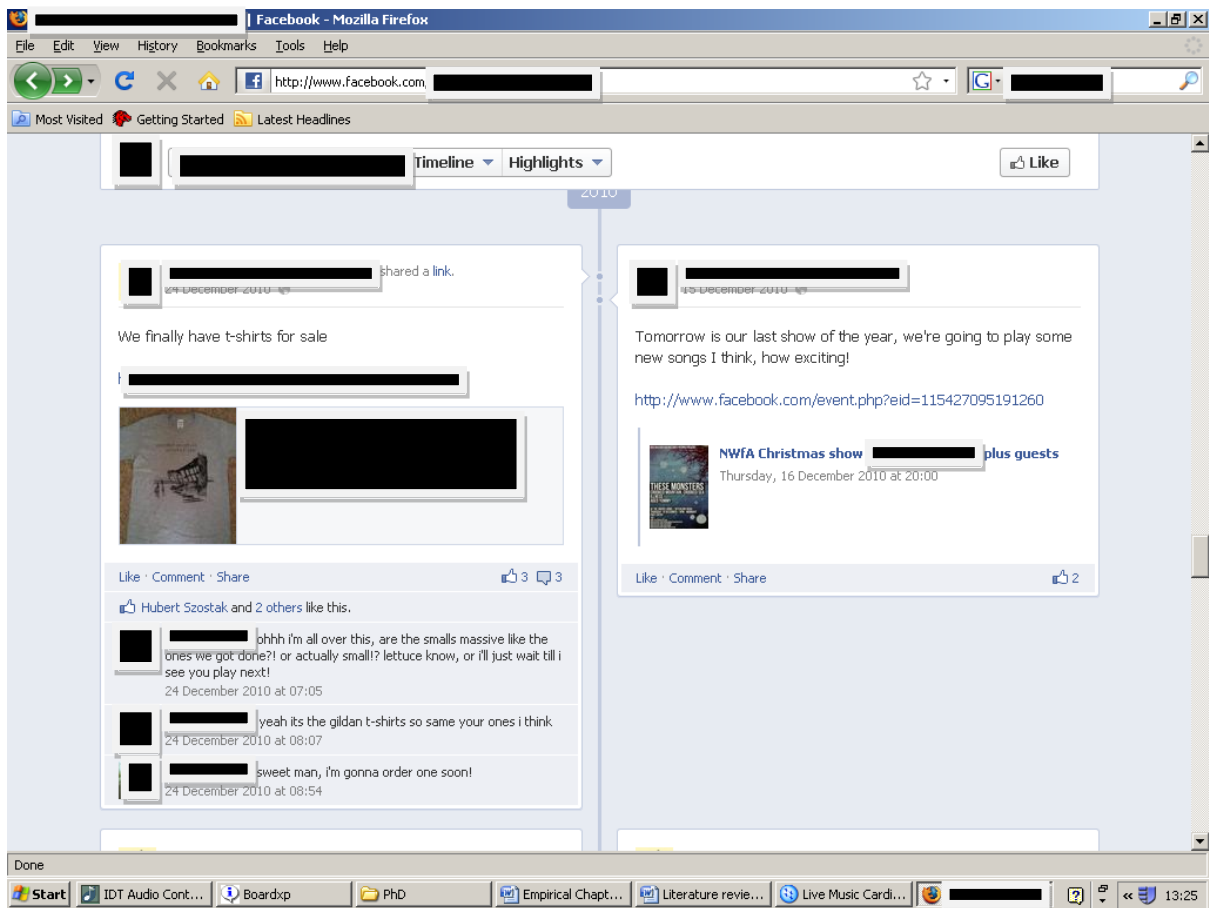
new ...



Open Player

Read www.brasino.com

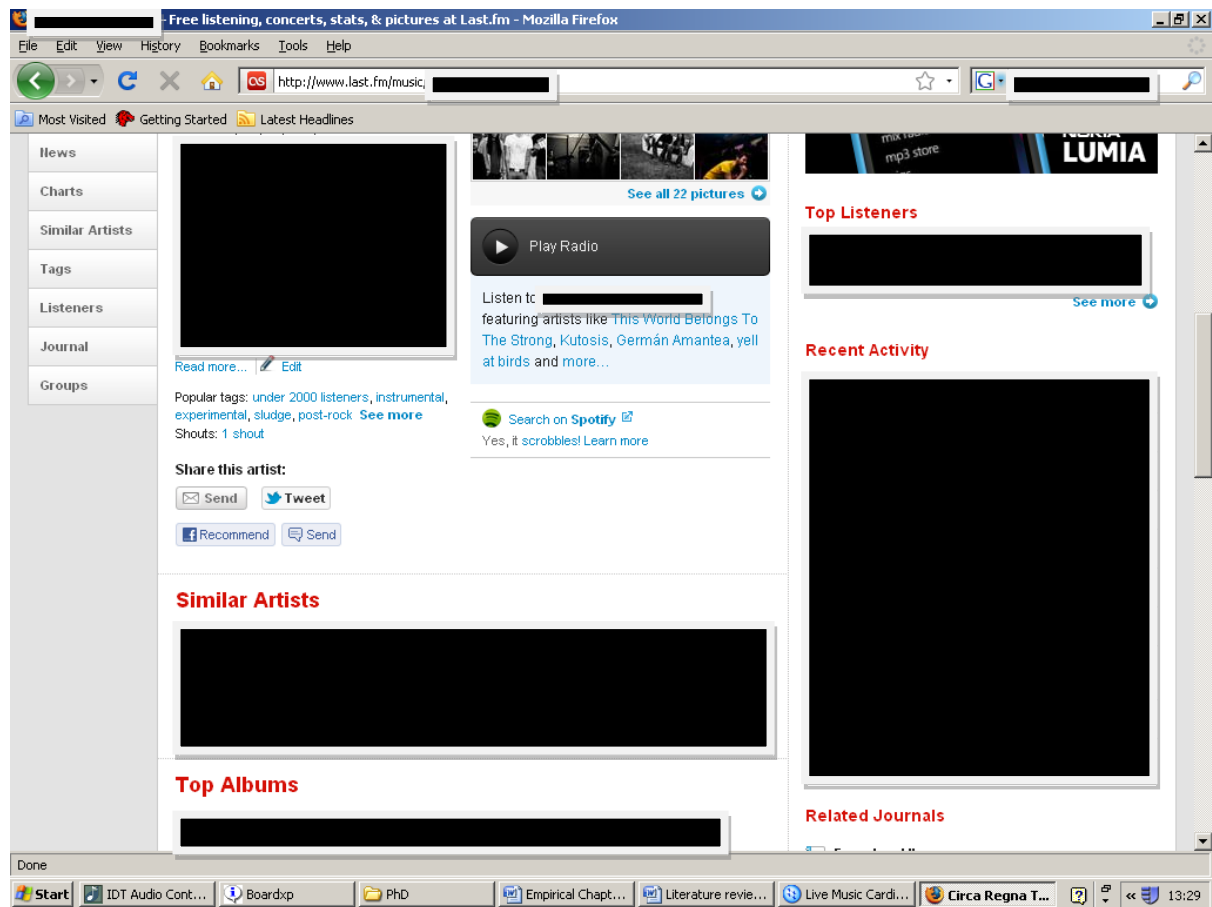
Start IDT Audio Cont... Boardxp PhD Empirical Chapt... Literature revie... Live Music Cardi... 13:18



Screenshots of one bands (i)MySpace and (ii) Facebook pages; demonstrating the predominance of other artist's networking on (i) as opposed to the predominantly fan orientated interaction of (ii)

The architecture and extent to which each platform had promoted its use as a way to promote music was a determining factor in the way it was used. As MySpace advertised itself as ‘a place for music’, it was more readily populated with musicians eager to promote; Facebook, on the other hand, had a more general appeal, with functions later added to facilitate a more musical focus, such as the appearance of fanpages. Whereas MySpace was considered a platform for continued contact between professionals, both domains provided scope for consumers to contribute to the milieu, and to acts of promotion. This was part of the evidence which suggested a ‘bleeding’ of interaction and use on the same online spaces between previously demarcated spaces and roles for producers and consumers (Huysen, 1986), a theme which recurs throughout the data. This ‘bleeding’ of use, allowing consumers to inhabit, use and share content within professional spaces, was identified as potential for development of what many considered an underdeveloped milieu. Audiences could contribute in a variety of ways on professional pages of local bands to create hype within a

local scene, but also on a much wider scale through sites such as LastFM, a music streaming facility, as this screen shot illustrates.



Screenshot showing the variety of recent activity of fans engaging with music through attaching genre tags, adding them to their libraries and sharing their music with other users.

In this case, listeners help build the profile of artists through updating their wiki page, assigning them to genres within the site, add them to event pages and their own listener libraries and actively engage with other users about them, often discussing gigs of theirs that they have attended. Fans have demonstrated their power to aid in the promotion of acts at both local and national levels. As popularity for a particular act within a locality grows, online and offline connections lead to more work and a potential national fanbase can develop. The ability for online facilities to both sustain local scenes, but also expose professionals to a wider network of contacts means there is increased economic and interactive scope. The nature of the internet in facilitating continuous communication on social networking sites allows both professionals and fans to continuously communicate and contribute in a self-reinforcing cycle of ‘prosumption’ (Bruns, 2008). However, the aforementioned ‘bleeding’ of production and consumption roles can also have detrimental

effects on this particular milieu. Data have revealed that such accessibility can on one hand provide potential for musicians previously restricted to operating predominantly within their geographical area, but it can also present consequences which have a potentially damaging effect on embodied participation and questions the extent to which mutual embeddedness really exists in practice. This highlights that these facilities and the gains they offer, are simultaneously laden with subsequent ‘losses’ which make themselves apparent through prolonged use. The rest of the chapter will explore this in more depth.

(2) Online and Offline Communication

The growth of online networks, and particularly social networking, has been instrumental in developing the reach of communication and promotion within Cardiff’s music milieu. This section aims to understand both the technological mechanisms which facilitate such activities, but also the social effects related to the use of digital technology which impact on the milieu in both offline and online domains. The data demonstrate the emergence of a two-way interaction between professionals and other members of the milieu; audiences can engage in more direct ways to communicate, heralding a significant change in the operation of the local industry, but also in relations between previously more discrete groups within the milieu. Additionally, evidence of ‘prosumption’, the increased capacity of those previously restricted to consumption to participate in culturally productive activities, is emerging through examination of the shifting relationships between ‘producers’ and ‘consumers’. However, although such evidence is present within the data, the situation is far more complex than a simple shift towards unproblematic prosumption. Not only is evidence patchy, suggesting that this is not a widespread activity; it is also found to have effects which are not universally positive. Professionals in particular are pointing out a multitude of consequences which they feel are detrimental to themselves and the milieu as a whole.

2.1 Online Promotion in Cardiff

This section discusses several aspects of the growth of online promotion within the Cardiff milieu, taking into account particular platforms e.g. MySpace and Facebook and the particular ways they are utilised by professionals and milieu members; the uses of multi-modality in promotional practice and the significance of ‘the feedback loop’ in relations with non-professionals. Together with forms of physical engagement, it offered a richer level of

participation than in the pre-digital era. The power and reach of social networking sites and their ‘viral’ capabilities were not to be under-estimated, as these professionals explain;

JC: Do you find, sort of, online the social networking and that sort of thing useful for-just in general for finding out about new music and, is it?-...I mean, you know I think J:[...]I couldn't really live without...online, Facebook and the power that exists within that...people talking about gigs with Twitter...people putting comments, so yeah there's always that and as I say, everytime I go on MySpace there's always someone asking me to have a look at their stuff...

(Jake (P9M8), promoter)

JC: Would you say that the growth in the amount of people coming to your shows is coming down to that online stuff or do you think there's anything...?

[...]

G: If you don't have...a Facebook page or a Twitter or a MySpace page, then you may as well be in a band who don't want to get anywhere, really...

(Gareth (M8M8), musician)

The utility of social networking for promoters and musicians within the milieu was universally recognised along the lines expressed by the professionals above. These facilities were found to be essential for all professionals at various stages of recognition. Professionals used a variety of platforms to engage their fanbase with a variety of multi-modal content, such as textual, audio, audio-visual and photographic material, which aimed to provide rich participation in practices of fandom online in both local and national contexts;

JC: So what kind of effect do you think [social networking has] had upon the music scene, particularly in Cardiff?

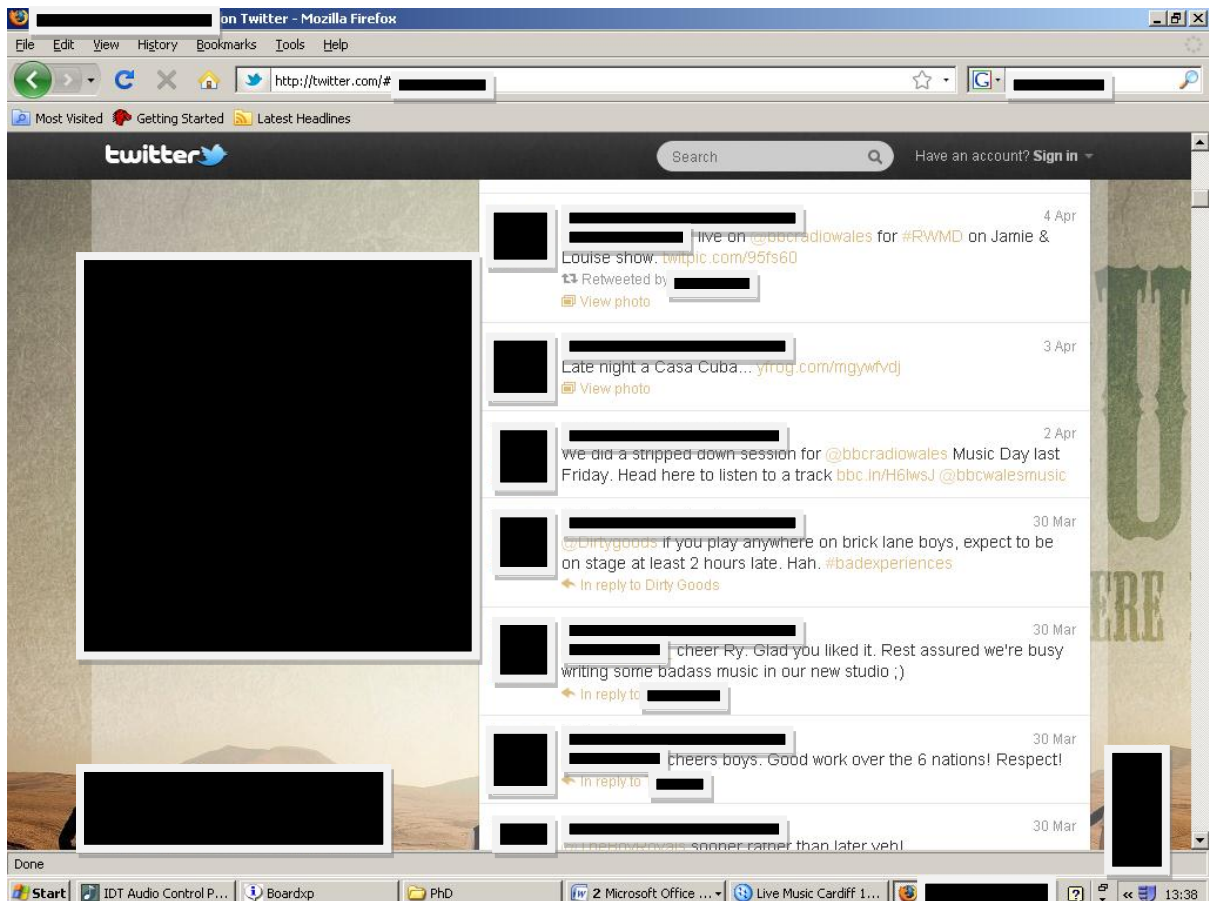
[...]I think, undoubtedly, the fact is that the internet, social media, social networking has increased the scope...perhaps targeting of promotion...

(Matt (P3M2), promoter)

Social networking sites, such as Facebook, MySpace and Twitter which were the most frequently referenced by professionals when talking about effective online promotional facilities, and were mentioned by all respondents as being useful for promoting at both local and national level. This is another way in which online facilities co-ordinated communication across the geographically close milieu and fosters ties with various other local milieux within the UK, in order to coalesce around an embodied event, such as a gig (Chesters and Welsh, 2006). Although similar in the way they were used, they each possessed particular features which made them distinct and specialist, as illustrated in the screen shots above and as musician Evan (M10M10) explains;

...I do think [Facebook is] really useful for letting people know when gigs are, anything band-related...if you send something on Facebook, you're more confident that people will read it than if we did a bulletin on MySpace, because nobody uses MySpace anymore other than to listen to music, really.

Whilst distinctions between MySpace and Facebook are clear in terms of audiences they are aimed at and attract, they are broadly similar in the facilities they provide for communications i.e. comment walls, blog facilities and photo sharing. Twitter, another prominent social networking facility, was also prominent and was designed to cater to alternative types of communication between professionals and fans, and this screenshot shows;



Screenshot of a Twitter profile page, detailing the variety of interactions between the artist, other artists and fans, from Cardiff and beyond.

Twitter differed from other facilities in that it provided a ‘micro-blogging’ format (each ‘tweet’ can be no longer than 140 characters). This screenshot shows the exchange of photos, videos and text in engagement between audiences and professionals, from both Cardiff and elsewhere. The posting of fan photos and comments demonstrates the presence of ‘prosumption’ activities within the milieu, which is suggesting that audiences have an increasing stake in the productive practices previously held exclusively by professionals. Their contributions are shared and used widely within the milieu through these facilities and are have an established role in the reproduction of the scene.

Twitter appeared to demonstrate a more compact and dynamic version of MySpace and Facebook, but succeeding in interacting with various milieu from Cardiff and beyond. Although each facility is designed in different ways to achieve various form of engagement and information exchange, their common role is to anchor interaction and prosumption in the reproduction of the embodied, face-to-face milieu. References to gigs and releases are frequent, and this suggests that mutual embeddedness is present to some degree, although the nature and extent is more complex than first appears, as will be discussed later. What is clear is that use of these facilities is directed by the physically present milieu; its economic objectives and its social relationships. The technology within these sites can encourage particular types of interaction, but as will be shown, use of these is co-ordinated and wide ranging in order to make fullest use of its capabilities in fulfilling the objectives of professionals.

Social networking, and Twitter in particular, is premised on short and continuous exchange of information. Its capacity to signpost and highlight various forms of content open up the possibilities of 'feedback loops', in which communication between professionals and other milieu members can be fostered. For seven promoters and six musicians, the feedback loop was of significant benefit online;

*JC: So, you're linked up to the artists and the genres and...
Yeah, that's really good, LastFM is...it allows you to...it allows any person in the world to go onto your profile and tag what you are. So, if they think you're progressive rock, they'll tag you if it's not on there already. And then other people who are looking for progressive rock, if they're looking for it, your name will come up and they'll check you out and they may like you, yeah.*

(Gareth (M8M8), musician)

*JC: So, [Cardiff is] quite a small scene?
And reacting as well, getting to react to what people say. Our website gives us the ability to blog about bands and acts and DJs and events that we put on here, and people can find out a little bit more, and people can comment on that. Our Facebook account is quite active in terms of what people like and don't like, and we pose that question from time to time 'who do you want to see in Cardiff? Who could we put on that you'd expect us to put on?*

(James (P1M1), promoter)

*JC: How is [online] helpful for organising those kinds of bigger events like festivals?
...as I said, it's about getting that information to people. It ensures that flow of information, and information back as well, y'know. Say you put something up and people might say, that doesn't makes sense, or what night? Can you clarify what night and the times? You can change that, whereas previously, you might send a text out, put a flyer out and it might be wrong.*

(Matt (P3M2), promoter)

These extracts highlight several benefits of the establishment of a feedback loop online; Gareth highlights the importance of fans' autonomy to tag artists' to a particular genre on LastFM, a streaming radio and social networking site. This had a promotional function as well as enabling communication between fans. James highlights the importance of feedback in improving the service to audiences and Matt notes the use of being able to re-edit and re-circulate content online, clarifying details about shows and releases. This highlights the interactional potential of the feedback loop, identified as part of the 'cultural grammar' of the internet, to re-edit informational content for promotional purposes (Jensen, 2005, in Lehman et al, 2007). The enablement of feedback provides many operational benefits, enhancing promotional reach, but it also enables a social interaction between audiences and professionals which demonstrates a genuine desire to improve the quality of music being staged in the city, as James explains. The information conveyed and relationships fostered within the online domain were tailored towards producing feedback which would translate into an enriched experience in the offline domain, as Samuel (P8M7) describes;

There's not many DJs, rather than bands, but there's not many DJs that I book from outside of the city that aren't on Twitter in some way, and you can open up a direct conversation with them beforehand... other people on your Twitter feed or your Facebook feed or whatever can join in the conversation, so they know people in the city when they turn up as well... it's a great resource, both Facebook and Twitter especially for building up a relationship with bands and DJs.

This quote demonstrates just how important online contact before face-to-face meeting can enhance social relationships between professionals and lead to more fulfilling participation within the milieu, as well as having a value in terms of enhancing professional reach. The potential of online spaces in fostering the economic and social vibrancy has been highlighted by those whose role it is to utilise these facilities fully. Some examples of fan engagement have been noted, and the opportunities for them to participate in ways which align with conceptions of prosumption are present. However, whether such opportunity translates into actual activity from audiences is thought to be more complex than this data suggests. This, and the possibility that online engagement may impoverish the vibrancy of the embodied experience of the milieu is also a concern. This will firstly be examined through the concept of 'viral momentum', a prominent analytical theme to emerge from the data.

2.2 Viral Momentum in the Milieu

A prominent theme which emerged out of discussions around the way the internet is utilised in both the economic and social reproduction of the milieu was the concept of viral momentum, a term coined by a participant in an early pilot interview. The use of the phrase was interesting and encapsulated much of what was discussed as important in what professionals wanted to achieve with regards to promotion. Promoter Matt (P3M2) explains in more detail;

JC: How is [social networking] helpful for organising those kinds of bigger events like festivals?

M: Whereas Facebook, it's very easy to make changes and updates, I mean, its useful for generating that kind of viral momentum, if some of my friends do a night, they might make me administrator of the night because they know I'll invite a lot of people to that night. So, it works both ways, you can get loads of people to invite loads of people.

Matt notes the ability of promotion to be more 'viral' when enacted online, the 'network of networks' (Castells, 2000) serving to provide a useful architecture for reaching as many people as possible and creating hype around an artist or venue. Interconnected use of others' networks helps perpetuate this momentum and this works to the advantage of professionals, particularly in the production of hype, a term frequently used by professionals. Hype can be defined as a build-up of excitement around an artist or band achieved through aggressive and sustained promotion. The online domain was particularly important in the construction and consequences of hype, as Gareth (M8M8) explains;

JC: Do you think it's helped your development of your band?

G: ...we kind of associate ourselves with other people as well, because obviously if you're on Facebook, you can say this person like this band, and if...obviously some people will like certain things and other people they admire like. So, if a certain person likes it, then a load of other people may be interested in checking it out. So, we've obviously got a couple of radio DJs who're into us, and if they say they like us, or if they've left a comment on our page, people may see what they've put on there, or hear what they've put on there. Especially on Twitter, if like, a radio DJ or a journalist or whatever writes something about, say X, on Twitter, people will see that and they might check out X then.

The use of online networks can aid a more comprehensive and sustained promotional strategy, and in terms of pure instrumental value a quantitative reach, is invaluable. However, the implications of viral momentum reach far beyond this. Not only can it provide reach within the online domain, but it is also a way in which mutual embeddedness may be fostered, as Ed (M12M12), Andy (M11M11) and Paul (M13M13) point out;

E: ... before that, we were in the studio recording that tune, so it'd gone from 'right, we're in the studio, we recorded it. Two weeks later we were playing it at a show and people already knew it...

A: And sung all the words as well

*E: ...and sung the words, yeah. It's not even out on a record yet,
[...]*

P: Yeah, like as soon as one person enjoys your album and 20 people are aware of your songs because they've gone 'hey, listen to this'.

E: Yeah, I'd like to think that people would perhaps listen to our songs online and then tell their mates about it and go 'ah, check out this band that I was listening to last night on MySpace' or whatever.

Access to artists' material before it was released or played live demonstrated the viral power of communicating multi-modal content, and resulted in audience familiarity before events took place in the offline domain. Ed (above quote) also highlights the power of viral momentum through friend recommendations as a key way to build a wider following. Viral momentum, in engaging fans with song lyrics and band members, also had a more personal effect on the band members;

D: ...and we played and it was kind of surreal and we were packing up and people were singing the 'la, la, la' and I was like, yeah, you're all dickheads.

E: Yeah, no, we love you.

D: No, not really. But yeah, it was just a surreal moment. It kind of humbled us to the point of embarrassment. It's really cool and I'm going red and feel better than I am.

E: No, it's nice.

P: Yeah, like as soon as one person enjoys your album and 20 people are aware of your songs because they've gone 'hey, listen to this'.

E: Yeah, I'd like to think that people would perhaps listen to our songs online and then tell their mates about it and go 'ah, check out this band that I was listening to last night on MySpace' or whatever.

(Dom (M15M15), Ed (M12M12) and Paul (M13M13))

The discussion of feeling 'humbled' and 'embarrassed' indicates a lack of awareness about the reach of promotion due to the viral nature of its online transmission. The 'surreal' feeling of audience members knowing the songs before they have engaged fully in promotion through gigging fosters an immediate engagement which is novel. This demonstrates the formation of social ties with fans through this manifestation of face-to-face fandom initiated in the online domain. The concept of viral momentum therefore coincide with discussions of the feedback loop in the previous section, as it is anticipated that such effects can provide the catalyst for this form of communication between fans and other fans, and also between artists. The bridge between the online and offline was thought, by professionals, to be maintained through such effects and provided mechanisms through which stronger fanbases could be built.

Nevertheless, there were some frustrations with viral momentum, and some questioned the extent to which it was effective or representative of actual practices of fandom within the milieu. Although its utility was well recognised, the nature of hype and its ability to provide sustainable practices of engagement within the fanbase was questioned by musicians Joel (M1M1), Rob (M2M2) and Hywel (M3M3);

J: And that's kind of what Hywel was talking about, getting momentum. And then people are like 'right, we really want to hear the album now, where is it?' and then a couple of months later after you update people with when the album...the big announcements like 'the album will come out at this time', then you give them pre-order links and stuff to pre-order the album, and it comes.

JC: So just building it up?

R: And that album comes along with press, so it'll be in all the magazines and the single will be on the radio.

J: And if you take too long between one of those periods, then people will just switch off.

H: How we like to call in the industry...fucked!

As they discuss gaining momentum within promotion, and the hope that this will lead to sales of releases and gig tickets, there is also the hope that such activity will also generate wider fanbases, as it is assumed by many that promotion will achieve. Instead, this conversation highlights the precarity of their situation with regards to their fans. It is felt by them that the only way to sustain interest is through relentless promotion which provides no let up, even in between releases of albums or touring. Although the wide reach of online promotion has been lauded by many within these accounts, a small minority highlight the problematic consequences; namely, that online promotion may not provide the answer to all the problems of promotion in the pre-digital era, but that it instead contributes towards a more light-touch engagement with music which does not result in long-term dedication to a particular artist, and an impoverishment of both the process of promotion, but also engagement with those who listen to their music. As we turn towards discussion of fan experiences of online and offline communication, this impoverishment can be explored in further depth.

2.3 Fan Experiences of Online and Offline Communication

Thus far, it can be seen that members of Cardiff's milieu have experienced a change in engagement with independent music in the city which is both quantitative and qualitative as the online domain becomes increasingly instrumental in efforts to promote. The facilities on offer to them have offered the potential for engagement in more comprehensive and far reaching ways and provide scope to contribute innovative output of their own. This section

deals with the extent to which, although suggested by much of the literature, these practices are actually enacted by audiences within an independent milieu. The data suggest that, far from online participation in Cardiff's independent scene being a seamless exemplar of mutual embeddedness, community and widespread prosumption; practices are in fact patchy and by no means comprehensive in their reach and effects. A selection of audience and musician data is drawn upon to highlight these points.

Data highlighted the extensive nature of fan engagement with the online domain and identified a multitude of ways in which it had helped them engage with locally produced music, as these extracts illustrate;

JC: So how do you find out about what's going on around Cardiff?

M3: It's more on Facebook, people add you and message you all the time.

JC: So what is it about Facebook that's good?

M1: Umm, we really like the bands on there, and they put up when they're playing, and you can see when they're playing Cardiff and it's a lot easier than looking on the TV and stuff.

M2: And everything is on Facebook, isn't it? And so is everyone else.

(Male Audience Member)

F2: MySpace is a big thing in the music scene at the moment, so I hear a lot about upcoming bands through MySpace as well. But it's mainly the events and the pages on Facebook that I get invited to.

(Female Audience Member)

JC: So how do you find out about....are there other ways to find out about what's going on?

M1: Yeah, Facebook and just the union basically. Cardiff Union, posters, online; that's it really.

JC: So how are those things helpful for you?

M1: They just have a list of what's going on during the week; you can look at that, and if you're interested in anything you can go and see it if you can.

(Male Audience Member)

Many audience members pointed out the informational function provided by social networking as being useful for knowing when gigs and releases were happening, and the fact that it was an aggregator for this information, as well as multi-modal facility for photos, videos and other textual material. MySpace in particular was an online anchor for the music scene, and a way in which new music in Cardiff could be discovered. Engagement with such facilities was widespread, with the vast majority of audience members mentioning use of these facilities, and also Twitter, LastFM and Spotify. The final two extracts also highlight the orientation of such facilities to the embodied experience of Cardiff's milieu; as the second quote explains, social networking aids in furthering their knowledge of gigs. The third quote

explains how the combination of both social networking and print media in combination are used to help them keep up with events. These data highlight the importance of mutual embeddedness of online and offline media in forming their perceptions of the milieu and the nature of their participation.

Social networking was also recognised by audiences as a key site of communication, as well as information exchange. This male audience member notes the way in which professionals and fans could witness the interaction that took place and the potential to create wide reaching feedback loops that were of social benefit to non-professionals;

Well, it's accessible, and the good thing about it is that you don't just see what your friends are putting, you see what they're posting on other people's...so you can see mutual friends and things, so if you think about the amount of friends that one person can have, and then all the friends that they could have, it's quite a wide tree of information, so you can see there's a lot of information coming in and it's easy to spot the things that are on.

(Male Audience Member)

This quote highlights the utility of the 'network of networks' (Hassan, 2004) which are created through online connections, and the wide range of contacts and information that can be garnered in order to enhance participation through dialogue with those who inhabited the online as well as offline space. From the point of view of musicians, this provided fertile ground for contributions of original content from non-professional members of the milieu. Local musicians, Evan (M10M10) and Isaac (M9M9) discuss how they encouraged user-generated content (UGC);

E: For our new EP, we put out a Facebook message asking people to contribute artwork to it, in kind of like a limited edition booklet. And we kind of sent it out maybe not expecting that much, but loads of people replied.

JC: Really? So what kind of things did you get back?

E: It was all quite different, wasn't it?

I: Some photographic, some done in paint. Quite a few collages, that seems to be a popular medium at the moment.

E: Yeah, yeah. But that's really encouraging because it feels like more of a community then.

The invitation for such active prosumption from audiences was viewed as a way in which 'community' was reproduced and strengthened within the Cardiff milieu. This was highlighted in the dialogue immediately following this exchange, when asked about the success of this appeal for UGC;

E: It was definitely a success...

I: Hopefully it will be...because it's not out yet so, it's too early to say whether it's been a success but yeah hopefully people will like it who contributed or people who are friends of someone who's contributed to the artwork will buy the CD. 'Ahh, yeah, there's so and so's picture in there.'...

These musicians felt strongly that the attempt to engage their fanbase in active prosumption was successful, contributing both to their promotional efforts, but also to the social cohesion of the fanbase, expressing their impression that it has fostered some form of community. Practices such as these appear to show that active content creation by non-professionals is reproducing the scene in a multitude of ways. Utilising the viral nature of the online space, audiences can lend both creative and critical eyes to the milieu and increasingly take on ownership of the material, a step beyond merely commenting on other content.

However, Webb's (2007) concept of the milieu does not easily lend itself to cohesive and close-knit communities as idealised within these accounts. On the contrary, there is plenty to suggest that occurrences such as that described are not representative of the practices of audiences. These quotes illustrate the patchy and inconsistent nature of prosumption that challenges such viewpoints, when audiences were asked if they ever shared their own Cardiff milieu-related content online;

F1: Yeah, sometimes, it's mainly photos on Facebook, not normally any more than that. I went to see X last night and I took a few photos and I'll try and put them on for friends who weren't able to go, so...

JC: Have you ever written stuff?

F1: I don't, but a couple of my friends do, but I don't.

JC: Do you read a lot of online zines?

F1: I don't really, I'm a lazy kind of fan and I suppose I don't...I just like the live music and I like to come along and be part of the atmosphere and stuff, I don't follow it up really.

(Female audience member)

JC: Ok, do you ever, talking about Facebook, do you ever upload things to Facebook or share things online related to music?

M2: Now and again, not normally related to music, it's just graphic pictures with your mates, just tagging and...

(Male audience member)

JC: Ok, I was just wondering if you've ever uploaded any of your own stuff, like photos you've taken at gigs or anything like that, do you do any of that kind of stuff?

M2: Not really. I'm usually drunk when they're taken and they don't come out very well.

(Male audience member)

These accounts problematise not only the idea of embedded prosumption amongst audiences,

but also that of sustained participation within Cardiff's milieu. The female in the first extract describes herself as 'a lazy kind of fan', not following musicians closely, appreciating live shows more readily. The following two quotes describe apathy or lack of commitment to uploading photos of shows, and indicates that sustained and universal 'prosumptive' practices are far from a reality from the perspectives of audiences. Descriptions of established prosumption are therefore questioned, and these extracts, which were representative of the majority of audiences asked, highlight that narratives of engaged 'communities' of professionals and non-professionals are questionable given the attitudes of audiences.

Whilst exchange of digitised UGC is in evidence, and contributes to both the informational and interactive reproduction of the scene, its reach has been significantly exaggerated in narratives of community which are expressed by some professionals. The concept of milieu, by its definition, also challenges romantic notions of a cohesive subculture. It accepts that the disparate and fluid nature of individuals' positioning in the milieu does not sit comfortably with such old-fashioned ideas of how social actors invested in independent music, and maintains that their positions are constantly changing. The gains made through social networking in terms of communication and promotion have also proved problematic for the cohesiveness of the 'scene', and the loss of this in Cardiff is felt keenly. However, the concept of mutual embeddedness remains salient, as accounts throughout this chapter have highlighted the anchoring of online interaction in offline events. This final section explores in further detail the ways in which such intertwining of the two domains contributes to the reproduction of the milieu through the themes of *experience and intimacy*, *memory* and *material culture*.

(3) The Physical/Digital Relationship: Mutual Embeddedness, Interdependence and Experience

As has been highlighted throughout this chapter, online interaction is firmly anchored in the concerns and events occurring within the offline space and such concerns both define and drive exchange of information and goods within this domain. Until this point, such relationships have been presented with the lens of the online space at the forefront; this section aims to demonstrate the continued importance of physical spaces within the milieu and the significance of embodied experience, despite the ubiquity of digitised networks. Employing a Schutzian perspective, this section is concerned with how respondents

constructed accounts of embodied participation within the milieu in justifying its continued centrality in their roles as promoters, musicians and audience members. This highlights the benefits of attending gigs, and purchasing CDs and vinyl as expressions of continued commitment to a local milieu, as well as badges of authenticity as professionals or fans. However, there is frustration that such forms of participation may be dying out due to the sheer accessibility of the milieu online. This has led, it is felt by some, to an impoverishment of the construction of memories, based on embodied experience, which contributed much to the reproduction of the milieu. Most notably, musicians, far from feeling wholly engaged with their fans, feel that some of the intimacy fostered face-to-face is slowly diminishing.

3.1 Experience and Intimacy

Many accounts from professionals and milieu members discussed the issue of mutual embeddedness with regard to the concept of experience. Attempts to grapple with the changes to the milieu as a result of shifts wrought by online communication and exchange were often framed in terms of changing experiences and attempts to adjust. Schutz (1967), highlights the importance of experience as a way in which individuals make sense and ascribe meaning to the social world. He proposed that perceptions and memories were subject to the reflective gaze, with a synthesis of such experiences forming a configuration of meaning of the social world. In this way, we can understand how experience is shaping members of the Cardiff milieu as they experience mutually embedded communication and the continued salience of physical as well as online experiences in the reproduction of the scene. Important in accounts of experience are accounts of intimacy; the attempts to achieve it between musicians and audiences and the extent to which this is evident in interview and observational accounts.

Overwhelmingly, many accounts of experience with live events emphasised the centrality of gigs to the scene. Attendance at shows remains an essential part of participation;

When you think about...one of your favourite gigs or whatever, it's like generally it's because you have like a good memory of having fun with someone as well, so like, people forget that you have like, you have to go through that phase of seeing a band with your mates and doing it like that, because it is, like, being in a band is like a social thing, I think anyway.

(Jon (M5M5), musician)

This musician evokes the significance of memory in forming his ideas and experiences about Cardiff's music milieu. Through the construction of such experiences, he equates participation with sociality; a key component of this being attendance at gigs. These

comments demonstrate that physical experiences remain at the forefront in constructing ideas around what it means to be an active member of the milieu. Intimacy is another important attribute given to embodied experiences; this audience member highlights the ways in which gigs can give him this;

I prefer live music to, sort of...clubbing...it's much more intimate, much more sort of interesting. The people who are creating their music...it's a good thing to see it performed.

(Male audience member)

Here, we can see how experiences of offline and online are made distinct through the evocation of the concept of intimacy. This audience member describes the experience of listening to live music as more intimate than listening to recorded music. He ascribes value to the act of performance, and in this way he privileges the live space as an essential site for participation in the milieu, and in terms of his own experience. Professionals were predominantly more emphatic about the importance of attending shows than audiences; both in terms of professional networking and engaging with audiences, acts which are conducted over both online and offline space. The centrality of delivering a good 'experience' for audiences was highlighted in a fieldnote from a Swn Festival seminar attended in autumn 2009;

I'd heard XX at a recent seminar for Swn festival mention the importance of performance in the building of a fanbase and the effort needed to be put into this aspect of their careers in order to succeed in this competitive industry. With so many artists being able to do it themselves in terms of promotion and gigging in the independent sector, making yourself stand out in your performances was something that artists were focusing on closely...

(Fieldnotes, October 2009)

Not only was experience constructed in terms of individual memories and perceptions of the scene, but was important in the performance context to be able to deliver a memorable experience, as this was seen as key to being both a musician and fan. The live event remained, more than ever, an important component of participation and in the construction of experience and intimacy between milieu members.

Nevertheless, the intimacy and momentous experiences evoked in the above accounts are countered by some data which challenges the idea of continued vibrancy within the milieu. Earlier discussions of the problems of low attendance at gigs seem at odds with the descriptions here. In some instances, the mutual embeddedness appeared to be little more than a myth, as these musicians explain;

JC: Yeah, so you said there's a difference between the type of gigs you do you don't get many people going and low attendance, like, why do you think there's such a difference?

J: Just lack of effort on our part sometimes. Just Facebooking, not Facebooking enough and just not trying to get people enough. It's difficult, like. It's also the price of the gigs as well, if someone sees a free gig, then they're probably more likely to come down. Then, if we're supporting a more famous band or something, people will want to come and see you then.

R: It's all about advertising as well, some gigs are really well advertised and you get people there and stuff because of posters and flyers and all sorts. But sometimes you go to a gig and no-one knows about it, so no-ones there.

R: Yeah, but you can still put a lot of effort into things and people just won't come.

Rh: People click they're attending on Facebook and you get complacent and then NOBODY comes.

R: It's happened before, we thought we were getting a few, we ended up losing like 50 quid, coz we paid a support band.

(Jon (M5M5), Rich (M6M6) and Rhys (M4M4), musicians)

This account reveals disconnect between interaction which takes place online, and the reality of participation at live shows. These musicians have experienced frustration that their promotional efforts have come to nothing, and that although fans have committed to participating online, this has not translated into embodied space. Not only does this cast doubt on the extent of mutual embeddedness between online and offline, but it also refutes suggestions that milieu members are wholly engaged with live music and feel compelled to experience it. This is supported by observations made at one show;

Another recurring theme within the live scene is the feeling of closeness that the musicians desire with regards to their audience. Often, towards the end of a set, musicians will abandon the technical paraphernalia that accompanies their performance and play acoustically closer, or amongst the audience in a more intimate and informal experience for the listener and the performer. This relates to encouragement which is often given by performers for the audience to come right to the foot of the stage instead of remaining a respectful distance back. XX, the 2-piece headline act, did this to great effect for their last song. Using only an acoustic guitar and a tambourine, they played acoustically in the middle of the venue floor, with the audience forming a circle around them.

(Fieldnotes, January 2010)

Participation, even when people had turned up for a show, was increasingly considered problematic for musicians, and this became evident in the offline space. Their frustration at a lack of intimacy with the audience and their reluctance to stand near the front of the stage caused the musicians to almost force this experience through their move into the crowd to continue playing. This desire for closeness to the audience, and the audience's unwillingness to grant it, casts doubt upon the extent to which embodied experiences of live shows (Fonarow, 2006) actually constitute intimacy. What constitutes enthusiasm online does not

always translate in embodied social action, and so intimacy may not in fact be universally valued or enacted within offline space. Whether memory actually equates with the reality of the milieu in the digital era can be examined.

3.2 Memory

Closely linked with the notion of experience is that of memory; it was felt by professionals that a good experience perpetuated good word of mouth regarding an event or about certain promotional set-ups, both online and offline. This translated into a memory which could be reproduced in the form of recommendations to others; this often manifested itself in the ‘viral momentum’ phenomenon discussed earlier in the chapter. However, the production of an experience which formed such memories, which were subsequently circulated to others within the milieu were as firmly rooted in the physical space as in the virtual. Turning our attention to the first quote from Jon in the previous section, he highlights the importance of physical presence at a show as a key experience of his youth. The sociality associated with embodied experience of live music in the presence of his peers cements both social relations and his involvement with the milieu; such participation is key to forming memories of the milieu which are passed on to others. Kyle (P5M5), a promoter, highlights these experiences as key to the process of memory making and retelling of memories through word of mouth;

I think you look at any venue, any of those long standing venues in Cardiff and any other city, and it's all down to reputation. It's the reputation of consistently maintaining quality and you know that if you went to Welsh Club on a certain night of the week, or you went to the Hacienda, all those big huge venues that have good reputations, then...yeah, it's down to having a good programme and good nights, but good bands, it's the experience of a good night as well, so it's always good to fine tune everything, down to the sound quality, down to the lighting, down to the safety within the venue and yeah, everything really, it's got to be an experience and it's got to be a good experience for them to come back, for them to be talking about it and for them to continually spread that good word and that word of mouth.

Kyle anchors the experience of a live show in terms of good quality of performance, technical mastery and enduring reputations of long-standing venues in Cardiff. These are experiences only to be found within physical space, and he uses these as important markers of distinction between offline and online participation, and the continued relevance of physical participation. Furthermore, the memory of such experiences, it is hoped, encourages further physical participation from those present and through the word of mouth that good memories generate. This is still viewed as extremely important by professionals, but is offset by

practices amongst others which they view as damaging to experiences of participation in the milieu;

I think because for a lot of people, [social networking is] still their attachment to the outside world and to what's going on. Y'know, a lot of people don't go out anymore! They're sat at home on their computers and that's how they find out about things. And if they are going out, then they might say 'ahh, ok, so and so is going to that' and so and so is going to this and it's not necessarily us telling people what's going on, it's people talking about it.

(Kyle (P6M5), promoter)

...the main thing is that everybody operates predominantly in an online world, almost to their detriment I think. Again, it's one of the things that's got lost, that some people exist so much in Facebook and MySpace and Twitter...which are brilliant tools, but they are just tools and there's other tools that you just can't ignore, like talking to people, like postering, like flyer-ing, that you shouldn't write off because...I'm speaking as a promoter, but if you're promoting a show, you have to think about always to bring people in, and sometimes that can be what you can do face-to-face that you can't do online. Like, I can't tell you about a show that I've got coming up but I can talk to you about the band. And I might discover that you've seen the band once before and you thought they were shit and that's why you've not bought a ticket. But I could talk to you... 'ahh, that's because they had that other singer, it's changed now, they sound like this' and you can do those things that you can't possibly do online, and that's an art, that...

(James (P1M1), promoter)

These promoters acknowledge the discrepancy between their attitudes and those of their audience with regard to the importance attached to embodied experience. Kyle highlights the impoverishment of merely interacting with others online; he implies that talking with others is not enough, and that embodied participation is a key element of sociability and even membership to a scene. Both discussion and physical presence are key activities, and the milieu as a whole is impoverished without this symbiosis. James explicitly highlights this in describing social networking as a 'tool'. By reducing it to its technological capabilities he gives privilege to face-to-face engagement, viewing it as key to his persuasive ability in encouraging others to come to shows. The 'art' of face-to-face promotion, and the ability to instil experiences through face-to-face contact is still considered the 'gold standard' in terms of interaction and the creation and reproduction of memory through experience. However, this faces significant challenge from the accessible nature of social networking, with the perception being that at least part of the challenge of low attendance at live shows in Cardiff is because there is less motivation to go out when a wealth of multi-modal information is available at your fingertips. This provides a contradictory situation in which both online and offline are considered equally important modes of engagement, but are not in fact perceived to be so, with significant impoverishment of physical participation the reality. This is cause

for concern amongst professionals, whose heavy emphasis on experiences being forged through face-to-face engagement and the memories constructed and circulated, are key to the reproduction of a thriving milieu. The final component of offline participation noted in the data was the continued salience of material culture in the experience of the Cardiff and its relationship to online communication.

3.3 Material Culture

Throughout accounts from all those interviewed, but particularly from musicians and promoters, there emerged alongside the importance placed on participation at live events a strong feeling that print publications and physical formats remained key to the reproduction of the local milieu. Material culture in the form of magazine publications, flyers, posters and merchandise, such as T-shirts, bags, CDs and vinyl, remained integral to venues and the promotional strategy of promoters and musicians in Cardiff, as has been pointed out in other literature (Yochim and Beddinger, 2008). The social significance of physical objects, such as those above, cannot be ignored in their role in reproducing the scene, and are an integral part of the networks of communication and exchange.

The significance of printed media was first highlighted in an early fieldnote;

Scattered around the venue on tables and at the bar also was the listings magazine for Beat Box Bars, detailing all live music for Buffalo, Ten Feet Tall, and Mr Smiths. The Buffalo magazine, 'Twenty10' is a monthly publication and lists gigs and performances; including ticket information, a short description of the headline act and supports; including their MySpace web address and sometimes that of the promoter.

(Fieldnotes, February 2010)

The centrality of such publications to promotion within Cardiff is clear by virtue of their prominent placement within the venues. Mutual embeddedness is also in evidence, with clear reference to online information within the text. It was clear that participation, in the true definition by professionals, included engagement across these spheres. Besides being functional in terms of advertising artists and events, there was an appreciation of such media in terms of its artistic merit and its centrality to embodied experience of the milieu, as an audience member and part-time journalist explains;

I still like getting the physical copy just to read...even though I've read it online, it's nice to hold what you've done and read it that way as well. And things like the [name of local music publication], I don't know if they do online, I imagine they do...

The experience of the material is key here, shown through the importance being able ‘to hold what you’ve done’, the embodied experience is constituted as a key element of a multi-sensory experience, online and offline. This experience links closely to the construction of memory through experience as previously discussed and the desire to preserve printed publication as a key practice within local music milieu endures despite the ubiquity of online communication. Tangibility in promotion is equalled by the desire to preserve such experiences in consuming music. There appeared to be a particular set of meanings constructed around vinyl and its relevance to contemporary music milieu, as these musicians explain when discussing their desire to make a vinyl release;

J: Like, I would like to do a vinyl release in the future because the sort of people who would buy vinyl, I know that sounds terrible but I think would like our music because like, I notice a lot of bands, like Race Horses in Cardiff, they have really good vinyl and they go to effort on their artwork and stuff. And then there’s other Cardiff bands who don’t have vinyl.

JC: What is it about vinyl that’s quite appealing to you?

J: I just pretend to like it because it’s cool.

R: There’s...with vinyl, when you listen to any record in vinyl, it’s as if it wasn’t meant to sound like that in the beginning, and obviously it was...I mean, like, there’s like...it’s something to do with a lot of the umm, technological side of it.

J: Like they compress a lot, for mp3, like you listen to the difference between one of your favourite songs on mp3 to vinyl; like vinyl has so much texture and things you will never have heard before, compared to mp3, where everything has been condensed into this little thing to be on the computer, so the quality...

R: And it’s just little things, like turning onto side two...

All: Yeah.

R:...and that’s meant, that first record on side two is supposed to be another album opener, but on CDs or on mp3, you never get that, you just get one track run through. When you’ve got something like a vinyl, you’ve got...its massive and you’ve got a lot more, it’s a lot more than just having something written on your computer, it’s a lot more than that.

C: I think it’s just a sign that you really like music because y’know, if you just want something for convenience you’d just listen to it on mp3. If you like a band properly, like, you might buy their album. But you have to take so much care over like a vinyl. I think it shows the appreciation of it; someone buying that instead.

This extended quote from Chris (M7M7), Rich (M6M6) and Jon (M5M5) highlight many themes around physicality, aural distinction between records and mp3 files, the experience of listening to vinyl and their views on its relative value. Rich’s comment that vinyl ‘wasn’t meant to sound like that in the beginning’ implies that technology has altered the aural experience of listening to a particular track. Jon takes this one further by using sensory descriptions of the aural experience to make quality distinctions between vinyl and mp3; attributing more ‘texture’ and undiscovered sound to the vinyl experience which renders it both in depth and in the form in which it was intended to be listened. This aligns with much

of the literature on the ascription of values of warmth and authenticity to vinyl (Yochim and Beddinger, 2008). The sentiment that listening to vinyl is ‘a lot more than just having something written on your computer’ appears to indicate that consumption of music in a physical format, for these musicians, held far more experiential value than ownership of mp3 files of lesser quality. Other professionals highlight the importance of vinyl in similar terms;

Um, it's probably more collectable I suppose, yeah, I prefer buying vinyl just coz you just feel like CD's are a bit more cheap and breaky! They tend to be more tacky rather than something to keep, I'd always prefer vinyl!

(Emily (P10F2), promoter)

...coz it gives you something extra. You can put, y'know, a single...I just find it nicer to have, to be honest, and you can physically play the music yourself, y'know and get it out, and put it on the vinyl player. I know a lot of people say it, but it sounds warmer as well, that's why, I think a lot of bands try and do it. And I think that it shows effort as well, I think it shows you're willing to make an effort to get a product out there.

(Gareth (M8M8), musician)

Evocations of warmth and quality pervade professional accounts, and this fetishisation of the format provides some evidence for the presence of a milieu within a milieu, one which privileges vinyl above the technological advances and accessibility of the mp3 file. However, this is a predominantly professional attitude; such expressions were only found in one audience account, with most stating their preference for consuming music was the mp3 file, followed by the CD. This indicates such practices are confined to a small circle of musicians and promoters for whom vinyl is an integral experience of the milieu. Nevertheless, in conjunction with the importance of the live event and tools of physical promotion, this was an important expression of professional authenticity and commitment to music. Consumption of music in physical formats remains a key narrative, but to different extent depending on the position occupied by a social actor, and is marginal compared to printed media.

Conclusion

This chapter has set the context for the milieu in Cardiff and its particular configuration and salient issues within the social and economic landscape of digitisation. It has outlined the ways in which globalisation and the influence of technology have transformed the organisation and modes of communication between those operating in local music scenes, which can now be viewed in looser terms, in the form of a ‘milieu’ as opposed to the more cohesive notions of ‘subculture’ or ‘scene’ which have been previously used. The combination of both local and global interconnectivity has enriched the quality of professional relationships both within the milieu and further afield, as well as providing

enhanced opportunities for musicians to promote themselves. Mutual embeddedness is recognised as being significant in transforming the nature of interaction with others operating within the digital milieu; and there is some evidence of both producers and consumers engaging in the milieu and producing original content.

However, overwhelming accounts of practices of prosumption have not been forthcoming. Bruns' (2008) notion of a rich milieu of consumers participating regularly in practices of prosumption has been challenged by these findings, which suggest patchy and unsustainable activity in this regard. Furthermore, some accounts even suggest that online interaction is having a detrimental effect on embodied participation; with evidence of low attendance at live events and accounts of the vibrancy of online activity not accurately reflecting the embodied reality. Engagement in face-to-face interaction is still seen as key to healthy engagement with local music, although there are fears that the encroachment of online engagement has stunted this somewhat. There also seems to be a discrepancy between the importance of physical formats to professionals as compared to audiences, who would far rather use mp3 than CDs or vinyl. Although evidence of mutual embeddedness and its benefits are present, there is some concern over the extent and nature of its influence.

The next chapter moves on from this discussion to discuss key social shifts discussed by professionals and audiences within the milieu. In understanding the key transformations brought about by digitisation, the conditions under which shifting perspectives around production, value creation and distribution of music and music related products by members of the milieu can be understood. This evidence makes the case that networked communication fosters new forms of sociality, the significance of which is only just beginning to be understood.

Chapter 6

The Impact of Digitisation on the Independent Music Industry: Key Issues and Debates

Introduction

This chapter explores the impact of digitisation on the operation of an independent music scene as viewed by the professionals and audiences that populate it. In understanding the way in which these actors make sense of the changes that digitisation, and the increased salience of online and offline spaces simultaneously, this section will shed light on the fundamental changes that professionals and audiences are experiencing with regard to the production, distribution and consumption of music. Not only will it elaborate on the significance of the categories that professionals themselves use in their sense-making, but also on the wider implications of such discussions of digitisation with regard to the fundamental changes it is having to value creation around independent music, the processes of commodification and re-commodification of the mp3 music file, the extent to which practices of prosumption and produsage are occurring, and the authenticity and integrity of music production and distribution across online and offline spaces.

Professionals and audiences frame the digitisation phenomenon upon several key categories of sociological interest, which are covered in the first section of the chapter; namely, *accessibility, simplicity, minimal cost, saturation and quality* and *hype and control over promotion*. These categories and their discussions around such issues reveal the ways in which the shift from operating in the offline domain alone, towards a mutually embedded mode of production and consumption, has fundamentally disrupted established economic, social and cultural relationships. These categories unpack a number of issues of sociological concern, and the second section attempt to deal with the significance of these shifts for the independent sector, but also consider their application to mainstream approaches to adaptation to digitisation.

Firstly, findings reveal an increasing preoccupation with the shift in the configuration of value creation within the milieu, which increasingly acknowledges music to be of lesser value, loading economic significance onto once peripheral merchandise and ‘experiences’, upon which fandom can be secured. These findings raise important questions as to where value is shaped and by whom, incorporating issues of consumer autonomy in deciding what they choose to access for free or spend their money on and the consequences of these value

shifts on the operation of the independent scene. Secondly, the data reveal a concern with the degree to which consumers are increasingly empowered to produce and disseminate original products online, again questioning the authority of ‘professionals’ to create and market their music or other creative output. Although this has been found to be the case, there is a complexity found within the data which begins to question the extent to which prosumption and produsage (Bruns, 2008) is a significant part of an independent music scene, and the barriers which contribute to its successful impact. This in turn questions the extent to which democratisation of the internet is indeed present and as extensive as proposed by other sociologists.

Finally, this chapter will explore the current priorities of professionals in the independent milieu with regards to making a sustainable living from their music, or even hopes of continued profit. To some extent, the data debunks the classic independent/mainstream divide of art for art’s sake versus ruthless pursuit of profit respectively, in that it reveals a complex multitude of motivations, artistic and financial, which shape the actions and definitions of success in an independent scene. The significance of all of these issues highlights the narrow focus of the mainstream in their focus on illegal filesharing, with this chapter revealing the importance of the wider social shifts which are occurring under digitisation, of which illegal activities are but one element. In order to understand the reasons behind such shifts, we must acknowledge the bigger picture regarding the impact of digitisation.

(1) Digitisation and the Independent Music Milieu

This section aims to contextualise some of the key shifts occurring as a result of the increasingly prominent role of digital music and social networking platforms within the independent music scene in Cardiff. Within the data collected in interviews with promoters, musicians and audiences, the aforementioned categories emerged as the most prominent themes in their accounts of the impact of digitisation. The data highlighted important sociological implications for the operation of the independent sector in Cardiff and the advantages, but also challenges posed by this transformation.

1.1 Accessibility

This section outlines the importance of the notion of accessibility as a theme that ran through a number of accounts from professionals when discussing the impact of digitisation, both in

terms of accessing the music itself, but also with regard to the relationships constructed with other local musicians. Almost all professional accounts alluded to accessibility as a major advantage in terms of promotion of music or events within the scene, and so there is a significant base of evidence through which to explore this theme. Most professionals discussed the impact of mounting their own, or promoting others' music online, both locally and further afield, with reference to the increased ease and accessibility that online architecture and facilities provided. The appropriation, use and exchange of music in the mp3 format allowed access, both legitimately and illegitimately, to be much wider in terms the amount of music available and the platforms through which music could be promoted and listened to. The following quotes expand upon the various advantages to professionals and other scene members of increased accessibility both within the immediate locality and beyond;

So [the internet] kind of helped us, especially in the way of sending music to send it...So I would say its probably the perfect medium...to put your band on a platform.

(Gareth (M8M8), local musician)

I think it has had a big impact actually, just the availability of listening to stuff has certainly made it more accessible for a lot of people.

(Male audience member)

No, at the end of the day, with Spotify and things like that now, you expect to it at your fingertips. If a new band releases, I listen to it on Spotify, if I think if a band is good enough and has a big enough following certain amount of people that will buy it. So it's like previewing it.

(Lisa (P2F1), independent label manager and promoter)

These quotes are telling of the pervasive nature of the positive attributes of increased access to music provided by the internet. Gareth emphasises the ease of promotion which the internet and social networking affords him and his band. Digitisation has served to give independent musicians the opportunity to make themselves more widely known beyond their local networks and provides a platform to promote on national and international levels. The use of such platforms by a wide number of musicians has allowed for the promotion of music, gigs and merchandise to be communicated across a wider user base and aids the immediacy and increased knowledge of a wider range of music, as the male audience member illustrates. Thus, the inclusion of all scene members, music fans and professionals operating on the same social networking facilities has 'levelled the playing field', and these

accounts strongly support sociological literature which advocates that the internet has democratised access and transmission of information by those who use it, breaking down clear definitions of production and consumption (Bruns, 2008; Cote and Pybus, 2007; Poster, 2004). Not only is this novel, accessibility has come to be expected by professionals and those traditionally considered consumers alike. Label manager, Lisa, discusses how increasingly free music is expected as standard when using social networking facilities. Accessibility to a wide range of music through Spotify is taken for granted and has assumed a significant role in the way that people promote and consume music, highlighting the practice of ‘previewing’ as salient and integral to the experience of listening to and eventually purchasing music. In promoting accessibility, the online domain has simultaneously altered economic relations between producers and consumers, endowing the latter with tools which empower them to make purchasing choices in advance, as well as allowing professionals to promote on an international level as well as within their local networks.

This accessibility can be seen as a boon for those who cannot achieve, or do not aspire to, mainstream success, in that they can take control of the role and costs of the ‘middleman’ in terms of music production and promotion. However, a significant portion of professionals pointed to the downsides to such unfettered accessibility to music and the ability of anyone to market themselves. The following quotes illustrate some of these issues;

...as soon as people think they can do that [make hip-hop music]...they start treating themselves like an artist, as opposed to thinking like a fan. And so there is a lot less fan interaction...the problem is; the digital world has given them too much power!

(Samuel (P8M7), local DJ and promoter)

I think convenience is a big word for consuming music on the internet more than anything else, and it is just the immediacy of it, and to some extent, going to a gig is less convenient because you actually have to do something, you actually have to get up from the computer and actually go out and participate, and I think that possibly one of the downsides of, shall we say, the digital, technological kind of society, the fact that everyone is connected but isolated, there's that interaction with other living human beings which is being sacrificed for the sake of being able to do everything online...

(Male audience member)

As a professional, Samuel was concerned about the effect of accessibility with regard to the erosion of previously distinct demarcations between producer and consumer, which relates closely to the issues of de-demarcation between these relational concepts, as outlined by

Huyssen (1986). This also closely relates to discussions of quality, which will be explored further later. In this case, he refutes some of the benefits of online accessibility for non-professionals, instead suggesting that this dilutes the quality of interaction between fans as a new mentality of participation is assumed by those who may consider themselves both producers and consumers. He implies that the lack of distinction between these groups has led to a power imbalance, in which professional hip-hop artists are stripped of their professional status as democratisation opens up productive possibilities for all. This adversely affects the power that professionals previously held to promote themselves and alters the dimensions of their relationships with their fans irrevocably. Here, it can be seen that democratisation is not welcomed by all, and that the social, as well as economic implications of digitisation are sometimes viewed as disruptive to social relations and economic outcomes, as the opening up of creation of music can flood the market and make 'professional' content harder to find.

Additionally, Samuel also highlights the detrimental effect of online accessibility to music, the convenience of which was such that he felt that it may discourage people from attending gigs and participating in the scene in a more embodied sense. This is a tension which has been discussed in the previous chapter and which highlights the continued salience of the embodied experience of being a member of a scene for some of its members. The use of the words 'connected but isolated' highlight the individualising effect that some noted as a negative consequence of access to large volumes of music and social networking facilities, in that this can actually stunt the development of a local scene socially and economically. This may actually achieve the opposite effect with regard to fan-musician relationships that refutes the suggestion that they are in fact becoming closer, in favour of a view in which the relationships are being dramatically reconfigured in a manner which disrupts established relationships with negative effects on the local scene.

Artists themselves have also raised concerns about the consequences of accessibility in the changing nature of their interaction with their fanbase. Local musicians Joel (M1M1) and Rob (M2M2) noted this in the context of the affordances that social networking provides;

J: It's weird, with some bands...you see the way they just don't interact with their fans and it has a positive effect...because people are like 'oh, they're untouchable'...

R: You can take it too far, you can be so friendly and nice and down-to-earth and normal that they don't idolise you anymore, that's the problem.

They respond to the notion that the online domain brings fans and musicians closer together and refute the extent to which this can be effective. They suggest that the qualitatively different ways in which artists and fans are able to interact online alters the relationship they form into a supposedly closer and more ‘friendly’ interaction. This has been highlighted in a recent paper by Beer (2008), who noted the changing relationships between fans and the lead singer of Pulp, Jarvis Cocker, on his MySpace profile. Fans felt as though he had become more of a friend than a figure of idolatry, and this local band have also noticed this trend within their milieu. The decline in idolatry and a move to more intimate relations with their fans can be seen to constitute a fundamental change in social relations brought about by sheer increase in the amount and nature of accessibility to artists. Idolatry is seen as a fundamental part of the identity of an artist, and its potential erosion through the use of online communication is seen as resulting in a decreasing amount of respect for the artist. The decline of idolatry and the sense of the unreachable can be likened to Benjamin’s (1936) discussion of the aura in the age of mechanical reproduction. Just as the invention of photography and cinema breaks down the aura and any sense of the unreachable in a work of art, so too does the internet break down the distinctions between fan and artist which defined musicians as authentic. The greatly increased accessibility has brought about a fundamental change in the nature of participation in the milieu.

This shift may be viewed as a precursor for some of the economic issues facing the music industry; a lack of respect can cause fans to view their relationships with musicians as equal or collegiate, thus overriding any obligation to remain loyal to economic structures which existed in the pre-digital era, in which increased levels of idolatry may have been more prevalent. This demonstrates the extreme complexity in the understandings of accessibility and its consequences for those operating within this milieu, highlighting contestation over the content circulated, and who is entitled to circulate this content. It appears also that democratisation of the internet and the existence of prosumption is not viewed as universally positive in the resulting de-demarcation of status and social relation, which have been irreversibly disrupted.

1.2 Simplicity

In addition to, but distinct from accessibility, respondents' accounts cited the importance of simplicity of their use of the online in accessing and disseminating information. This was a recurring issue for both professionals and audiences alike, as the architecture of social networking, streaming services and downloading programmes became increasingly easy to engage with. Although this category was not as extensively discussed in comparison to accessibility, which was universal, it was mentioned in about a third of the sample and deserves a mention as a distinct analytical category. The following quotes illustrate the advantages of simplicity;

...there's something quite attractive to it, in the sense of the listener because they know they can easily get access to it, download it quickly and listen to it straightaway...

(Gareth (M8M8), musician)

MySpace has been a revolution. It feels old now, MySpace, but it's still, to try and understand it's importance and the difference to a band...I mean I don't get sent...I do get sent CDs, but the percentage compared to MySpace links, that's how all bands operate, and I can get on there and I can hear three or four tracks, it's faster for me to skip and find things, it's a huge benefit for bands. I know where they are, what they look like, when their tour dates are, all things that...it was much harder for them to convey before. They'd have to write a letter and think about all those things, they'd have to include a photo. Again, it's just steps, that would have been...get a photo taken and print it out and make it colour.

(James (P1M1), promoter)

...now I can just send out an email, include a link to the website, and all people have to do is include a link and instantly then you've got all the tracks that have uploaded. I think it is, it's all about time, it seems we don't have enough of it to use effectively as the in thing, and just the instantaneous, being able to listen to stuff, I think that's very important to some extent.

(Local music journalist and audience member)

The attractiveness of such easy and unrestricted access has the benefit of drawing wider audiences than would have been possible previously. The ease of access to the internet, as opposed to the effort required to buy a CD or attend a gig was seen as a huge benefit for promotion, as Gareth explains. James also highlights the significance of the multi-modality that social networking platforms afford musicians, and the ease at which aesthetic qualities can be conveyed through MySpace. Whereas previously bands may have been restricted to text and photographs alone alongside their demo tapes, social network platforms which are orientated towards music production seamlessly meld multiple modes of expression in order to create and maintain a coherent blend of sound, photographs, text and video. The ease through which such domains can be edited, and are living spaces which can be added to or edited over time present a platform in which promotion is increasingly dynamic and

participatory. Tools such as website links and the instantaneous access to information are crucially important in fostering such dynamism and building the viral momentum, which was discussed in the first chapter. Such rapidity of dissemination may also put paid to feelings of being swamped with information, which will be discussed later in this chapter, allowing professionals to feel as though they are, to some extent, on top of the deluge of information being circulated.

In addition, the simplicity of digital can translate effectively into physical spaces within the scene, as DJ Stu (P7M6) points out;

...it's had quite a big, big impact in certain respects...um...as far as my DJing's concerned I was notorious for taking way too many CD's out to my night [...]and then I moved on to mini disk because I found although the quality's not brilliant- you can get five hours onto mini disk, so instead of bringing out all these CD's, I'd burn my CD's onto mini disk and I could just bring boxes and boxes...Now, with MP3's I can have a laptop with an external drive, external drive, you can get for about fifty quid...um...and that can contain all the CD's and all the mini disks that I need to bring and if I needed anymore I could get another external hard drive for fifty quid...um...so yeah, MP3's, like, it's changed, I can DJ with a laptop now and take out just about everything that I want to and software and everything else that you can get on a laptop's- virtual DJing, it's so much easier to just bring a laptop bag and DJ.

This comment highlights the obvious storage and transportation advantages of digital music as opposed to earlier physical formats. It also draws attention to the increasing effect of digitisation on the ways in which promoters and other professionals operate in physical spaces and provides an understanding of how DJing can be enhanced through the portability and expansion of music libraries. The ability of digital music to be catalogued in such a way, in conjunction with the multi-modal co-ordination of online promotion, reconfigures the landscape of promotion and access to music, and consequently the commodification of music itself. Social networking makes it easier for the consumer to access and 'preview' music, and it is the simplicity of such platforms as a result of digitisation which through which music is being re-commodified in its digital form. As the seamless nature of social networking increasingly allows for more simplified and accessible promotional strategies, this is resulting in a de-commodification of music as conceived in its digital form. It is losing its privileged position as the most valuable product, and is re-commodified as a key part of promotion, rather than privileged as a product which can only be obtained through established modes of exchange. Instead, the importance of data is highlighted in selling peripheral goods,

merchandise and gig tickets, which yield higher amounts, as James (P1M1) explains in his discussion of a promotional aggregation site called Music Glue;

...so Music Glue are a company, who say what they do really, which is that they try and glue different parts of the music industry together in ways that weren't done before. So, for example, what they're doing with this concert is they're acting as a ticket reseller, so they're providing the engine to sell tickets, which then bolts onto the back of the band's website. So, you can go to their website, or their MySpace, where the gig listing will be, and you can click 'Buy Tickets' and it'll give you an e-ticket. So they're providing that facility, although they're not a ticket re-seller. But also, because they've done a hook-up with the band or with the label or both, then when you get your e-ticket, you also get an mp3 of something that is exclusive to the band. So, and they're kind of then talking to you, the promoter and providing you with what you need as a promoter, which as a ticket re-seller, is just a ticket count twice a week. So they're joining all of that up, so like I said before, what you're also getting is not just another ticket outlet, because they're enabling the band's MySpace and the band's website to sell tickets.

As well as the obvious promotional simplicity which this company offers, this also highlights attempts to load value onto tickets and other exclusive content through seamless linkage to social networking sites of artists, piggybacking on the viral success of platforms such as MySpace in the attempt to derive income from content which can be sold at higher prices than a song or album. This emphasises the ways in which digitisation has contributed to a reconfiguration of value and privileging of certain products within the market, taking advantage of the simplicity of such platforms to innovate and generate revenue. Although simplicity aids access to content, it also contributes to revalorisation (Virno, 2004) of music and previously 'peripheral' goods, which are now gaining increasing importance.

1.3 Minimal Cost

Discussions of cost as associated with the digital shift were also inevitably bound up with debates of the democratisation of music production and the extent to which consumers could become prosumers. About one third of respondents discussed how breaking down of cost barriers, for example, the requirement to purchase expensive recording equipment and hiring professional studios, had democratised access to recording and getting noticed. The following quotes illustrate the perceived positive outcomes of this from different perspectives

What you notice nowadays is that most bands will record demos and stuff, I done, but they can record it really cheaply, you can record it in a Mac if you want and you can get your music out there, because essentially songs on the whole...it's about a song, it's about a tune, a melody, and maybe it's about lyrics, it's not quite often about how it's recorded, or any of that.

(James (P1M1), promoter)

We're going down the cheap route as well, the very, very cheap route. to the realisation that the label that we're putting it out on and the way we're releasing it, we're not gonna make a living off this album now, we might make a living off the album, but we won't make a living of the release of this album right now. So, we'll get it and we'll recoup some expenses and we don't need to sell an album at £10 to recoup expenses. Sell it for cheap, get exposed.

(Rob (M2M2), musician)

there's a lot of local studios which are a lot cheaper and, y'know, almost as kind of like the, like, not overly produced kind of like sound of bands, slightly rawer, slightly, y'know...um... and you can get really, really decent results and then just send your tracks off to somebody to master them without having to pay, you know, thousands and thousands of pounds to actually go in a recording studio. You can then release the tracks yourself, get them on places like iTunes, it's very easy to do that, there's a lot of companies that will actually do it for you, you pay a certain amount of money and they will sort it all out and you get a certain amount of marketing through it and everything and so you can actually bypass the labels.

(Stu (P7M6), promoter)

In this first quote, James notes the decreased need for extensive equipment and software required for musicians to make their music; relevant programs are often available on affordable PC or laptops, thus limiting the demand for professional space and equipment. James implies there is a decreased emphasis on the importance of high quality production in favour of a focus on the music itself, something which is supported by Rob in his discussion of their band's promotional strategy. The realisation that recording and distributing cheaply can reap short term benefits in gaining a substantial fanbase is weighed against doing it 'properly'; that is, taking time and money to produce good quality recordings. This is increasingly becoming the norm in musicians' accounts, echoing previous discussions that music is now used as a primary promotional tool rather than a key product which can be sold at a premium. The re-commodification of music in this way has been driven by the increased access to low-cost software programmes which enable all to produce as well as consume. Promoter and DJ, Stu, also highlights the decrease in demand not only for expensive studios, but also the expertise which goes with it when it comes to marketing and distributing music. Digitisation has afforded bands the ability to deal directly with international music sellers, such as iTunes, without the necessity of a manager or label support, as well as re-iterating the increased acceptance of 'slightly rawer' sounds, or the decline in high quality production.

These extracts appear to suggest that digitisation has contributed positively to professional autonomy and democratisation when it comes to production, affording more choice and creativity, albeit sacrificing quality to a small extent. However, a portion of this data indicated that there was some dissent regarding the extent to which this development was thought of as beneficial, as this scene member points out;

Again, an interesting one from my perspective is the way music is recorded today and when I started working at the studio, we were recording, computers were just kicking off hosting virtual software and plug-ins, they were called. So, in the space of ten years, it's gone from studios which have expensive technology, to people working into a shop, picking up a PC and beginning to make music of vaguely equivalent quality, and I think that's a very big change, because the studio where I used to work, trying to convince people that they're going to get something better for say £250 a day was very difficult, and most people were not interested. It's almost a sense of achievement that you've actually made this in your mate's bedroom with the worst possible recording gear, but you've managed to get this on CD and this is what you sound like, and it's almost like you don't have to spend the £10,000 to go to a studio and get the job done professionally. And I think there's another interesting change which the music industry has gone through. I think it's on its knees to some extent.

(Audience member and occasional musician)

This extract highlights significant issues with regard to the consequences of the lower costs involved in music production as a result of digitisation. He points out the economic consequences of studios and other facilities which used to be considered so integral to good quality music production. With the democratisation of production comes the relegation in status for these operations as the only legitimate way to master recordings and distribute effectively. He implies that this has damaged legitimate enterprises within the creative industries, as demand for their expertise dwindles as availability of inferior equipment becomes more widespread and the credence attached to good quality recordings also diminishes. He shows contempt for earlier perspectives that privilege democratisation and consider the DIY ethic a noble cause, arguing that the industry is 'on its knees' as a result. This complicates the clear-cut thinking which assumes blindly that democratisation of production is a universally positive development, and that the abandonment of concerns about quality in favour of the DIY ethic (McGuigan, 1992; Williams, 1993; Willis, 1990) contributes to a dilution of professionalism in independent scenes. The threats to distinctions of quality and professional status threaten to unravel the operation of the independent scene, just as piracy has been identified as a threat to the mainstream. Here, we can also see echoes of Benjamin's (1936) discussion of the 'aura', in which music, as the work of art, is thought to be decaying through the decline of quality and value caused by digitisation.

These data reveal that the binary of *democratisation v. professional expertise* and *DIY vs. quality production techniques* discourses do not apply uniformly to independent and mainstream narratives respectively (Strachan, 2007). The adoption and importance of such values is complex and reveal the contestation over definitions of professionalism and quality which exist with the independent scene in Cardiff. This calls into question the extent to which both democratisation and prosumption may be seen as beneficial, even within a milieu which does not privilege profit above all other concerns. This is discussed in more detail in the following section.

1.4 Saturation/ 'Swamping' and Quality

The majority of scene members' accounts commented extensively on the benefits of accessibility, simplicity and minimal cost to the reproduction of the scene and in particular to the practices of promotion and consumption of music. However, within these accounts lay an undercurrent of dissatisfaction with certain consequences of such ease of communication. Problems associated with too much access have been alluded to, but these will be formalised more clearly here with a discussion of the issues of 'saturation' and 'swamping' as they relate to framings of quality distinctions made by professionals and scene members. A selection of quotes selected from a number of interviews with musicians and promoters highlights the problem of saturation;

I think [social networking sites are] still a necessary tool, but I think it's actually ever decreasing rather than increasing because it's becoming so saturated. Facebook especially; I don't check my event invites anymore and I'm a promoter! [...] And there's such saturation within it that you can't rely on it. But, you still need it.

(Kyle (P6M5), promoter)

But the statistics on how many people...actually open the newsletters...shocking, absolutely shocking...the opening rate of the last update I sent was 162, out of 900

(Joel (M1M1), musician)

It's easier to invite people to gigs [online]. If you really wanted to get out there, forums especially. If I wanted...and I was in a band like Iron Maiden, you go on their forum, 'you like our music? Why don't you have a listen? Here's a free download if you want to try it out.' [...] But that in itself actually makes it harder, because there are so many more bands doing exactly the same things; they've all got the bloody same idea. And it's so much more accessible, they don't think it's hard work [...] but it's still hard work to go out and do it online. You've got to make it look pretty as well, and eye catching, you've got to make it attractive to people. Again, that principle still applies with posterings, but y'know, with technology I think it becomes that much more important as well, to grab the attention of so many more people.

(Tony (M17M16), musician)

Of around half of the musicians who commented on saturation, all considered it to be a significant detrimental aspect of the accessibility afforded by online platforms of communication and exchange. Kyle discusses how the law of diminishing returns can apply to the use of Facebook promotion due to the amount of promoters and other music professionals using it to advertise events, releases and other significant occurrences. In this case, the amount of information about events coming through on Facebook is such that even a promoter is put off looking at them because of their sheer number. He points out the paradoxical position of needing such platforms to reach a wider audience, yet recognising that the more it is used, the less effective it may be due to the struggle to stand out amongst so many others. Drawing upon Wernick's (1991) discussion of promotional culture, we can see here the expansion and primacy of promotion within local music cultures. Wernick argues that the act of promotion has become so ubiquitous within the marketing of culture that mass marketing is in symbiosis with the commodity sign. The expanded role of promotion dissolves the 'superstructure' into the 'base' (1991: 19). In critiquing this shift, Wernick highlights how promotion often employs the same symbols and narratives, leading to cultural homogenisation and increased apathy amongst the receivers of promotion, as illustrated by the above quotes. This may illustrate, as Wernick outlines, the tendency for promotional culture to become devoid of meaningfulness and efficacy as each promotional effort becomes indistinguishable from the other (1991: 196).

Musician, Joel (M1M1), has also taken issue with this development, noting the frustration experienced with their online promotional strategies and the way in which their updates are written off as spam by their fans. These developments appear to signify a breakdown in trust between consumers and professionals, the ubiquity of promotional bombardment online contributing to a culture of spam which can be potentially dis-embed established relationships between producer and consumer. This seems at odds with earlier accounts which point to a seemingly increased degree of closeness between these groups, demonstrating that the shifts that digitisation have brought can also be destabilising in their consequences. On the one hand, fans may feel closer to their favourite artists through the direct and immediate contact that the medium affords, whilst simultaneously frustrated by the mass of information that they are subjected to through social networking platforms. These central tensions are a key

emergence as both physical and digital modes of communication become mutually embedded, and highlight the multiple ways in which digitisation is reconfiguring social, as well as economic relations across face-to-face and online spaces.

Musician, Tony (P17M16), also points out the uniformity of online promotion as contributing to the deluge; most professionals use the same platforms to promote and this makes events less distinct. He implies that promotion is no longer seen as ‘hard work’, due to the accessibility and ease of such platforms as Facebook. Part of the issue, as he views it, is the difficulty in making an event or band stand out from others who are scrabbling for attention from the same market. This too echoes Wernick’s discussion of cultural homogenisation occurring out of the ubiquity of promotional culture; so many people choose the same route for promotion, e.g. the Facebook event, that the amount and uniformity of promotion can be detrimental to its efficacy as the pursuit of market imperatives fuels promotional culture. Democratisation may be evident in the access and methods of promotion in the online domain, however, this account suggests this may be indicative of an impoverishment with regard to innovation and creativity for a local scene, something which it was supposed could thrive with the help of digitisation. Others have pointed out the need for intelligently targeted and creative promotion;

D: I mean, I think Twitter...uhhh, I'm not a particular fan but it's a bit more interesting in the way that, in the way that...I mean, its micro blogging essentially...I don't know about spam on your own page but people choose to follow you.

E: Yeah, you only see it if you want to see it.

D: ...so people only see it if they choose to accept your spam. You can do, which is kind of an intelligent way to go about it, you're not ramming it down people's throats, people are coming and obtaining it. People are using 'it' as a tool rather than you using it as a tool.

(Dom (M15M15) and Ed (M12M12), musicians)

I: Well, for this release that's coming up, it's gonna be...we're gonna do limited edition, y'know, CDs and plus a full digital release...

JC: Why have you chosen to do both of those things?

I: I think if it's just a digital release. I think with the...if you're releasing something on a small, independent label, or, y'know, you're a small band, I think just doing a digital release is just gonna get swamped amongst everything else that's gonna get released, and it's nice to still have...to do something a bit boutique and have that something in your hands.

(Isaac (M9M9), musician)

These extracts acknowledge the issues that come with saturation, Isaac commenting on the ‘swamping’ of releases amongst all others which take place online, and Dom and Ed highlighting the negative effect that spamming can have on relations with fans. Additionally, however, they place the need for alternatives to bolster online activity and tacitly endorse a variety of approaches in order that the online sphere does not become the only mode of engagement in the promotion of their music.

In addition to the issues of saturation/swamping is the trade-off between accessibility and saturation/swamping with the quality of music coming through, and the way in which, and by whom, ‘quality’ is judged. These extracts illustrate this issue from a number of perspectives;

In one sense, it's removed the wall from people...the accessibility wall, the band who are genuinely good but can't attract record label attention, can now put out their thing and do whatever they want...but also, it takes away a filter, so the filter of the major label...so you get a lot of really left [field] ...stuff

(Journalist and audience member)

Yeah, there's more choice, but less quality. I think what people have to concentrate more on is how to get their music across easily and make money out of it. That's the best way, if you go out of your way to do that...of course, it's the million dollar question, I don't know how to do that...

(Male audience member)

D: But the problem with that is that there's a lot of crap as well, there's a lot of crap.

E: Yeah, that's the thing.

D: It puts people off, yeah. It puts people off going to discover new bands and stuff because they don't know whether they're going to see something fucking brilliant or they're gonna be in for an expensive night and they're seeing really shit bands...

(Dom (M15M15) and Ed(M12M12), musicians)

Issues of quality were present in about half of promoters’ and over half of musicians’ accounts, as well as discussed within focus groups and by a couple of audience members, for whom it was less of a priority. What primarily emerged is illustrated by the audience member’s comment that the trade-off for democratisation of access to production and dissemination is that demarcations of professionalism are further eroded by the loss of their ability to make authoritative decisions about what constitutes quality in music production. Again, Huyssen’s (1986) discussion of the breakdown of traditional/avant garde distinctions can be drawn upon to understand how the democratising effect of the internet is re-drawing the boundaries between producer and consumer. Increasingly, the authority to make such judgements is becoming wider. However, as Adam, and also Samuel’s earlier quote (see page 164) illustrate, this is viewed as a threat to the status of ‘professionals’ and a dilution of

quality and creativity within the scene, and makes hidden the real 'quality' amongst more 'sub-standard' music.

Such sentiments are also expressed by musicians in that they identify the presence of a lot more 'crap' music through the process of democratisation, and the negative effects on consumption which occur; audiences are confused as to where to seek clarification over which music is 'good' and are thus swamped with marketing for a larger number of acts. The diffusion of figures that have the power to indicate quality has disrupted established modes of distinction around music which in turn has led to confusion over what and where to consume it within the scene. This is supported by one male audience member, who in passing highlighted the need to be innovative, yet direct in the way that music was marketed, something which had been lost through the process of digitisation. These comments highlight the de-demarcation (Huysen, 1986) occurring around quality distinctions as music is de-commodified as the central artefact within a music milieu and re-commodified within the frame of digitisation, within which central tenets of value and quality are fundamentally altered.

Discourses around definitions and authority over quality advocate preservation of high/low distinctions, with values of professionalism being bound tightly with markers of high quality.

Promoter James highlights this imperative;

Like I said, the only other thing about digitisation is that there's been a change I think in people's understand of how music should sound. Like, coming from a DJ world and you quite often have a problem with...you'll have people who've started out DJing and they come and they've ripped CDs, and they rip really low quality mp3s onto CDs that are really high burn and the come out and DJ and the sound quality is terrible, and that's a blight really, that I've noticed, where because it's easy to access stuff, there's no thought or consideration being attached to what they're doing.

This extract reveals the continued salience of quality distinctions and wariness with regard to its erosion. He pinpoints the lack of 'consideration' of DJs over the quality of their recordings, and seeks to render them unprofessional through their lack of thought over this issue. He feels that this has resulted in 'a blight' for the scene as ease of access is privileged over the quality of the content circulated. The wish to preserve such distinctions is associated with a desire to preserve the creative and cultural integrity of the scene, and resist the dilution of this which has resulted from increased accessibility. Musicians also expressed such aims in terms of technical, as well as aesthetic quality;

And we made a decision as well, with the video, rather than put it on YouTube first, to put it on Vimeo, because it's a better quality website, loads up quicker and I guess it just kinda, I mean, it's on YouTube now, but I guess it's those extra things to help you stand out more.

(Isaac (M9M9), musician)

The use of technical tools to enhance the quality of disseminated work was a way in which distinctions could be enforced and more consideration could be enacted over the way in which they communicated with their fanbase. By prioritising Vimeo over YouTube, attempts were made to display some prior authority and knowledge of formats in order to justify decisions pertaining to quality. It was this which would both provide platforms for disseminating music in improved quality, but also displaying concern for quality as integral to the practice of being a musician, something which has been de-emphasised.

Although established sources of 'taste-making' have become de-stabilised, there is evidence a more de-centralised process of making quality distinctions in process, which aims to re-establish the importance of quality and harness this in order to promote innovation. These developments have had unforeseen consequences, which have done much to hinder the success of 'professionals' as much as levelling the playing field of success. These data highlight the downsides of digitisation for the independents, which are experiencing changes in a qualitatively different way to the mainstream. In order to accurately understand the significance of digitisation for this sector, and for policymakers to offer appropriate support, the implications of these salient concepts for issues of democratisation, re-commodification of music and value creation must be considered.

1.5 Hype and Control over Promotion

Although issues of hype and autonomy over promotional methods and outcomes was mentioned in a relatively small number of interviewee accounts, the issues raised within them contribute significantly to issues of presumption and democratisation of content, as referred to in previous sessions. This issue highlights both the benefits and disadvantages to digitisation and so it is pertinent to understand how hype is used to promote within the online domain, and the degree to which consumers have a stake in the generation and effects of hype.

Although the term ‘hype’ could refer to sustained and concerted efforts at promotion in various guises, it was largely acknowledged to have taken on a different character in the online domain. Different professionals discussed their interpretations of the changing nature of hype and the consequences for promotion. As mentioned in the previous chapter on the discussion of viral momentum, the online domain offers a far more rapid and wide-ranging set of promotional tools at the disposal of all, which has altered the generation and maintenance of hype within the scene. This was attributed largely to the nature of social networking and the constant engagement that is afforded with communication features of this nature. The following quotes illustrate these issues;

...now setting up to release our album, we always have to have a plan as soon as we start off, it has to happen at a certain time, for the hype to build in a certain fashion[...]and so momentum is really key these days...like Joel said, short attention spans...if you vanish for a month in between when your single is released and your album is released...you’ve just wasted money...doing publishing and stuff...

(Hywel (M3M3), musician)

R: And they’ll [the fans] be excited for it before the shows we then play. Before the shows they can listen to it on their own before they watch us play, then we’ll have another song to add.

J: And then the music video for our first single, and we put the music video...well, we update people what’s going on with the music video, a couple of sneaky pictures and stuff on Facebook, and then the music video goes up on a website and then we send an exclusive, and then we put it up ourselves and it goes to the music channels, and see how many of those we can get on, we can get played on.

(Joel (M1M1) and Rob (M2M2), musicians)

JC: So what comes out of that then? You say you get MySpace and people come up and talk to you and mentions on Facebook and things. What...?

J: Just more hype, I think and like, better reviews really. It weird, but the reviews, like in my opinion, started off good but as more stuff was said, they seemed to have gotten a lot more positive now. Because I think generally people are getting like...do you know what I mean? Because it started off, people were like ‘yeah, I don’t know whether I like this or not, because I’m not sure if other people like it so I’m just gonna...’ it was honestly like 6/10 reviews. And then we had like a really sterling review a couple of weeks ago... I think people do generally...it’s like human instinct, like stupid things, like you’re obviously gonna judge art on what people around you think because y’know, it’s just the way it is.

(Jon (M5M5), musician)

The constant presence of others within this space has meant that no opportunity for promotion is to be missed, as Hywel points out. The consequences of not engaging in continual generation of hype are that momentum is lost, short attention spans wonder to other artists, resulting in a significant threat to potential profits. This highlights, within the

perspectives of the respondents, that the nature of hype generation is much more dynamic and yet superficial in the online domain. The combination of fierce competition and plentiful sources of multi-modal information mean there is much to distract audiences, and so the importance of sustained promotion increases. Fellow bandmates, Joel and Rob, describe the way in which effective hype can be generated utilising the multi-modal tools on offer, such as blog updates, video, photos and the music itself. Ensuring a steady stream is effective in building anticipation and increasing attendance at shows and sales of music and merchandise, and this is built through the creation of a relationship with the consumer which makes them feel as though they are the only ones with access. Use of the word ‘exclusive’ and ‘sneaky’ reinvigorate the notions of discovery that have been lost in the effort of mass communication, as will be discussed further on. This finding highlights the strange paradox of seeking to reach as many people as possible, whilst aiming to maintain pre-digital notions of appealing to small niches within a scene.

The diversification of media used to generate hype; combined with the wider audience reached has reconfigured traditional ways of generating hype which utilise the variety of strengths of each type of communication to create stronger promotional tools. The positive viral effect of this promotion was not to be underestimated by Jon, who considers the power of gradual hype to have had a positive effect on his band’s image in the scene, both online and offline. These extracts reveal the much wider set of tools at professionals’ disposal in order to execute more sustained and strategic promotion which effectively markets their music as high quality and worthy of attention and purchase.

These data contribute to an understanding of how the generation of hype has benefitted professionals through the multi-modal tools at their disposal and the way in which it has repackaged what is defined as quality in terms of music. Notions of discovery have also been reconfigured in an attempt to retain the illusion of niche music markets, despite the internet allowing anyone to access music from Cardiff’s independent scene. Despite such positive accounts, musicians have picked up on the lack of mystique and subsequent cynicism which characterises online hype, and the visible threats to loss of control over the consequences of their promotion strategy, as these quotes illustrate;

I think as well I remember few years ago being like 15, 14, I found out about new bands from watching things like Jools Holland or you were flicking through music channels and seeing someone on ...and I think if I liked the sound of them, that was

how I found out about a new band. And I remember finding out about a few new bands from Jools Holland and stuff. But I mean no-one's...I don't think anyone...anybody, I don't think that's how anybody finds new music nowadays. I think everybody waits for it to come to them. And for it to catch on, it has to be pretty big already, and has to have a certain amount of hype behind it...

(Jon (M5M5), musician)

No, that's a PR thing as well, though...Sandi Thom as well, did a live recording. Y'know, like a website, a live gig from her basement, and it was supposed to be this kind of new thing and it was done on YouTube and it was really viral. It wasn't. It was...massive tech support went into that, it cost tens of thousands of pounds to do that, and it was completely set up by the label. It was a PR thing, they made out that it happened that way so people would latch onto it and feel that they helped put that artist there...

(Lisa (P2F1), promoter)

Jon describes how practices of discovery have changed markedly for him as a consumer as a result of digitisation. He describes the nature of hype and accessibility as dulling the urge to actively discover music, as existed pre-digital. He argues that the internet has made it too easy to access music, and that one integral consumer practice, the motivation to discover, has been lost. Too much hype, it is suggested, can dis-embed fans from one of the key features of being a music fan, resulting in a less engaged individual who does not participate fully in the consumption of culture.

The cynicism present in the generation of hype presented in Lisa's account also draws on this idea of hype for the purposes of mainstream profit. She constructs the signing of Sandi Thom as a trick designed to make consumers feel as though they have helped her get signed by a major label, where in fact it was a carefully orchestrated stunt by Sony Records. Both of these accounts render the consumer passive as a result of hype; a cultural dope, easily manipulated and devoid of any critical judgement, voicing opinions based on those of which they view as authoritative with regard to quality distinctions. These data suggest that hype is good for the professional, but simultaneously impoverishing for the consumer. However, other accounts suggested control over promotion and the effect of hype was being wrest from 'professionals', and that they were experiencing a loss of control over the use of hype within the online domain. These data begin to question the degree to which audiences are passive, and makes the case for the presence of democratisation to a certain extent.

Although amongst many there existed cynicism as to the extent of democratisation and autonomy amongst audiences, there were others in the professional domain who felt strongly that there existed a significant disruption to the control over the way their music was disseminated and used by others. Others within the scene have pointed out that audiences do, in fact, have an active stake in the music produced, as these quotes illustrate;

JC: But does it help with stuff like that, or does it help in a different way?

C: Well, it has helped us more recently, because we've started to see people who actually want to come to our gigs and stuff like that.

R: Yeah, people saying things on MySpace. We get a lot of...we get quite a few comments saying 'well done, great gig last night' because people felt they obviously had a good enough time to write on our Facebook wall. They obviously had enough time to take ten seconds to write on our wall, which is obviously amazing if someone feels as if they enjoyed it that much, that leads, hopefully, to other people wanting to come and see you as well. So it's just a massive hype machine, whichever way you do it, isn't it?

(Chris (M7M7) and Rich (M6M6), musicians)

I've tried to use the approach of, trying to make it work a bit like Twitter that- if they're following me they want to follow me, and then I know that when I put news out it actually has an effect as opposed to, y'know, the complete opposite, it's a difficult one, I try and follow different clicks when you put something out, how many people click, kind of thing so you can trace the impact it's having and have a look at who's following you from where and then how things are working and that's getting more interesting.

(Samuel (P8M7), promoter)

Both of these quotes indicate a welcoming approach to audience engagement and autonomy emerging out of efforts to generate hype. Chris and Rich indicate that it can have positive effects for engagement with fans online; people are more likely to respond to hype to the extent that they directly compliment bands via social networking sites. Audiences respond to promotion by engaging with professionals and demonstrating that they have an active stake in the music milieu. This offers a dissenting view from that previously discussed, which suggests that online hype is creating a cynical promotional culture in which the consumer is passive and plays down the existence of prosumption or produsage. Samuel also refutes this claim, highlighting the potential of social networking platforms for audiences to initiate contact and has useful for him in terms of understanding how what he does is having an impact, rather than contacting people indiscriminately. This leads to far more effective and meaningful engagement with those who are interested.

These data, although not present across the entire dataset, begin to problematise the impact of hype and the way it has altered practices of promotion and fan interaction. Some argue that it

has dulled the capacity to think independently as a fan, others recognise the ways in which they can proactively engage, and others view this engagement as a threat to control over their music. The following quotes highlight this concern;

D: I mean, if you're anything like us, you'll spend...you'll spend a bit of time debating over set lists and album listings and which kind of little skits and stuff we can use and fill and stuff, and like say 'this song can only go after this song, that is the only possible place' It's designed, it's like some sort of perverse, surreal, mental, anal...

E: No, it's not just thrown in there.

D: ...architecture, that we're kinda gonna, so to release something like that, that we've thought about and architected in such a way as a complete piece of work. And then to have someone pick and choose, pick n' mix between the thing. I mean, it's great, it's great that they're listening to us and it's great for us and stuff, but it would be wonderful if they'd take the whole piece of work and see it like that. I mean, the best example I can think of recently with that thing, is [band], they did that [album]. They, they had their album, and they've designed it in such a way that they've...their album is fluid, it's one track, but really it is 14 tracks, but you've pretty much got to listen to it all the way through, all the however many minutes it is...and that's how they've designed it, that's how they want people to consume it, and I think preferentially, that's how a lot of bands would like people to consume their music.

(Dom (M15M15) and Ed (M12M12), musicians)

JC: So there's a lack of control over...

J: Yeah, massively, well there's, if someone else wants to do something pictures wise, I can untag myself from that picture if I wanted to, but whoever the girl...whoever made that picture, her friends would still see it, so...but I don't think that's a problem personally, I think all press is good press. Is that what they say?

(Joel (M1M1), musician)

These quotes illustrate a lack of musician control over music, both in terms of the way it is listened to and the way associated content is disseminated online. Dom and Ed note a frustration with regard to the death of the album format as people are more likely to download one song as opposed to the whole package of tracks. They mourn the loss of the album, to an extent, and the value of it as a work of art in its own right. This aspect of altered consumption habits, as a result of digitisation, amounts to a feeling of loss of control of how their work is received and listened to. The example they give of an innovative attempt to get audiences to rediscover listening to music in this way captures this preference and importance placed on this mode of reception as key in the practice of fandom. Joel also points out the lack of control over general content transmitted once in the online domain. Although he does not have a personal issue with this, he does highlight that lack of control is a significant side effect of use of digital platforms, and one which professionals have to come to terms with if

they are to capitalise on the potential of the internet. The trade-off of promotional culture is that free and duplicable material is not easily accounted for, and this can be as much a threat to sustainability as a tool for enhancement of revenue. It is these contradictions with which this milieu is attempting to come to terms with.

This section, and those before it, has highlighted the tensions that exist within an independent scene as to the real effects of hype, and there is much polarisation as to whether the effects are positive or negative. This throws into doubt the exclusively celebratory narratives of democratisation and accessibility previously espoused, as well as the straightforward claim that prosumption and produsage are unproblematic and uncontested concepts which describe accurately the ways in which consumers are using the internet to participate in cultural production. Instead, it has highlighted a plethora of issues which challenge these narratives, and place other issues, such as the enactment of illegal activities online, in context and as part of a much wider set of shifts.

(2) Key Debates and Issues: Emerging Social Shifts

The following section examines some wider shifts occurring as a result of digitisation in further detail, and their significance in the context of digitisation and building on the issues already discussed. They are as follows; *the creation of value, democratisation and the internet and debates over sustainability and authenticity*. Drawing upon discussions already made, an understanding of how these issues feed into respondent's accounts and their overarching significance to the debate will be outlined.

2.1 Changing Notions of Value Creation

A significant issue emerging from the rise of the mp3 file as a tool to disseminate music online is the changing notions of value attached to the music itself, and the new means through which value is being created in online and offline spaces. Understanding how this might have shifted has been partially alluded to earlier in the chapter, when discussing the shift towards music having an increasingly significant role in promotion, as opposed to being seen as the central value-laden commodity that it was in the pre-digital era. This suggests that the value of the music itself is declining as other, once peripheral products, become more salient, such as merchandise and gig tickets. However, what is of sociological significance for this research is in understanding who is engineering such reconfigurations of value and how

this is taking place from the perspective of all those interviewed throughout the course of the research.

Value was an issue discussed by around a third of professionals and a few audience members. What was interesting was that there was little dissent in terms of their views on value of music in the digital era, and that many of their accounts expressed feelings of loss as well as some advantages when discussing shifts in value. This first account from a group of female audience members encapsulates this ambivalence;

JC: Why do you like to buy CDs?

F3: I don't know. I just quite like having them. I just like having the CD, you can play it in your car as well and stuff.

JC: Ok [to F1], why do you like just using iTunes?

F1: Umm, I don't know, coz it's normally umm, only one or two songs that I like, and I don't want to buy the entire album because I don't have that much money, so 79p is better than fifteen quid or however much it is.

Here we can see examples of the main perspectives on consumption and perceptions of value with regard to music. On one hand, the merits of the CD are treasured as an old format; the possession of the physical artefact appears to be privileged over the convenience of the mp3 download. On the other, such convenience is heralded as freeing for the consumer in allowing them to choose which songs they purchase, rendering the album format, once an inconvenience in terms of price, almost obsolete in the way music is arranged and distributed. It is these perspectives which present dilemmas for the consumer who values accessibility, but also the artistic integrity of the album format. The following quote also illustrates how accessibility and lower costs can be detrimental to the way in which music is valued by consumers;

...I do understand that the way in which music is consumed has changed in that respect and I think things have become, for want of a better term, fast food, and it's definitely the case that a quick listen, onto the next one, onto the next one, and I think that's another thing that's going to be quite noticeable in future generations, almost like attention span...attention deficit to some extent...it definitely makes me think that CDs are physical and therefore last, whereas mp3s, they only last until somebody hits delete, which makes them quite disposable...

(Male audience member)

The use of the term 'fast food' as a way to describe the way music is disseminated and treated is indicative of the shift of economic value away from music. With the lower cost of individual tracks, and in some cases their free giveaway for promotional purposes, the importance of music as the central product, and of most value to the consumer, has been

eroded. The ‘a la carte’ selection model of digital music, legitimised by iTunes and other streaming facilities has meant that consumers are accustomed to receiving music on a single track basis at significantly lower cost. The minimal cost also contributes to the cheapening of music and a withering of attention spans of consumers, in line with the discussion regarding hype in the previous section. With so much choice and minimal costs, commitments to purchase a significant body of musical work, such as the album, are made less often. This has reorientated modes of consumption towards consuming smaller amounts of music more quickly, and contributes to a ‘death of the album’ as a format, as these quotes from musicians illustrate;

P: And I suppose that’s good and bad, because stuff becomes a bit more disposable, doesn’t it? You can just go...like, your attention span goes because people listen to albums, because certain songs sound better when placed in between certain songs...people just hear it in isolation and go ‘ohh’. But when you hear it where it’s supposed to be it’s much more...

A: In context, y’know.

P: Definitely, definitely.

D: I mean, the art of the album may have gone slightly off path, I think.

A: Yeah, it has, it’s all singles now, y’know.

D: I mean when you used to be able to not be able to find anything on the internet, the internet didn’t have anything to stream, it wasn’t about those things, you’d have thought...you couldn’t afford an album. If you were lucky and you were a kid and stuff, maybe you could save up enough money that week to buy one album, say one album a week, and that album you would listen to back to front, front to back and stuff, like, you’d know every sound. And it doesn’t happen so much these days and it’s regrettable, but I think I mean, even myself I find that I find music...I mean there’s so much music out there and it makes some music a bit more disposable.

[...]

D:...you don’t necessarily listen to it as a complete piece of work.

JC: Is that a good thing...or is it?

D: No, it’s terrible.

A: Yeah, I do think it’s a bad thing, I mean, artistically it’s kinda...for somebody who has a bigger vision, not to get all prog on it, but who feel they kind of need a little more time to express themselves, y’know, it’s not always within a 3 and a half minute format.

(Paul (M13M13), Andy (M11M11) and Dom (M15M15), musicians)

In this extended extract, these musicians bemoan the declining importance of the album format to consumers, arguing that the internet has fostered a culture of consumption in which the album is not recognised, neither in economic nor aesthetic terms. Fans prefer to listen to individual songs rather than engage with the album as a work of art in its own right. They point out that a placement of a song within the context of the other pieces on the album adds much to the quality of experience of listening to music, and this has been lost through digital modes of consumption. This extract, alongside narratives of disposability and attention deficit

amongst consumers, can provide an understanding of the ways in which music has been re-commodified through digitisation as of less economic value through the increasing instances in which it is given away for free, with other products simultaneously being assigned higher value. In addition, this has contributed to the decline in music's aesthetic value; as the economic imperative dictates use of the 'a la carte' model as being more lucrative, so this influences listening habits, and has in the process fundamentally changed the ways in which music is presented and made meaningful by fans.

These data represent a significant disconnect between professional expectations and the reality of consumption, of which control over the manner of dissemination and modes of listening are increasingly being democratised. As the value of music decreases, new 'regimes of value' (Appadurai, 1986) are being instilled in other artefacts and experiences, which are now considered to be of more economic importance than the music itself. The landscape of value creation is being redefined within the independent sector by consumers who increasingly have the power to access music at low cost, whilst also willing to pay a premium for 'deluxe' or experience-based products, as will be discussed in the final chapter. Digitisation has contributed to fluidity within the production/consumption relationship in which traditional notions of commodity value have been destabilised. Drawing upon Appadurai's (1986) theory, renegotiation of the value of music in the online sphere is currently underway, with some significant resistance from those who have historically retained control over these products, as highlighted in discussions of their loss of control over material once it is in the digital domain, and the increasing autonomy of consumers over the format through which music is listened to.

Additionally, this reconfiguration of 'regimes of value' can be argued to render such established practices of buying and selling irrelevant (Thrift, 2008), giving way to increased possibilities for innovation and invention. Greater possibilities for consumer involvement with the creation of commodities is arguably taking place, but to what extent? The following section explores this in greater depth.

2.2 Democratisation of Creation in the Music Industry: Myth or Reality?

As the reconfiguration of value has been highlighted within the literature, and illustrated within this research, so too has the issue of democratisation of access, creation and

dissemination of digitised product amongst so-called ‘prosumers’ or ‘producers’ (Bruns, 2008). The ability for almost anyone to create and transmit their work, whether it be music or any other related artistic endeavour, has been constructed by many as one of the defining features of the internet and the digital transformation (Poster, 2004; Cote and Pybus, 2007; Bruns, 2008; Thrift, 2008). However, much of the ‘smooth narrative’ of this development, proposed in the above work, is problematised within this research. As outlined in the salient categories highlighted by respondents, there are certain side-effects of accessibility and other so-called positive developments of digitisation which serve to create problems for them and even call into question the extent to which democratisation is present within practices of communication and exchange. The data have highlighted the possibility that social networking and other digital platforms do not serve to promote democratisation, but instead act merely as pure aggregators of data which have only indirect social effects. This means that, although such facilities have the potential to facilitate democratic access, what in fact happens is that the internet stores professionally created data, from which activity within the consumer base derives. This points towards a less dynamic movement amongst consumers which indicates that produsage, and even prosumption, are not as endemic as originally thought.

Discussions of saturation and ‘swamping’ of information firstly point to the negative effects of a deluge of information. Far from being effective in reaching as many individuals as possible, this blanket approach to transmitting information is largely ineffective, as these accounts illustrate;

Absolutely, and if you have 20,000 fans on your page, how many of those 20,000 actually read what you do?

(Tony (M17M16), musician)

Because it’s that whole thing we said about social media, is that with Facebook, it’s easier to block off, it’s so much easier because you’re bombarded constantly with things now, it’s so much easier to shut off from it all...

(Kyle (P6M5), promoter)

As these quotes imply, there is an element of doubt as to whether online promotion is as effective as purported, but also that the bombardment of information is overwhelming, and that there is a need to protect oneself against it. Saturation of information leads even professionals to feel swamped, and this leads to uncertainty about the level of effectiveness of their own promotion on their audiences, as Tony and Kyle mention. With it being easier to

ignore, the question is raised as to firstly; how effective is online promotion in reaching and engaging wider audiences? Secondly, if it is the case that in fact online promotion does not increase the efficacy of promotion; can it be said with complete accuracy that the internet has led to a set of practices of communication and exchange in which consumers are engaged and have an equal stake with professionals? Joel's comment (see page 175) regarding the statistics around who actually reads their email updates highlights this discrepancy, and appears to support Tony's uncertainty about the effectiveness of his own promotion. Kyle's quote (also page 175) also suggests that the more promotion which is undertaken in this way, the less receptive audiences become, supported by his own habit of switching off to all the promotional material he himself is bombarded with. It can be suggested that democratisation is less widespread than first suggested, and that social networking facilities merely serve as depositories of data through which little prosumption or produsage occurs.

Professionals, when discussing this issue, appear to be cognizant of its salience and acknowledge its ineffectiveness, calling for more 'intelligent' methods to be employed. This appears to combat the 'one size fits all' approach currently being taken, with the accompanying attitude that email updates and Facebook events are the only effective way to promote. As well as highlighting the ways in which de-demarcation of professional roles are diluting the quality of online content (see page 175 onwards), promoter Samuel also outlines the need for more intelligent promotion to be formulated (see page 184) in order to re-establish good quality engagement with fans whilst restoring faith in the approach to promotion. At present, there is acknowledgement that methods, whilst on the surface appear to be democratic, are in fact not received well by audiences, or ignored completely. This adds weight to arguments which support the democratisation myth by revealing that accessibility of production and promotional methods for all does not automatically mean more effective promotion takes place.

A key tension which emerges is that instead of engaging a wider audience and securing sustainability, professionals and audiences identify a compromise in engagement and quality of music produced. This has culminated in a situation in which democratisation, in their view, has diluted the efficacy of promotion and lead to lower quality products which do little to enhance the cultural richness of Cardiff's independent music milieu. Samuel (P8M7) also

discusses the way democratisation has led to an impoverishment of the scene and the attitude to acquiring music more generally;

I'll come back to the sort of, uh, the quality, people do desire a level of quality and I think I got sick of fucking, burning white CD's of- and just not giving- I had so many, I'd download ten albums and not listen to one or listen to one and you're like, someone says, 'have you heard that album', 'Yeah, I downloaded it the other day', 'No, but have you heard it?' 'No I haven't, coz I'm listening to the other twenty five I downloaded last week', so people were just downloading like crazy, not really absorbing the music because they had so much to go through, they were burning loads of crap CDs so you get loads of bloody CDs everywhere you don't know what the hell's on them, coz they're just, loose and then you just think, is this the way I want my music to go?

The decline of listening to music in relation to the propensity to collect is also a significant side-effect of democratisation of access to music. Whereas previously people 'absorbed' the music, he suggests that we now have a much more transient engagement which emphasises possession over listening. In some cases, possession is not even required with the increased availability of material on streaming sites. It seems that democratisation, far from fostering a more equal and meaningful relationship with a local music scene, can serve to distance consumers through too much access and a resultant decline in quality. This negates the claims made by Bruns's and sets limitations on the productive capacity of consumers in the digital age.

2.3 Sustainability V Authenticity: Motivations for Participation

Alongside disruptions of value and democratisation came data which suggested digitisation was also reconfiguring motivations for pursuing a career in independent music. Whilst previous research has highlighted the binary between cynical mainstream sector pursuit of profit and the not-for-profit, 'art for art's sake' ethos of the independents; this research provides a more nuanced picture of motivations which complicates these neat oppositions (Strachan, 2007). Although romanticised notions of the independent scene and its claims to authenticity are readily subscribed to by professionals, there is evidence from their accounts, and from the shifts caused by digitisation that they have described, that such claims are being disrupted and redefined in the digital era. Particularly important in this discussion are accounts of professional control and status when it comes to creation and dissemination of music. This challenges the rose-tinted view of community and authenticity, and provides new ways of defining professionalism in the local scene.

As previously discussed, the digital is reconfiguring ideas regarding authenticity over promotional roles in the scene. As democratic access, a key feature identified by respondents in the digital era, has become prominent, so has the gradual erosion of professional control over products circulating online. Therefore, perceived higher status has diminished, as the discussion of the secondary effects of hype and quality of music explains. Despite this, musicians and promoters persist in framing their musical and promotional endeavours through discourses which emphasise their authenticity, as these extracts show;

I guess I feel like it doesn't hurt that we kind of go out of our way to emphasise that we're putting these bands on because we think they're really good, not because we saw them as likely to turn a profit or to bolster our status as promoters or whatever [...] I think there are enough people who are invested in DIY/underground/independent/etc music culture that they appreciate people doing things in a personable way.

(Steve (P11M9), local promoter, via email)

I think what happens sometimes is that your musician on the street will see someone, a pop act, and say 'I'm better than them, why am I not getting that? Why am I not getting what they're getting?' And they're kind of looking at it wrong. I think they're giving themselves the wrong idea, because I will guarantee, that musician, if they're any good, will get a lot more out of what they do, in terms of who they are as a person, than that person, who might have a lot more money. It's...I think we're sold these ideals, which are based around money and goods and whatever, and I think for a lot of musicians, they have a different set of ideals anyway, but somewhere along the way the ideals get...they've changed, y'know?

(Kyle (P6M5), promoter)

Both of these extracts draw clear distinctions between the ethos and practice of independent scenes as opposed to the mainstream. Steve remarks that the principles of promotion should be based upon genuine love of the music as opposed to pursuing profit, subscribing to the binary as set out in other accounts of practice within the independent music scene (Willis, 1990; Strachan, 2007). Furthermore, Kyle points out that the ideals of the mainstream can permeate into the independent sector. However, he dismisses these principles as misguided, and not ones which will bring fulfilment as a professional. These extracts firmly subscribe to the *profit versus artistic integrity* binary that have made the independent and mainstream distinct within these narratives. The construction of authenticity with regard to the independent scene in such responses makes the claim that they are more trustworthy, altruistic to fellow professionals, and motivated by the central driver of the scene; music, in seeking to attain the moral high ground over the mainstream.

Although such views were widely espoused in the evidence base, there were notable instances in which the impact of digitisation in complicating such clear disruptions to clear cut ideas about who was ‘authentic’. Kyle’s extract refers to the presence of those in the sector who had become increasingly profit driven, and this was evident in other accounts;

I’ve known musicians/bands who have released most or all of their music through independent channels, but have done it in pursuit of, if not legitimate rock stardom, then at least making their music the thing that earns them their pay packet. Which is perfectly OK, if often wildly optimistic.

(Steve (P11M9), promoter, via email)

Yeah, and especially because two of the songs we recorded with [his band], they cost us over £500 just for the two songs, so we don’t want to just give them away, see. Because it took a lot of production and time and effort and our money, which we worked hard towards for...y’know, you can’t just throw it away, like.

(Gareth (M8M8), musician)

With [her band’s] next release, like the album release, as with all the bands on the label, at least one track will be given away for free in the three month preceding the release. Like all of the blogging sites and things, you get a much better response if you give them a track that they can stream. For the most part they stream, some of them might offer it for download, but it disseminates out through the web and you have to kind of offer something in order to try and sell the rest of it I think, that’s the way it’s going.

(Lisa (P2F1), promoter and manager)

As Steve outlines, not all bands, in his experience, are in it as a side-project, or purely for the aesthetic pleasure of producing music. There are expectations that it will garner income in some form, whether it’s long term sustainability (which is rare) or merely steady, if not lucrative, revenue. The very expectation of profit casts much doubt on these neat narratives which divide the mainstream and independent scenes on these terms and is to some extent aspired to by many independent artists, even if it is not always realistic. Gareth’s discussion of monetising music highlights the degree to which music produced to high quality still holds value despite a climate in which giving it away for free for promotional purposes prevails. This also highlights disconnect between the idea that independents thrive on the ethos of the ‘creative commons’ and are willing to give away music with little regard for financial remuneration. Lisa points out that such practice is treated as a means through which other, high quality music can be sold. This reinforces the financial importance still attached to the independent music scene. Despite the vast majority of respondents who claimed to subscribe to the binary distinctions which cast the mainstream as a principally artistically driven, non-

exploitative endeavour, these statements do highlight the importance of sustainability and hold the pursuit of making a living through the music industry as important. Whilst the holding of these noble values may be genuine, priorities around profit generation remain important and need to be taken into account when discussing attitudes to free music.

It can be suggested from these data that digitisation is complicating definitions and practices of authenticity within this particular music milieu. On one hand, clear cut distinctions of profit v artistic integrity are being adhered to in interview accounts. However, this is countered by practices which still subscribe to discourses of sustainability and ‘making it’ in the music industry. Processes of digitisation complicate such distinctions through offering the potential through which such success can supposedly be easier to achieve, whilst simultaneously making it harder due to the increased deluge of information circulating. This suggests that traditional notions of authenticity lose their salience to some extent through processes of digitisation; the potential it offers for success overriding the compulsion to subscribe to clear cut distinctions in practice. Authenticity is now being constructed in new ways as a result of the transformation to digital; worth as a professional now being dependent upon quality distinctions and the degree to which hype and circulation of music can be controlled. Although traditional distinctions remain important to social actors, they are being augmented with other concerns which increasingly work to define authenticity and its importance relative to sustainability, which appears to be increasingly prioritised in their accounts.

Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the dramatic social and economic shifts that have taken place within the Cardiff milieu as a result of the digital transformation. Digitisation can be seen as a gradual shift in perspectives and practices which reflect a wider social change, which expands the analysis beyond concerns of economic decline with which the mainstream have been concerned with thus far. This chapter has highlighted the ways in which an independent milieu understands this change and their main priorities, as outlined under the major headings in the first section. These categorisations bring to the fore key tensions, which were then outlined in the second section. The reconfiguration of value has been brought about by processes of digitisation and also through the increased productive capacities of consumers to some extent. The accessibility and low cost of music has contributed to such change,

however, this has been tempered by the decline of artistic integrity and disposability of music as increased accessibility leads to music being perceived as less valuable by consumers. Not only has this re-orientated notions of obtaining, listening and circulating music, but has also lead to a lack of respect for music and its creators which, it is argued, has led to the current economic stagnation within the mainstream industry.

Although democratisation of access can be said to have brought this about, this is by no means a complete or even wholly effective change. This research has also highlighted the limitations of democratisation through issues of saturation of content and the extent to which presumption and practices of produsage are enacted within an independent milieu. Instances of this may be limited, but where it is happening can break down professional distinctions, becoming detrimental to quality of output. Finally, digitisation is also reconfiguring constructions of authenticity amongst professionals. The data show that although many are eager to maintain traditional distinctions between mainstream and independent motivations for making music, there is in fact much muddying of the waters in terms of aims and objectives from those working within the Cardiff milieu. Pursuing avenues of sustainability, and even profit, are considered just as important to some working within this sector, as accessibility opens up potential for success. However, preservation of the quality of music and control over the means of distribution are still considered important in garnering revenue, and this can lead to conflicting perspectives on the advantages that digitisation can offer on this score. What is clear is that digitisation has contributed to a multitude of disruptions to independent operations which throw conventional social and economic practices into disarray; having implications far beyond mainstream concerns over revenue losses. The final chapter explores these changes in further depth, incorporating a discussion of piracy which places the issue in this wider context.

Chapter 7

Changing Landscapes of Legality and Interaction in a Local Music Milieu

Introduction

This chapter aims to build on discussions of the Cardiff milieu and the effect of digitisation on professionals and audiences, examining in closer detail the wider social, as well as economic, shifts that are taking place within this particular independent music milieu. Thus far, categorisations germane to respondents in the reproduction of the Cardiff 'scene' with regard to digitisation, and mutual embeddedness of physical and digital platforms and commodities have been highlighted. However, it is also imperative to examine the fundamental social shifts initiated by digitisation and the rise of immaterial product through the more problematic issues encountered.

Much of the policy discourse has highlighted the issues of illegal filesharing, which is considered one of the most important issues to be identified as a problematic consequence of digitisation. Although contemporary perspectives on the illegal filesharing debate are of great importance to this thesis, it is also pertinent to acknowledge that such activities should be examined within the wider social shifts that are occurring. This research argues that by divorcing the issue from its context is to ignore other important issues, and the means through which independent sectors are adapting to the change.

Beginning with a discussion of perspectives on illegal filesharing specifically, this chapter will expand its analysis to offer a wider understanding of those online activities that are considered 'transgressive', and the impacts that such activities have had on roles and responsibilities of producers and consumers in the scene, the production and treatment of digitised music, engagement with online platforms and digital products and the modes of adaptation and innovation reshaping engagement with digital music and peripheral goods. Although illegal filesharing forms the basis of this concern, discussion of other transgressive activities emphasises that focus on a singular issue serves firstly to place a disproportionate importance onto it, and secondly ignores other issues with which it is inextricably linked.

The first section of this chapter deals with discussions of illegal filesharing from the perspective of promoters, musicians and consumers separately. These data reveal discourses of both resistance and adaptation to such change, with the latter coming through strongly in

such accounts. Using this as a starting point, the second section then goes on to highlight the presence of other objectionable activities considered significant by professionals. These activities cover a multitude of issues which have been ordered thematically and illustrate the broader nature of change that digitisation has wrought within an independent milieu; these include; *the breakdown of professional division of labour, the ephemeral character of music, the tyranny of individualism in production and consumption, and innovation in promotion and fan engagement*. These sections will illustrate the wider landscape of change with regards to perceptions of acceptable conduct and illegality, and suggests that shifting social conventions have implications far beyond the issue of illegal filesharing. This suggests that an exclusive and aggressive focus on this issue has thus far failed to acknowledge these other shifts, which must be taken into account if a better understanding of the impacts of digitisation and sharing of immaterial product is to be achieved.

(1) Illegal Filesharing and Freely Shared Immaterial Product: Emerging Perspectives

This section aims to treat promoters, musicians and audiences separately in understanding how they are making sense of the changing landscape of legality within the context of mutually embedded online and offline platforms. It will explore the ways in which legal and illegal activity is defined, and the circumstances under which the circulation of free music is welcomed, if not tolerated utilising criminological theory to analyse the individual, moral and situational factors that affect the degree of participation in illegal filesharing, and how various techniques of neutralisation (Sykes and Matza, 1957) are employed in this process. What is clear, first and foremost, is that agreement on legality of freely circulated music has not been achieved within the scene; there is much disagreement about the extent to which it is beneficial. What can be concluded is that, unlike the discourses emerging from the mainstream and from policymakers, decisions made on this issue are not hard and fast, but are often ad-hoc and contingent on the context and perceived outcomes. Rigid definitions of legality do not suit a small scale economy of this nature, and can even stifle innovation within it, should it be applied in a blanket form across the sector. This highlights not only the significant divergence between the mainstream and independent sectors in terms of approach to free music, but also that policy is ignoring the innovative potential of this method of dissemination.

The case for a potential ‘sharing culture’, present to some extent within this independent milieu, can be made. Indeed, *The Hargreaves Review* (2011) recommends a more realistic reform of copyright laws for the digital age, encouraging a degree of copying to exist in order that innovation is not stifled without posing a threat to the growth of the CIs. Illegal acts, as defined in the mainstream sense, have less of a bearing on the independent scene, this is due not only to the context-dependent nature of sharing practices and ethical codes with regard to sharing unauthorised mp3 files, but is also couched within a wider set of fundamental changes in social interaction brought about by digitisation. This chapter argues that the continuation of such an approach will fundamentally re-orientate the social and economic landscape of the independent music sector, but that in doing so may be beneficial in terms of innovation and the fostering of creativity within such a milieu (Hesmondhalgh and Banks, 2009).

1.1 Promoters

Promoters were able to appreciate the ways in which digitisation had altered the goalposts in terms of what was considered legally acceptable, and that to an extent, laws governing the use of copyrighted goods would need to change in order to adapt to the emerging format which increasingly dominated the music market. However, this was tempered with an ethical concern as to the consequences of free music circulating unchecked and unremunerated online. There were strong feelings as to the negative consequences of this for the music industry as a whole;

People who, in times past, would have been willing to pay the asking price for records now take the opportunity to illicitly download when presented with the chance. There’s been a slow erosion of the shamefulness, if you will, associated with this practice, to the extent that to a much younger generation it is considered something that is done as a matter of course.

(Steve (P11M9), promoter)

...there’s a lot of people who take the view that all music should be free...I can’t think of any other art form where that’s the case, and I don’t think it should be...

(Emily (P10F2), promoter)

Steve refers to the development as a ‘steady erosion’ of the unwritten ethical and moral codes which apply to the sharing of unauthorised music. This has been supported by figures which suggest that up to 91% of college students believe that sharing of mp3s should be illegal (Hinduja and Higgins, 2011: 576), and that almost 50% would not feel guilty about downloading copyright material (Hinduja, 2003: 54). With the availability of free mp3 files circulating online, younger generations of music fans are unaware and not subject to previous

payment barriers to music. This has led to decreased importance on payment and the normalisation of both legitimate and illegitimate forms of free access, such as streaming via Spotify or illegal facilities such as Limewire, or The Pirate Bay. This leads new consumers to consider free access ‘as a matter of course’, for better or worse. Literature that deals with illegal filesharing within the framework of deviancy has highlighted how changes in situational characteristics can affect incidences of deviance (Higgins, 2007). Here, we can see that the emergence of free access to music online has increased the ease through which free music can be obtained. The normalisation of the concept of sharing without payment for music is seen, to some degree, as an inevitable result of the ubiquity of the internet and social networking facilities. However, the use of the expression ‘slow erosion of...shamefulness’ by Steve, seems to imply that such behaviour, once clearly in opposition to ethical and legal codes, is being gradually rationalised. Sykes and Matza (1957) examined how those engaging in deviant behaviour rationalise and resolve feelings of guilt over their crimes. These ‘techniques of neutralisation’ allow the criminal to maintain their behaviour and sense of self, and several of these techniques are evident in the data and acknowledge feelings of guilt related to illegal filesharing. Steve’s account implies that such ethical codes should remain through the use of the word ‘shamefulness’, a clear indication that he feels some appreciation of artist sustainability and ethical codes should remain despite such unfettered access, and opinion shared in much of the literature (Hinduja, 2003; Hinduja and Ingram, 2008; Ingram and Hinduja, 2008; Hinduja and Higgins, 2011). Emily also feels that such practices also contribute to an erosion of sustainability of the local and mainstream music sectors which are detrimental to the perceived intrinsic value of art and wider sustainability of the CIs. The shift from fixed monetary values of exchange is viewed as a significant challenge to the CIs, which left to develop, might lead to negative growth and an impoverishment of the creative sector.

However, the potential for innovation through free sharing is also recognised in other accounts;

...you can't buy everything you need to listen to [for promotional purposes] otherwise you'd never make any money...I need to listen to what's going on and I need to listen to everything, and it's great to have that there and then. But if there's something I want to listen to at home...then I'll buy it quite happily...I think people use music disposably more and more, but there is still some music that they will keep as almost sacred...

(Kyle, (P6M5), promoter)

I think there's ways around it that a band can do, like, free downloads...I think if a band does a free download they can sort of say, 'look, we're giving something to try and compromise!

(Emily, (P10F2), promoter)

..although [free music] completely change[s] the landscape, I think it's a good thing...because it's a lot harder to break into a gig than download a song...if thousands of people are getting their music for free online then that means that they're gonna have lots of happy people coming to their gigs...

(Lloyd, (P4M3), promoter)

These accounts, in contrast to the fears discussed in the first set of quotes, illustrate the simultaneous uncertainty and potential posed by the digital domain for the music industry. Kyle outlines the importance of accessibility for promoters, and how it benefits his promotional activities, despite contributing to an attitude of disposability within the profession. The advantages and pitfalls of such a development mean that promoters are looking to adapt their business models, as Emily points out. Despite earlier comments indicating her attitudes to free sharing of music were not favourable, her account is later orientated towards encouraging professionals to adapt to altered working practices. She mentions the giveaway of free downloads as one such method of adaptation; this indicates that the erosion of hard and fast restrictions on access to content is already working its way into the practices of promotion for professionals, and is accepted as part of the way in which the landscape of promotion is changing (Baym, 2011: 29). A broad acceptance of such change is evident to various degrees within such accounts, and Lloyd's is notable for identifying the connection between leniency with regard to free mp3 files and the avenues it can open up in terms of the live scene. This perspective highlights the positive outcomes of compromise with regard to accepting the presence of unauthorised distribution, as well as the benefits of encouraging it through individuals' own promotional practices.

Acceptance was the broad consensus within the data, with promoters operating upon the premise that sharing was acceptable provided that outcomes with regard to promotion remained sustainable. All respondents drew the line at unfettered access with no remuneration for output, advocating a combination of giveaways and offers embedded within a sustainable business model. This aligns with Sykes and Matza's proposal that individuals largely subscribe to conventional values of legality (1957: 664), in that they support the endeavour of musicians to make money within established business models and supply chains. There was no explicit discussion or support for the 'creative commons' or an ethos

that knowledge should be circulated without charge for all to enjoy. Samuel, promoter and musician (P8M7), provides a justification for this when asked about the effect of mp3 on his line of work;

...one way to look at it is; great, people want to listen to your music, that's a compliment to you and people are spreading your [music] for you...but we need to make money to keep going do, you know, it's kind of annoying in that sense...

The pros and cons of illegal filesharing are recognised in equal measure in this and other accounts. Understanding the ways in which audience behaviour had changed and adapting to such changes was recognised. The benefits of compromise in giving music away for free in their own promotional practices was acknowledged to bear fruit in sustainability in the physical sphere, such as through improving attendance levels at gigs. However, there remained frustration at the degree to which unauthorised sharing robbed them of total control over the dissemination of their product.

For local promoters, such erosions of clearly defined boundaries of legality were a necessary part of engaging individuals with live events, in the hope of creating more sustained engagement between fans and artists. New models of sustainability, based on adaptation were favoured overall, which advocated compromise between disseminating free promotional material and highlighting the detrimental effect on uncontrolled forms of sharing within the wider milieu. The importance of being able to retain control and receive appropriate remuneration for their product remained a key concern, despite concessions made. This effort to retain notions of ownership and traditional capitalistic notions over music indicates a continued commitment to neo-liberal values which privileges individual ownership over music and the right to benefit financially, directly or indirectly, from that creative output. As far as the promoters are concerned, pre-digital models of sustainability are to be adapted, and not overhauled, based on established principles of capitalism and eschewing 'creative commons' models. This approach indicates a marked change in direction when compared with the aims and objectives of the DEA, and aligns itself increasingly with the conclusions of *The Hargreaves Review* (2011), advocating flexibility in the practice of control over mp3 files to secure remuneration, but also capitalises on the innovative potential of the medium. Musicians provide a complimentary, yet nuanced set of views, which will now be examined alongside these findings.

1.2 Musicians

Musicians also framed their accounts, like promoters, within the context of sustainability and adaptation of business models to the changing circumstances brought about by digitisation. Although there were differing degrees to which the effect of digitisation on music sales was considered in a positive and progressive light, three musicians expressing strongly negative perspectives, with the remaining twenty advocating more positive or balanced views. Despite a variety of personal views on illegal filesharing, most agreed that developments were inevitable, and that the benefits provided by digitisation were so extensive in terms of communicative reach that such side effects were part and parcel of using the internet. The following quotes highlight the theme of inevitability which pervades a significant number of accounts;

Bands think that they can avoid this illegal, they always think 'we can do this and we'll avoid illegal downloading'. It never ever works, someone will find a way of doing something. For example, the latest thing has been to, you put a track up on YouTube with a video, which we will be doing in March and you release that before, when you put the pre-order links for the single to buy. You can rip mp3s from YouTube videos and there's programmes, it's absolutely simple to do.

(Joel (M1M1), musician)

...but I think it's never going to be stopped, it's never going to be stopped, filesharing coz, I mean, you could just...say for instance you meet someone you have a lot in common with and you say 'oh, I know this band, you'll really like them', you just send a track from your iTunes over to them. I mean, that's filesharing, but that's just also just sharing an interest with someone. I mean, you can never really stop it in a way, its always gonna happen. Someone's gonna be emailing a zip file of an album to another person they've just heard from a band, I dunno. I don't think you can ever really stop it...

(Gareth (M8M8), musician)

J: I think the filesharing thing, it really gets on my nerves because that Metallica thing, where they had a massive go at millions of people who were downloading their music and they weren't paying for it. I was like, your fans... the music industry is changing and people just need to learn that and its all very well, like, I like vinyl and stuff but I'd never expect all our fans to listen to vinyl just because we like vinyl. They can listen to it in any way they want, coz I like music anyway, I think artists...it really annoys me when people are sort of high and mighty about how their fans listen to their music...

R: Because it should be a pleasure for your fans to listen to your music...

J: ...yeah, you should be grateful people listen to your music in the first place.

(Jon and Rich (M5M5, M6M6), musicians)

These accounts acknowledge the ubiquity of filesharing as a salient issue, and the accompanying narratives of inevitability which ran throughout discussions. Joel highlights the ease at which music can be shared due to the architecture of the internet and the ease at which mp3 files can be transmitted via an array of platforms. Gareth discusses the ways in which such actions have become embedded in the practice of fandom, framing the motivation to share music based on an aesthetic appreciation of the music that they enjoy. Such embeddedness is indicative of a technique of neutralisation (Sykes and Matza, 1957) called *denial of responsibility*, in which drawing attention to the inevitability of the practice removes responsibility for its perpetration. Furthermore, Jon and Rich note the use of the mp3 file is so engrained that they feel mainstream musicians no longer have a right to expect fans to purchase physical product. Here, Jon and Rich employ the *appeal to higher loyalties* technique (1957: 669), in which they argue the privilege of having an audience is much more important than a concern for how they acquired the music. There is an onus on them to accept change and adapt accordingly.

These accounts support notions of adaptability as discussed in the previous section, dismissing hardline initiatives to reduce piracy as futile and out of touch with the economic landscape of contemporary music. Practices that are considered illegal in the eyes of the law are gradually being accepted or even considered necessary to the innovative reproduction of the scene. These findings point to a dramatic re-orientation within the independent scene with regards to legality, and have important implications for the ways in which music is disseminated, but also dramatically questions traditional boundaries of sustainability which have been espoused by the mainstream. These findings suggest the currency attached to aggressive preservation of revenue streams around music is being eroded by these practices.

Musicians were aware that to take such an explicit pro-copyright stance was problematic, considering that in their capacity as consumers, they also participated in illegal filesharing, as Jon (M5M5) discusses;

But, in terms of music...I'm not going to [take a firm stance against filesharing], there's just no point because I'd be a hypocrite, we all listen to music on the internet anyway...

Through their own experience, they could appreciate the motivations of illegal filesharing and the extent to which such practices were deeply embedded within the practices of fans.

Jon in particular pointed out the hypocrisy is expecting his fans to respect the monetary value of music and to refrain from accessing unauthorised material when he himself had done the very same. This adds weight to narratives of inevitability, not only in musicians' perspectives but also through their actions as consumers.

Initially at least, the promotional advantage of free circulation of music was appreciated by independent musicians, and an essential part of building a fanbase, as discussed in the previous section. Gareth (M8M8) explains the advantages of this;

...I wouldn't say [sharing is] illegal, I wouldn't say it's morally wrong either, it's just people want to listen to music really...I mean, you can't call listening to music a crime, really...at least that person is listening to it...and without filesharing they may not even have listened to that band...

Firstly, this quote strongly advocates the importance of free giveaways of music as providing strength to the scene through circulating music widely and encouraging attendance at gigs and sales of other products. A certain amount of taster content is necessary if you are to engage a potential fanbase and build a significant following. Gareth also frames his views on illegal filesharing to both reflect these interests and the discovery-oriented mindset of consumers; illegal filesharing is not 'morally wrong', it is an intrinsic part of being a member of the scene. As with his comment above, he evokes the *denial of responsibility* neutralisation (Sykes and Matza, 1957) and does not consider illegal filesharing a crime. Such techniques have allowed some milieu members to detach themselves from acknowledging criminal behaviour, as found in other research (Higgins et al, 2008). This statement thus reinforces the belief that rigid models of legality are decreasingly irrelevant in relation to the promotional imperative, as Baym (2011) also finds. This fundamental reorientation in perspectives represents the shifts which are taking place in the treatment of cultural products online, and reflects the decline in monetary value of the music itself.

This is not to say that musicians wholly endorse this altered climate; these comments were tempered with the need for artist sustainability, as reflected in promoters' accounts. There were identified advantages to giving away music, but a fine balance was required between this and encouraging payment for music and peripheral products. Gradations of value based on quality were found in many narratives around digitisation, as mentioned in the previous empirical chapter, and are also salient here, as Gareth (M8M8) discusses when talking about the criteria upon which music should be sustainable;

...two of the songs we recorded with [name of band], they cost us over £500...so we don't want to give them away...because it took a lot of production and time and effort and our money...we can't just throw it away.

[...]

...rough doesn't matter, people can have rough for free...as long as the real stuff we're recording, the stuff that really matters, is not being ripped from us, then I don't mind so much.

Here, Gareth identifies music produced and worked upon to a significantly higher level of quality as being more valuable, and thus the expectation is that these products be considered for purchase. The distinction made between 'rough' products for promotion, is contrasted with expensively produced, reworked, most innovative and 'polished' music, which is of both higher economic and aesthetic value to the musician, with the expectation that the consumer will also recognise this. It can be concluded that there continue to be attempts to instil new 'regimes of value' (Appadurai, 1986) which echo mainstream value chain concerns, but which are adapted to the digital domain and suitable for implementation within an independent scene. Again, support for the 'creative commons' is not forthcoming amongst musicians, in line with the perspectives of promoters. There remains a clear economic ideology which aligns with pre-digital notions of ownership of creative works by the creator and the unequivocal right of that individual to seek remuneration for their work. It is first and foremost their property, and they have the right to garner revenue from it. The specific sentiments expressed here were a one-off in relation to the wider dataset; however, a desire to maintain some form of value chain was present in other accounts, as Jonathan (M24M22) elaborates;

If other than sharing, people pay a smaller price and I think that would help bands that were starting out as well. Because I think some people would hear a little bit of it on MySpace and if it was like...whatever, but then if it was 25p or something then I'm happy. I think more people would do that, which would mean that you wouldn't have to say to people 'don't copy' when you give it out for free, because the price would be lower, and more people would think 'well, it's only so many quid for a digital album' more people would then, and everybody would...

It remained important to retain some value over music, but such accounts were diluted by the desire to promote, and using their music as a tool in achieving this. There appeared to be a clear need for balance to be achieved between using music in this way, but also preserving its economic value and combating the erosion of legal boundaries around its unauthorised use. Unlike promoters, musicians, as creators of music, felt this more keenly, as expressed in their accounts. The construction of gradations of quality was an attempt to reinstate value around

music based upon the employment of sophisticated production techniques. Distinguishing ‘rough’ promotional content from ‘polished’ output fit for purchase appeared to be one such example of attempts to achieve this. Whether this aligned with audience views is a further matter of concern.

1.3 Audiences

Audiences, on the whole, were significantly less aware of industry issues around illegal downloading, and tended to consider issues of legality predominantly in terms of their own consumption of music. Lack of consumer awareness of illegal practices has been documented in other research which states that nearly 50% of those participating in illegal downloading did not know it was illegal (Hinduja and Higgins, 2011). However, despite this there was present a broad spectrum of views on the rise of illegal downloading and the effect it had on consumption as well as the wider industry. Although the ethical implications of partaking in such activity were widely questioned, it was widely acknowledged that such activities were omnipresent, as these quotes illustrate;

JC: You mentioned a bit about sharing there, what kind of filesharing do you use?

M2: Uhh, is it BitTorrent? I'll start off with that because it's free and then I might decide to buy it, So yeah, BitTorrent.

JC: Do you fileshare as well?

M1: Yeah, BitTorrent or any of the Torrents...just for the purpose of the tape.

(Male audience member)

JC: Another thing I wanted to ask you about was piracy and free music and all the things that have changed with the rise of the internet and mp3 and that kind of thing. I just wanted to know how you guys got hold of music and what kind of things you use online to get hold of music.

M2: I'll download anything, yeah.

JC: How do you get hold of music, what kind of things do you use?

M3: YouTorrent, that's what I use. I did an essay on this last year!

JC: Yeah?

M3: It's just too easy, so...way too easy, so...and I bought the music, so...

JC: So, what are your views on...obviously you use Torrents and...what are your views on illegal downloading and doing that?

M3: It's there, ideally it wouldn't happen, but I can't afford to buy all the music I listen to.

M1: Yeah, that's the main reason. There's too much music to buy, so yeah...it's like twelve pounds a CD, way too much. And you don't have to leave your house! So...

JC: It's immediate as well?

M1: Yeah, you can download it at anytime of the day as opposed to buying it in the shop.

(Male audience members)

JC: Do you have any opinions on filesharing either way?

M1: No.

JC: Do you see anything wrong with it?

M1: Uhh, yeah, to some degree. If I had money, I'd buy CDs, but I don't.

JC: What about yourselves?

M2: I feel a bit guilty downloading torrents, I usually buy. My brother is a musician so I don't feel it's really fair.

(Male audience members)

These accounts reflect common attitudes and practices to accessing music in the digital age. These accounts have been framed in terms of accessibility on one hand, and tempered with an acknowledgement of the disadvantages to artists on the other. Although the use of torrents to illegally download were quite commonplace amongst audience members, there was also a need to justify this behaviour as it was acknowledged that such actions are not legal, or socially approved, on the whole. The second quote states that 'ideally [illegal downloading] wouldn't happen' but that the availability of a wide range of music, coupled with its high price encourages consumers to turn to Torrent services. This passage contains within it a subtle reference the neutralisation technique *condemnation of condemners*, in which the high price of music serves to mitigate his behaviour, with the justification that record companies are also at fault in exploiting their customers. The third quote also acknowledges that it can hinder artists' sustainability and that there exists residual guilt over their complicity in such issues, which indicates an affiliation with conventional ethical and moral codes, as opposed to a complete rejection of them, as Sykes and Matza (1957) suggest.. Although these accounts admit participation in such activity, others frame such practices negatively and with reference to risk. However, these too note the ubiquity of such practices within the online milieu;

F2: I used to use Limewire years ago, but then I found out when I got my new laptop with Vista, that Microsoft had some sort of tracking system so they could find out if you were using illegal sites, so then I stopped and then just simply started buying albums.

(Female audience member)

JC: Just one more thing, what I'm interested in is filesharing and how that's affected the music industry, and I just wanted to know what your opinion was on filesharing generally and related to the gigs that you go to? Do you do it yourself?

M2: Not anymore.

M3: Sharing as in downloading songs?

M2: Limewire and stuff like that? No, not anymore, too many viruses. I used to when I was younger, I think everybody did, didn't they? But nowadays I just buy albums, it's easier.

M1: Yeah, I used to do Limewire, WinMX was another one, but there's so many viruses it's just not worth it, so I just buy CDs and copy them onto my iTunes.

M2: YouTube is brilliant. So this band tonight we're talking about – checked them out on MySpace and they were brilliant, so we came.

(Male audience members)

These alleged risk factors are enough to deter some consumers from using such facilities, and have been enough to modify their behaviour accordingly. What is interesting about the second account is that these risks only became apparent with age and experience of using P2P sites, as one male audience member outlines. Apparent 'education' with regard to risk, no matter how true the information might be, combined with experience, appear to be important factors in the development of consumer engagement with digital music, and this approach is advocated in a number of research studies to combat the problem (Hinduja, 2003; Hinduja and Ingram, 2008; Ingram and Hinduja, 2008; Hinduja and Higgins, 2011). This is also particularly significant in discussions of age of consumers and knowledge with regards to legality.

It was found amongst a minority of audience members who recalled their habits as younger consumers that ambiguity around issues of legality and legal facilities was present. A clear misunderstanding of which platforms were legal was uncovered in the following accounts;

JC: So, do you still stream from Napster or Limewire or anywhere like that?

F2: I don't anymore, I never used to download, I only used to stream it from those places. And now I stream it for free, which as far as I'm aware, is legal.

(Female audience member)

JC: Do you ever use anything, like P2P or Pirate Bay or Limewire or anything like that?

F2: I used to when I was younger, but I found an easier way!

F1: My ex-boyfriend was always into that, he used those websites quite a lot and to download music took him quite a while, usually I'd just pinch it off his laptop and use it then, so I got hold of it that way. But I was like 14 when I last did it!

JC: So why do you...you said you did it when you were younger...what changed? Why did you...

F2: We didn't know it was illegal, we knew nothing about it back then, and then when I found out I was like 'oh, crap! I'll stop now.' And then I had loads of viruses off it as well, so yeah, it wasn't good.

(Female audience members)

Both of these statements demonstrate a certain amount of ignorance as to the legality of certain services; the first quote mistaking streaming from Napster and Limewire as being

legal, which it is not, and the second quote obtaining illegally downloaded material via a third party when they were much younger and unaware of such services' legal status. It is well established that situational factors such as age, knowledge and experience of the internet and notions of risk modify behaviour over time (Higgins, 2007). However, the facilities mentioned have succeeded in creating a significant amount of ambiguity around legal status, with lack of knowledge leading many to assume that streaming and downloading are legitimate practices. Although the second quote refers to past behaviour as a younger teenager, this illustrates, in conjunction with earlier quotes, both the embedded nature of such practices amongst consumers, but also the significant destabilisation that has taken place with regard to economic and social conventions of legality in the digital era. This constitutes a deeper problem wherein those who are transgressing boundaries of legality online do not even realise that they are doing so. Therefore, issues of culpability and techniques of neutralisation (Sykes and Matza, 1957) can be complicated by ignorance of the law itself, the online architecture muddying the waters and creating ambiguity. The confusion as to what is acceptable suggests that rules and regulations as to fair access, and furthermore social interaction, are constantly shifting.

Despite such ambiguity, most audience members, if they were knowledgeable enough about online facilities, advocated a combination of acceptance of a certain amount of sharing of music in combination with a sustainable model of remuneration for musicians. The role of sharing should be orientated towards discovery and then purchase;

JC: ...Do you often buy music?

F1: I used to, but now I use Spotify and We7 and YouTube. If I haven't got the CD, and I'm not gonna buy it, then I'll just use those to find it.

JC: What's useful about Spotify?

F2: It's just got everything hasn't it?

F1: Yeah, and if you suddenly think 'I want to listen to that song' then you can just type it in.

(Female audience members)

However, it is acknowledged that these techniques may only be successful in some instances, and that unfettered access to P2P services may mean that consumers use these solely in their consumption practices. This quote from a male audience member supports those initial quotes made in support of illegal filesharing;

It's just too easy, so...way too easy...

It was the importance of both accessibility and sustainability which were appealing to audiences and musicians, but which was also a central point of tension, as this particular milieu were continuing to grapple with how exactly this could be achieved. One matter was for certain in many eyes; that the presence of sharing was embedded within the local music scene, as discussed by this male audience member;

I think the argument that flows on...is 'how should artists actually be paid for their work?'...because it gets back to the fact that actually this band, they still need to eat...unless there is some other way, other...obstacles to sharing...you have to find some other way of making money...there's no way of caging [music] into a format which can't be copied. You can't un-invent that.

[...]

it's easy to sort of blame people and point fingers and sort of say 'you shouldn't share files'...well, I'm not on the side of pirates and I'm not on the side of big dinosaur industries either, but there's got to be a better way.

As with other quotes which highlight sharing as an embedded practice, this audience member goes further in highlighting the futility of moral judgements around sharing practices, legitimate or otherwise. Employing techniques of neutralisation, it would appear that such comments align with *denial of responsibility*, as Gareth's did above. However, it could also be suggested that it no longer remains a question of moralising, as has been the focus of previous research (Freestone and Mitchell, 2004; Bonner and O'Higgins, 2010) but being pragmatic in accepting its existence within online practices. The overall train of thought was orientated to working around practices influenced by online engagement rather than adherence to rigid pre-digital models.

What was interesting about these accounts was that, even more so than professionals', they were constructed in terms of the self. Audiences had significantly less awareness of issues of ethics or sustainability, and constructed their perspectives in line with their own self-interest when it came to accessing music. Here we can see, to a much greater degree, that notions of right to access content are entrenched, no matter whether sources are legitimate or not. The right to access available content without recourse to ethical considerations of ownership reflects the key tension between traditional 'producers' and 'consumers' and a reinforcement of neo-liberal ideology which emphasises individual privilege over the interests of the whole, in this case, the wider music milieu. Adaptation is welcomed and preservation of revenue

streams supported on the whole, however, this will not stop illegal activity of individuals if such content is widely available.

Adaptive attitudes to illegal filesharing, and the ambiguity regarding legality are but one set of issues in a wider context of change. Although illegal filesharing has been identified by the mainstream as a pressing economic concern, shifts in social interaction and relationships with immaterial product are also important, particularly within the context of an independent milieu in which the economic imperative is less marked. The themes explored in the following section illustrate that the changes wrought by digitisation have more far reaching consequences than loss of revenue; they represent fundamental changes in our relationship with music as immaterial product, and by extension, other creative works, as a result of the growth of social networking and P2P platforms. Understanding these themes can help us to understand not only why unauthorised sharing has become an embedded practice, but also the wider set of changes which are structuring the contemporary music industry and future business models. So-called 'transgressive' themes explored include *the breakdown of professional division of labour, the ephemeral character of music, individualisation of the production and consumption experience and innovation in promotion and fan engagement.*

(2) Transgressive Activities and the Cardiff Milieu

The predominantly adaptive attitude towards illegal filesharing outlined above has been identified within a maelstrom of much more endemic shifts in professional relations and both professional and consumer engagement with music. As such illegal activities become part and parcel of these shifts, the following thematic sections can help us understand the fundamental reorganisation of individuals within and across online and offline networks, the way in which immaterial product has reconfigured the value of musical works, and also the methods being adopted to recommodify music and reinvigorate fan-musician relations. The first section discusses the disruption to established roles and responsibilities amongst Cardiff professionals.

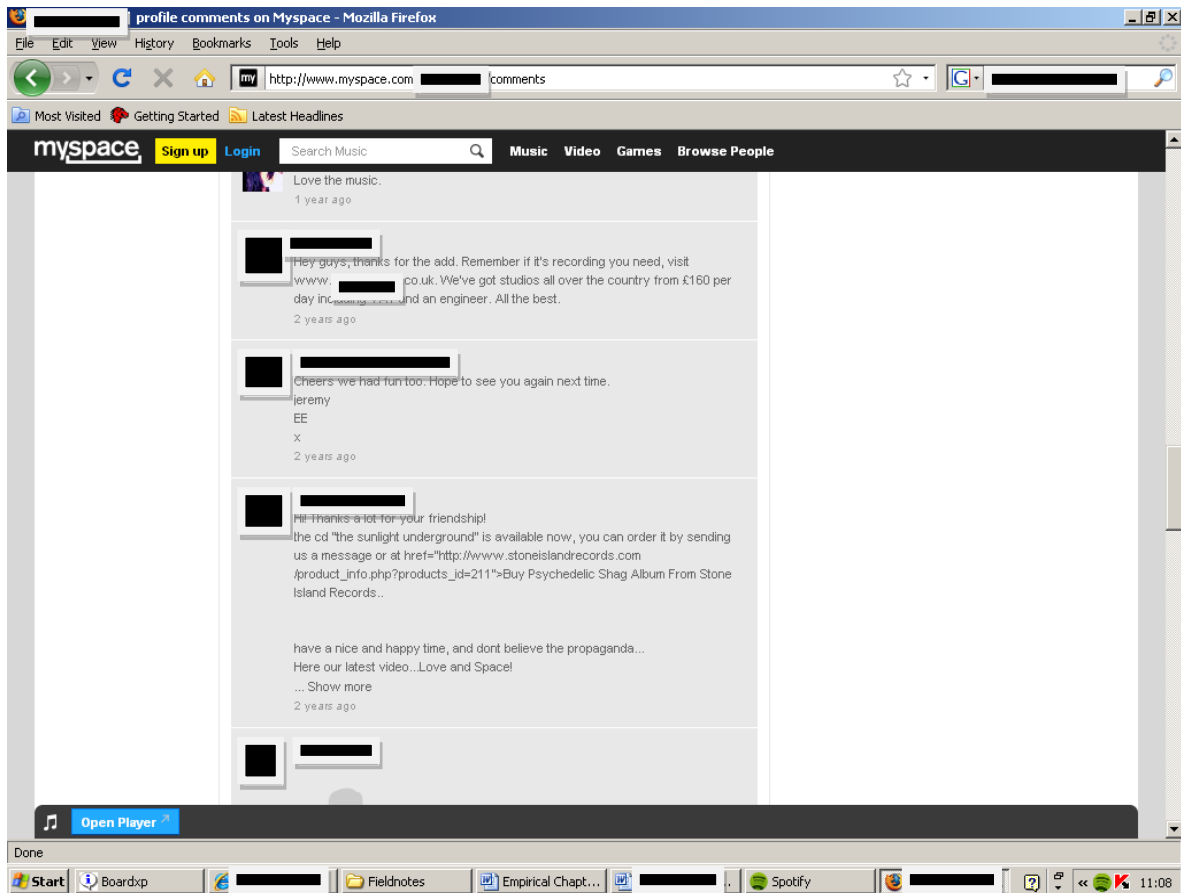
2.1 Breakdown of the professional division of labour

Professional relationships in the Cardiff milieu, established within the pre-digital era, have been significantly disrupted and it is argued, are now in the process of being reconfigured as the online becomes mutually embedded in relation to offline modes of communication. The

process of this disruption and reconfiguration has brought with it several problematic issues for musicians and promoters as established roles breakdown and new rules are in the process of being formulated. This section explores some of the established conventions of online communication, and those actions which can be considered ‘transgressive’ under pre-digital conventions.

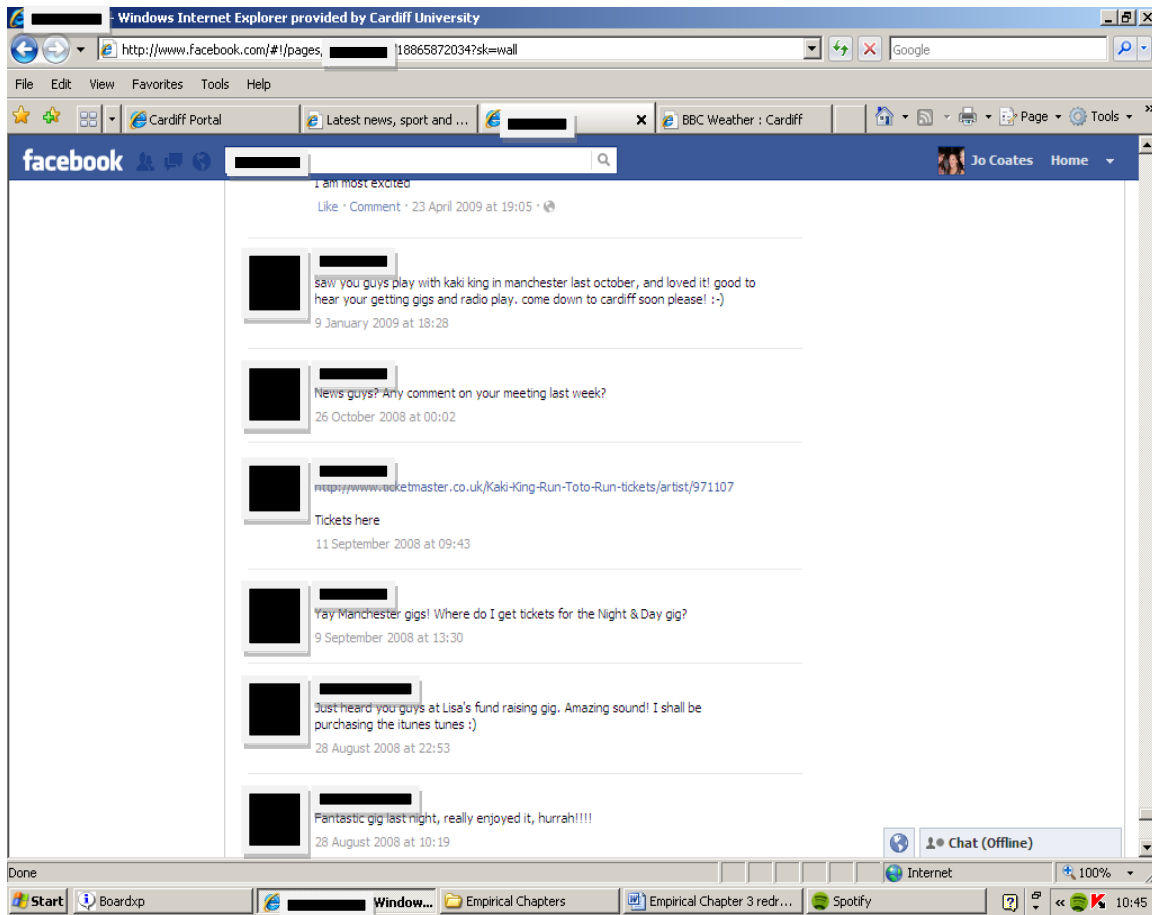
The implications for social relations, as well as changes to the configuration of the value chain are significant here, as a simultaneous re-ordering of economic and social relations takes place. Such findings point to the emergence of a new set of mutually embedded relations within this music milieu in the digital age. Use of the concept ‘netiquette’, defined as the ‘conventions of politeness recognised on Usenet and in mailing lists’ (Taylor and Scheuermann, 1997: 269), is useful here in application to the re-ordering of social relations brought about by online engagement, and can help unpack exactly how social relations are being reconfigured.

The data reveals that within the online domain, some conventions of interaction have been configured from scratch, taking into account the novel nature of some online platforms, such as social networking sites. Within such platforms have been discovered both the creation of ‘new’ netiquette, but also problematic interaction through breaches of these new conventions (Aarsand, 2008). Establishing the boundaries of such interaction has been made difficult due to the fluid and contingent nature of information circulated within it, which is constantly subject to change. However, within certain social networking facilities, netiquette had been established with regard to professional networking, as this screenshot illustrates;

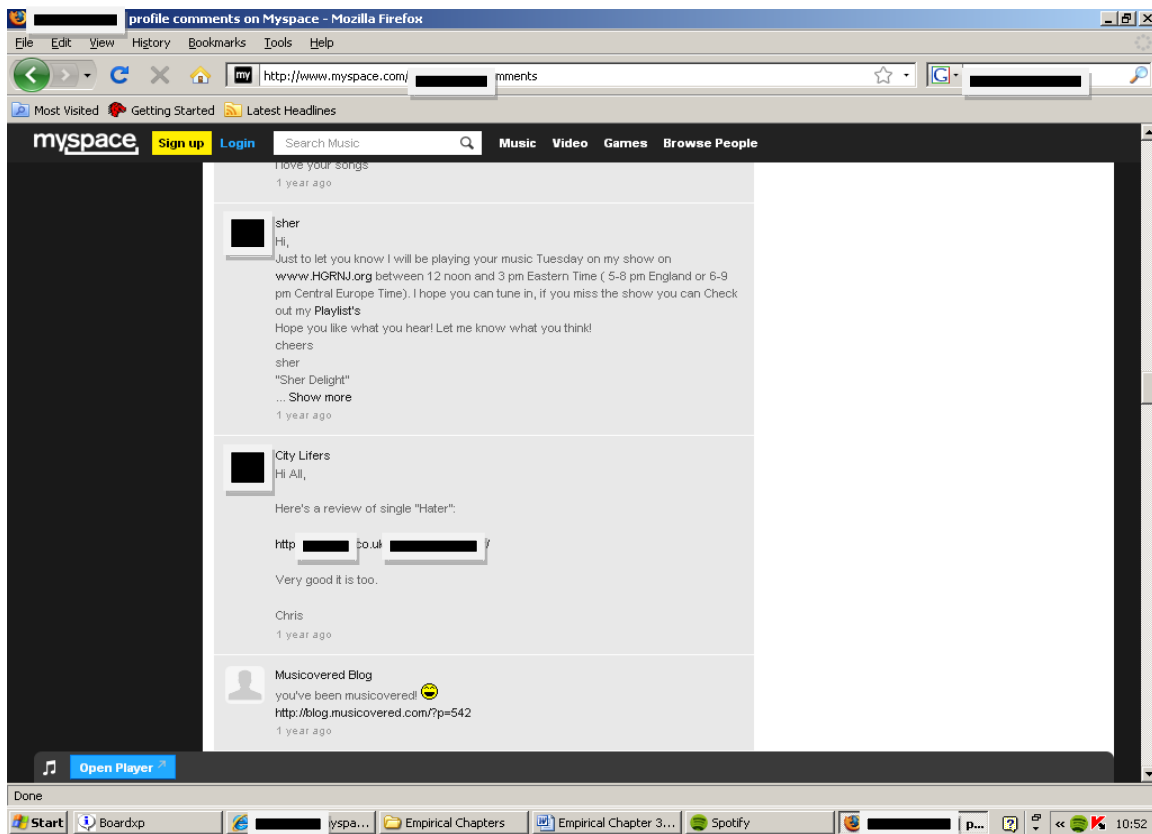


Screenshot of local artist's comments page on their MySpace profile: showing 'thanks for add' and other messages aiding professional networking

Contact on these facilities followed an established pattern of; submission of an online request from one party for online 'friendship', which constituted a linking of, and access to, one another's profile page information. Following acceptance by the second party, the first party would often send a message of thanks as a starting point for further discussion. Acceptance of friendship between professionals signalled permission for each party to advertise on the other's page. The architecture of certain platforms dictated that some were more suited to professional networking (MySpace) and others for interaction with fans (Facebook), as these screen shots illustrate;



Screenshot of artist's Facebook profile wall, showing examples of positive feedback from fans.



Screenshot of same artist's MySpace comment page, in which professional networking, as well as fan comments, were considerably more present.

Predominantly, the nature of responses was positive, polite, and followed a stable arrangement required for successful interaction as defined in an offline context (Goffman, 1959), and which were crucial for the successful maintenance of the scene. Demarcation of online spaces and their uses in this way was well established and commonplace within the ethnographic observations made. However, there were points of conflict within the use of social networking and other online platforms as other forms of conduct were considered less acceptable, illustrating the fluid nature of online relations. The destabilisation of previously well-defined roles of professionals was also very much present, alongside other well-established practices of netiquette. This indicates firstly, that there exist problems with effective communication of roles and responsibilities, but secondly that the confusion that exists is intrinsically linked to the creation and allocation of value within these different roles. Democratisation of the internet has done much to enable anyone to create value through re-editing and re-circulation. However, conversely, this has also led to a disruption of established value chain creation within professional relationships which musicians in particular are struggling to cope with, as Gareth (M8M8) explains;

We don't do flyers, really, we kind of leave that up to the promoter. If it's an independent promoter, they're the ones who should be flyering it and posting it. Whereas, we'll have the digital flyer and we'll put it up on our webpage and we'll promote the show on the X/X [bands he is a member of] Facebook page which is...or we'll post it on our friends' wall, if it's a really important gig we will, anyway.

There is a clear desire by the musician in this account that clear boundaries between promoter and musician should remain established online as they were in the pre-digital era, despite the architecture of the internet making it easy for a band to promote themselves. This is emphasised by musicians Isaac (M9M9) and Evan (M10M10), who provide similar sentiments;

JC: So what about promoters, what is it that makes a good promoter or a bad one?

E: Promoting it, I think (laughs).

I: That's the key there, the key is in the job description, which some promoters have failed to realise.

E: I think some people think if you just put something on Facebook and invite 50 people, it'll snowball somehow...

These accounts both emphasize the importance of firmly established and coherent promotional roles across both online and offline spaces as clear indicators of success in the reproduction of an independent scene. However, there is frustration at the perceived laziness of promoters to perform these tasks competently and an implied feeling that promoters are reliant upon 'soft' online promotional methods to advertise events, to the detriment of the vibrancy of the scene, as promoter and musician Samuel (P8M7) discusses;

Facebook, obviously has become the promoters super tool, but it's kind of super rubbish at the same time... your inbox is just messages from promoters all over the bloody country who have got nothing to do with you and are just sending you messages and I'm just thinking, 'well, I'm not going to that.' You end up not looking, you end up just dismissing them, and it's also made promoters lazy...that doesn't count as promotion... in my book.

This destabilisation has provided an unpalatable breakdown of distinct professional division of labour which previously clearly demarcated roles between promoters and musicians. This is considered transgressive in the eyes of both musicians and promoters, viewed as detrimental to perceived and actual status and expertise of professionals working within the independent sector. Not only do social relations and role allocation constantly need to be renegotiated across online and offline spaces, also disrupted are defined perceptions of value chain location. The internet has disrupted the consensus over who is responsible for value creation at each stage of the production process, leading to subjective interpretations of responsibility. The musician who bemoans the expectation that they should do the work

previously considered to belong to the promoter demonstrates the gulf that has emerged between those within the professional milieu regarding value creation. Networked relations have formed the basis of such a gulf and present significant issues for the successful reproduction of the scene. Such disintegration of professional division of labour takes issue with the idea that that the integration of online domain has made relations more effective.

Another such example of the effect of transgressive behaviour and a breakdown of distinct professional standards within promotional operations is the ubiquity of spam in the online space. Electronic spam is defined as the receipt of significant volumes of unsolicited email or other online advertising, which has become an increasingly significant problem online as the user base has grown. In the context of the music milieu, respondents referred to spam as being the receipt of large amounts of advertising on social networking sites to encourage people to attend events and purchase music and merchandise of particular bands on a local or national level. This was a problematic behaviour, which was overwhelmingly negatively received by professionals as being both an annoyance to their fanbase, but also corrosive to relations between musicians and fans.

All respondents expressed an abhorrence of spam in various ways. It was overwhelmingly an activity to avoid doing and becoming subject to. Firstly, because it was considered ineffective, as musicians from one band (M1M1 and M2M2) explain in a problem they encountered with regard to the amount of people who actually read the mailshots (email updates of the band's activities) they send out;

J: So, obviously a lot of [their mailshot] is going to spam and some people are just not even bothering opening it or deleting it. I know a lot of it is going to spam, because it says that, but I don't know why it's going to spam.

R: Because you're sending it from a fucking spam...

J: Probably because it is spam! It's a mass message...what I'm trying to say is that it's not very effective, and I thought it was just us, but I spoke to our manager and he says it's the same [for everyone]. He says at least it's reaching that 162 [out of 900] people...

Although reaching a certain proportion of fans, the return cannot be viewed as overwhelmingly effective in terms of reach, and raises concerns about the use of blanket forms of promotion such as mailshots. This aligns with discussions of the need for more 'intelligent' promotion as outlined in the previous empirical chapter, which are considered to be both more effective, and more credible as promotional strategies, distinguishing those who

are considered professional from those who are not. This band also expresses a concern about alienating their fans through excessive blanket-style promotion, as indiscriminate spamming without thought to the audience was seen as a breach of netiquette. Many professionals cited avoidance of the use of spam in their promotional strategy, as promoter and DJ Stu (P7M6) explains;

But then I could just post a comment on their wall saying...y'know, 'I also DJ at XXX', I think that's more legitimate. So I'm very wary and of course there are legal aspects to spamming anyway...um...certainly by email, I don't know if they're covered by things like Facebook and what have you in the same, same way...

There exists wariness towards spamming, which is perceived as detrimental to professional status due to its ineffective results and the annoyance it evokes in those who receive it. Promoters want to be perceived as professional and credible, and spam does much to discredit this aim in the eyes of professionals. It was clear this practice, although identified as transgressive and unwelcome, was ubiquitous within this milieu and online in general. This links with notions of quality and professionalism as outlined in the previous empirical chapter, in that it is not viewed as a 'legitimate' practice, defined by legislative attempts in the UK and other territories to reduce spam. In addition, it contributes to frustration at breakdown of established and legitimate professional roles and the manner at which fans may be alienated by a bombardment of such information. The following quote highlights the frustration felt by musicians when they are subject to spamming from other professionals;

P: I was on [the band's] MySpace, and something was playing and I thought 'What?'...

A: Oh, it's the fucking [name of band who spammed their profile page]!

P: It took me ages to work it out, and I pressed stop[on their song] and it was still playing...

A: Cheap bastards, I thought how rude is that? Yeah.

JC: Can you get rid of it?

A: Yeah, delete my comment.

JC: So they've posted a comment which contains a song?

M: Yeah, one of their songs, the sons of bitches!

(Paul (M13M13) and Andy (M11M11), musicians)

Here, musicians are lamenting the behaviour of other artists, the band mentioned in the extract posted a flash player of their song in the comment section of the interviewed band's profile, thus playing over their own flash player and preventing the listener from hearing their songs. These data illustrate the impact of netiquette on professional relations; the ways that pre-digital modes of working are being broken down by professionals and other scene

members alike, but are also being re-constructed through definitions and justifications of illegitimate behaviour. Such responses to loss of control over content contained within their profile page highlights the threat these musicians feel to the effective promotion they put out, and succeeds in breaking down professional distinctions and the spaces in which such activity can take place. Such invasions of supposedly clearly demarcated space illustrate commonplace transgressions which for some have a detrimental effect on the promotion of their music. This is a consequence of the breakdown of professional division of labour and established value chains, and also calls into question the argument that democratisation of the means of online production and dissemination have a wholly positive effect.

This section has highlighted the problematic consequences of breakdown of professional roles and the consequences of this disintegration for relations between producers and consumers. In addition to challenging and reconfiguring promotional activity, the network is also restructuring activity around the treatment and purchase of music, leading to a fundamental re-orientation in fandom and consumption in the digital era. Such changes are highlighting transgressions around treatment of artists, musical formats and the configuration of choice.

2.2 The Ephemeral Character of Music in the Digital Age

Fundamental changes originating from widespread use of online networks have led to relations between professionals and fans which some professionals have deemed transgressive. The data discussed in the previous section has predominantly referred to relations around promotion; however, much of the data has illustrated how modes of consumption have also come to be considered transgressive in the eyes of professionals. This section discusses the wider consequence of the rise of immaterial product and the possibility that the ubiquity of music circulated in an mp3 format has fundamentally challenged established modes of consumption in the pre-digital era. As a cultural product that has more rapidly thrived and developed in immaterial form in comparison to books or newspapers, music is a significant media which may provide insight into the ways in which immaterial forms may be treated in the future. The particular formation of this media lends itself to a distinct trajectory of development which has accelerated in the network space, but also sets it apart from other media which lend themselves more readily to materiality, or the use of

hardware to engage with the product e.g. e-books. This trajectory has reconfigured purchasing and listening habits in particular ways

Building on ideas around disposability outlined in the previous empirical chapter, the case can be made here for understanding the specific changes to consumption habits and their effects. Highlighting how music is increasingly viewed as collectable and transitory ties in conceptions of ownership and listening habits which increasingly reflect individual concerns rather than the wider interests of the scene or the independent music sector as a whole. The following quotes reflect a significant theme of disposability in music consumption;

I think people will, y'know, I think people use music disposably more and more, but there is still music that they will keep as almost sacred, so yeah, I think it just separates the disposable from the amazing.

(Kyle, P6M5, DJ and promoter)

...it definitely make me think that CDs are physical and therefore last, whereas mp3s, they only last until somebody hits delete, which makes them quite disposable.

(Male Audience Member)

As outlined in the previous chapter, narratives of disposability within the data provide interesting insights into the de-commodification and revalorisation of music within the digital context. This inevitably impacts upon the attitudes and decisions of all social actors regarding consumption. The architecture of the internet and the modes through which music can be accessed has changed attitudes to music. The presence of P2P facilities, such as Limewire and The Pirate Bay, as well as legitimate streaming services, offer a method of access that is novel, and which is altering the way consumers listen to music, as these quotes illustrate;

I don't buy music anymore, I've got a Zoom, it's pretty much like Spotify, subscription, it works on my phone and my computer and its pretty much all I spend my time on. Because I've got the subscription, I don't buy music anymore. I pay a subscription fee every month, £10 a month. Again, correct me if I'm wrong, but I've not seen a single penny[of profit as a musician] from Spotify.

(Rob, (M2M2) musician)

JC: So, [internet] changes the way you listen to things and pick things out?

K: Yeah, completely. As a DJ generally, when I was buying records, you tend to listen to about ten seconds of a tune before you decide whether to buy it, you listen to the intro, you listen to the middle, you listen to the breakdown, and you can tell from that, you know straightaway if that's gonna be good enough. So, that translates now to listening to stuff online and bands and stuff like that, yeah, you've got that...right there's the breakdown, there's the whatever, you can just listen to that straightaway and decide whether you want to book that band or...

(Kyle (P6M5), promoter)

These professionals point out that the facilities available to them online have shaped the way they relate to music in comparison to their pre-digital consumption habits. The use of subscription services contributes increasingly to a ‘sampling’ culture of music in which individual songs or albums are no longer purchased, but are streamed for a monthly fee. The sustainability of such legitimate faculties such as Zoom or Spotify is contested, but is nevertheless contributing to a treatment of music which is facilitating a consumption of large volumes of music in an ‘a la carte’ manner. Social uses of such facilities suggest that they are contributing to a growing attitude to music which emphasises its transitory and ephemeral nature. Kyle highlights how such volume of music and its availability contribute to such ephemerality in his promotional work. In order to get through volumes of music sent, a ‘skimming the surface’ approach must be taken in order to keep up. He learns to listen for certain markers of quality which frees him from the commitment to listen to the whole track. Such practices make the case for the internet facilitating such ephemerality, but additionally, the adoption of such facilities has been shaped by those who use them both for business-related and personal purposes. In addition to the discussion of music as ‘fast-food’ as discussed on page 187, other extended conversations with audience members in pilot focus groups highlighted feelings of music as ephemeral, as this male elaborates;

M1: Interesting, I suppose I like to have a CD if I can. But then there’s all sorts of...I suppose because I’m sat at a computer all day anyway, it’s relatively easy to find torrents and the illegal stuff. But things that might be on a band’s website anyway, that offer a ‘this is what we sound like’ kind of thing and I’ll happily download that and frequently I will find ‘yeah, that’s the CD I must get’, sometimes I might get round to getting that CD, but the list of wanted CDs grows far faster and far longer than I can actually buy them.

JC: So you’re still a purchaser of CDs, then?

M1: I am, but I have quite a large number of mp3s as well and sometimes obscure bits and pieces that, yeah, I’d like to buy a CD of sometime, maybe if it was something available in the States or something, I listen to a fair bit of foreign language stuff as well and so it’s quite nice to collect things from wherever I can and mp3s do offer a way of doing that without having to wonder into an actual physical shop or even going to Amazon or something and ordering that, even though I intend to for some of those bands, yeah. My curiosity often races ahead of my...

M2: ...income.

M1: Yes, exactly.

This passage highlights the role of immediacy in perpetuating ephemerality. The emphasis on the ability to ‘collect’ such items that interest M1 is a result of the free access to content mounted online. ‘Curiosity’ can mean that much more is accumulated than may have been in pre-digital value chains. It is suggested that the lack of purchase of all music encountered online causes consumers to get ahead of themselves as they encounter such output, leading to

an increase in ephemeral engagement with music. The payoff for such access is an increasingly impoverished engagement with music which is specific to this form of cultural output, as opposed to cultural forms which are textual in nature, as the development of the mp3 lends itself to online dissemination in specific ways which accelerate the onset of disposability and ephemerality.

However, there were examples in the data which suggest that this is not the full story. In marked contrast some view such unrivalled access as a boost to their purchasing habits;

JC: But, I just wanted to know because I'm...my research is interested in filesharing and how that's changed how people get hold of music...

M2: Massively, like with Limewire, I can actually download a song that I know, it'll take me half an hour but...I never used to really buy music until I got my first iPod eight years ago or whenever it was, and then I started downloading stuff and then I started buying music for the first time. So it wasn't until then that I really started listening to music as much as I do now. So weirdly, by starting downloading, I've ended up buying a lot more.

(Male audience member)

This supports earlier research by Filby (2007), which proposed that access to legitimate and illegitimate streaming platforms actually stimulates purchase of music. This also appears to support the rationale of *The Hargreaves Report* (2011), which advocates a stance which relaxes regulations on access to copyrighted material and emphasises the benefits of freely circulated material for innovation. It highlights that evidence of the ephemerality of music is not universally advocated by respondents, and that although disposability and a more superficial engagement are in evidence, there are some who make use of such facilities in different ways, thus questioning the literature which supports technological determinism (McLuhan, 1964) and emphasising the multitude of ways in which one technology can be used to serve different societal requirements.

Evidence of disposability and ephemerality disrupt traditional conventions over the purchase of music, shaped by the nature of and reaction to wider access manipulation of mp3 music files. This is related to earlier discussions of changing relationships between consumers and fans. Frequently raised amongst independent musicians was the 'familiarity breeds contempt' problem, in which the closeness achieved between the two groups of social actors fostered an

increased lack of respect and idolatry for musicians and their art. Joel (M1M1) and Hywel (M3M3) elaborate on this problem;

*J: There's a fine line between...with having fans and having people like friends and I mean, it sounds horrible but we'd rather have people, y'know, we'd rather have people that really really y'know love the band and stuff than really love us as people.
H: Sergio Pizzono, the guitarist from Kasabian said the other day in NME a couple of months ago, he said that he doesn't like Twitter because he thinks it breaks down the barrier between the fan and the artist and takes away the mystique a little bit between them, and he thinks the downfall...part of the downfall for music, because people don't idolise stars so much, because they're constantly contacting them and stuff.*

The disconnect between this and the reality of artist-fan relationships has already been linked to the erosion of respect for artists, but can also be connected to the subsequent ephemeral attitudes to music which have been identified above. Transitory engagement with the art itself is linked with erosion in the pre-digital boundaries between artist and fan. The importance of the preservation of mystique remained important as increased closeness was identified as transgressive and detrimental to attempts to become more well-known and successful. This is in stark contrast to mainstream equivalents of such followings, such as Lady Gaga's Twitter following, which reached over 20 million in March 2012 (Topper, 2012). Such loyal followings, and on such large scales would seem to be welcomed as the future in the mainstream arena, however, independent operations appear to highlight such phenomena as potentially damaging to meaningful interaction online. Musicians Tony (M17M16) and Karen (M16F1) share similar sentiments in discussing the difference between forums (discrete websites which facilitated discussion on specific topics, and which require membership) as opposed to social networking;

*T: Forums, again, they used to be brilliant before Facebook, before all of these other things came in. They were an opportunity for fans to get together and have a chat about your band, have a chat about other bands...
K: And there was some very, I think because they were sort of the only online space in which you could go and do that, there were some very clearly understood boundaries about things, and it was all contained within this little world, you could go onto that forum and say something about this or that, you'd get people who'd just write horrible things on people's forums anyway. But it's also so polluted now with all the Facebook stuff. It's become such a, as you say, there isn't any kind of frame around anything anymore. Everything sort of bleeds into everything else.*

The breakdown of such boundaries and a lack of frame around social interaction on Facebook is a marked and negative development in comparison to the forums which preceded it. The disintegration of established modes of conduct found in the latter have contributed to a removal of civility which constructed earlier online relations. This is supposed to be common

across all social networking sites and paints a dystopic picture of relations with professionals, fans, and interaction with the art forms circulated within the network and which contribute to, and exacerbate, issues of disposability and ephemerality. Such consequences were identified by relatively few respondents, with roughly equal celebration of increased closeness and feedback with fans, as these extracts show;

It sounds terrible, but personally I...part of the reason I use Facebook is to help promote the band, my personal Facebook, not the Cuba Cuba Facebook page, but my own. So if people add me, I'll just accept accept accept, and it's weird, coz then they...no, but loads of bands do that...and then they'll tag you in a picture with, and they've typed out your lyrics and...so they make things like that, I think that's really nice.

(Joel (M1M1), musician)

Um, I dunno, I could show you a Sound Cloud thing [comments section] and I was just laughing; 'this is fucking amazing' you know, just like, that was an actual comment 'this is fuckazing!' and I just thought, that's great, that made me laugh, and another guy above it, 'this got me so excited I could fuck my face' I was just like, 'what!?' just reading and laughing, just thinking, 'enthusiastic' do you know what I mean? It's funny, just, that kind of comments, 'ah I love this' a guy saying, 'I'd kill somebody to do a track with you' that sort of thing, just off the cuff, small, positive, silly remarks basically.

(Samuel, (P8M7), promoter and musician)

Yeah, definitely, we're always at the shows, we're always at the nights we put on and I think, particularly within Cardiff, it's quite easy because it's quite a close city, it's a close community, that, yeah, we're constantly getting feedback and everything from our crowds. Yeah, and we generally know most of our crowd as well, so yeah, it's great.[...] We're open to criticism as well, we welcome it, if people aren't happy about a certain thing, wicked, let us know and we'll change it.

(Kyle (P6M5), promoter)

As much as concerns were raised about the increased closeness with fans, as many highlighted the benefits of such enthusiastic feedback from audiences and the spur it created to receive such positive reinforcement for their work, as Samuel recounts. Although this requires a great deal of self-promotion, as Joel discusses, the return that he receives is more than financial; engagement with fans and expressions of their appreciation of their music through online engagement with the music and lyrics is inherently meaningful and a sign of growing support. From a promotional perspective, Kyle highlights the critique as useful in gathering information about how to improve his business, and welcomes frank exchanges with audiences about how this can be achieved. These accounts reveal a multitude of outcomes which result from increased familiarity between professionals and audiences. Some fear that it has a detrimental effect on the treatment of music by audiences; leading to a

disregard and appreciation for the work of art in favour of collecting and consuming mass quantities of material. This may be a consequence of the particular malleability of music into immaterial form and the acceleration of development in this respect for the music industry before any other CI. However, business-focused benefits have been lauded, with the creation of dialogue around a music milieu welcomed as a method of improvement and motivation to make more and better music.

It appears as though interpretation of the new conventions of interaction and exchange offered by the internet are nuanced; particularly to interests of musicians who are concerned about the irreverential treatment of their output as a work of art (Benjamin, 1936), and also those within the milieu who are more business-minded and therefore more receptive to the benefits of increased closeness with fans. Concerns of disposability and ephemerality are secondary to ensuring an effective feedback loop which will improve their promotional activities. These competing concerns characterise the disruption to established social and economic modes of the pre-digital age, and highlight the diverse interpretations and consequences of the prominence of immaterial product and its increasing embeddedness within established practices with which it is not always compatible. Issues of sustainability and respect for music remain salient, and many are attempting to re-establish such values in immaterial music in order to secure this. The following section explores the innovative methods being attempted within the independent sector which are attempting to re-establish notions of value, loyalty and allegiance to artists within the independent milieu.

2.3 Innovation in Promotion and Fan Engagement: Advocating Adaptation

Through the discussion of the disruption to established economic and social relations which have defined the digital age, professional accounts told of some of the strategies which were being employed in order to retain sustainability of music, merchandise and related 'experiences'. Interviews and observations revealed that in a general and far-reaching sense, the landscape of promotion, dissemination of music and engagement with fans in the Cardiff milieu was changing more comprehensively than could be covered by reducing the issue to the problem of illegal filesharing. The emergence of such activity appears to confirm these activities as established and entrenched; however, the following data explores the ways in which music, de-commodified in CD and vinyl form, is being re-commodified in both physical and immaterial forms. These data deal with emerging strategies for engaging

consumers and securing sustainability across online and offline spaces; these include re-establishing material culture as a bridge to digital engagement, co-ordinating promotion across online and offline spaces and the engagement of fans based on the consumption of ‘experience’ as well as traditional products. The adoption of such diverse strategies aims to adjust in accordance with the emergence of immaterial product and networked relations and devising new business models which promise realistic rates of revenue for independent artists. Additionally, these strategies attempt to reinvigorate notions of allegiance, economic value of music and loyalty to particular artist, which have historically been so important to the practice of fandom, thus reinvigorating the ‘aura’ (Benjamin, 1936).

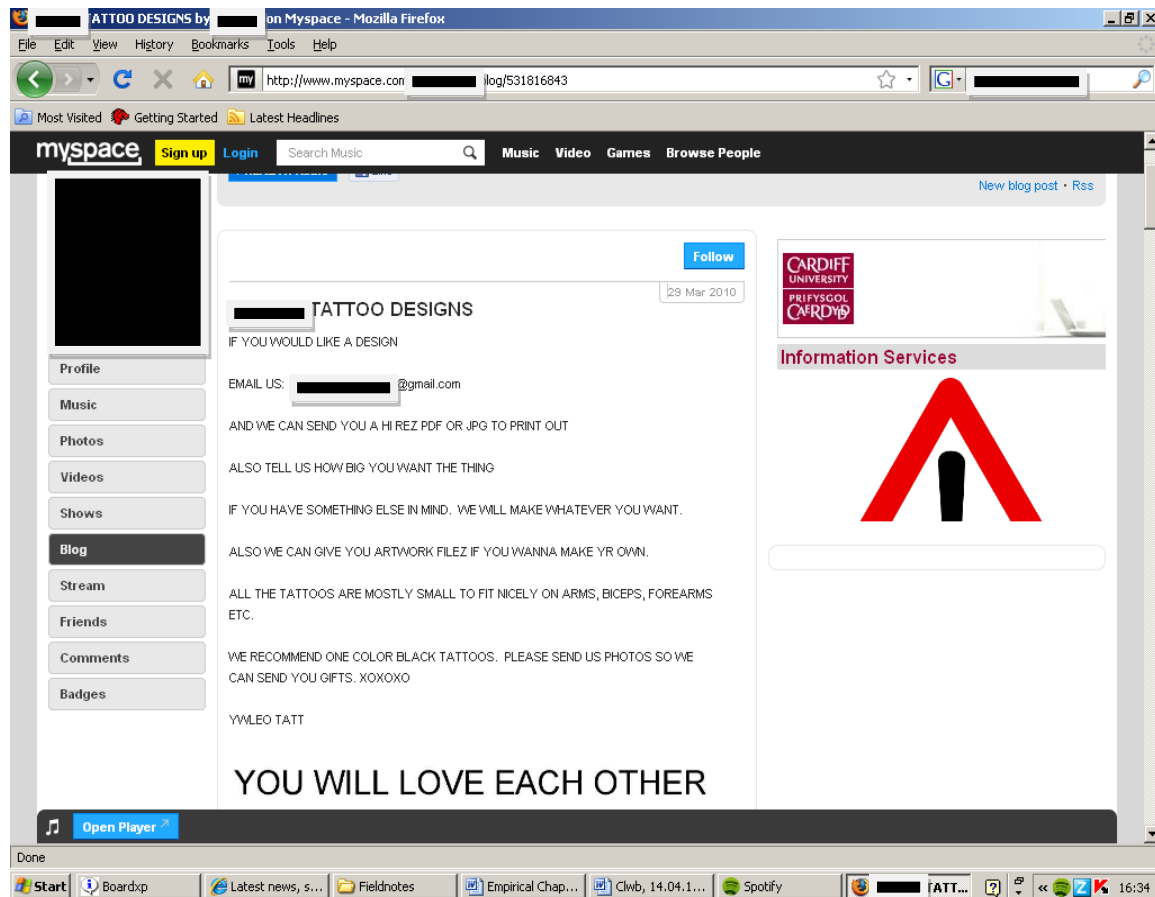
An important strategy that has been taken up by independent professionals within the Cardiff milieu is to secure engagement with fans across online and offline spaces; encapsulating contact before, after and in between physical engagement at live shows. The online space was seen as a key site of mobilisation of a large number of potential fans for promotional purposes; however, it was also important to provide links across the two domains in order to secure enduring practices of consumption and fandom. Musicians Joel (M1M1) and Rob (M2M2) explained their novel attempt to secure payment for their music from those who attended gigs;

*J: Coz what we’re going to do is, one of the new formats is that you get a card. It’s a unique card with a unique code inside it. It’s usually like a wallet, like a cardholder, an Oyster card holder. That’s the format really, although we don’t live in London, it can be used for any...but it’s a card with our art on it, on the front, and inside, it’s like you scratch away or whatever, and it’s got a code and you go to a specific website and you type in the code and you get the album as a download, as a pack, and that allows us to sell that album for like two, three pound and still make a profit.
R: And they feel like they’re getting something as well. You can’t go at the show ‘oh, cool, we like the band, go to this link on your credit card and go and download this’.*

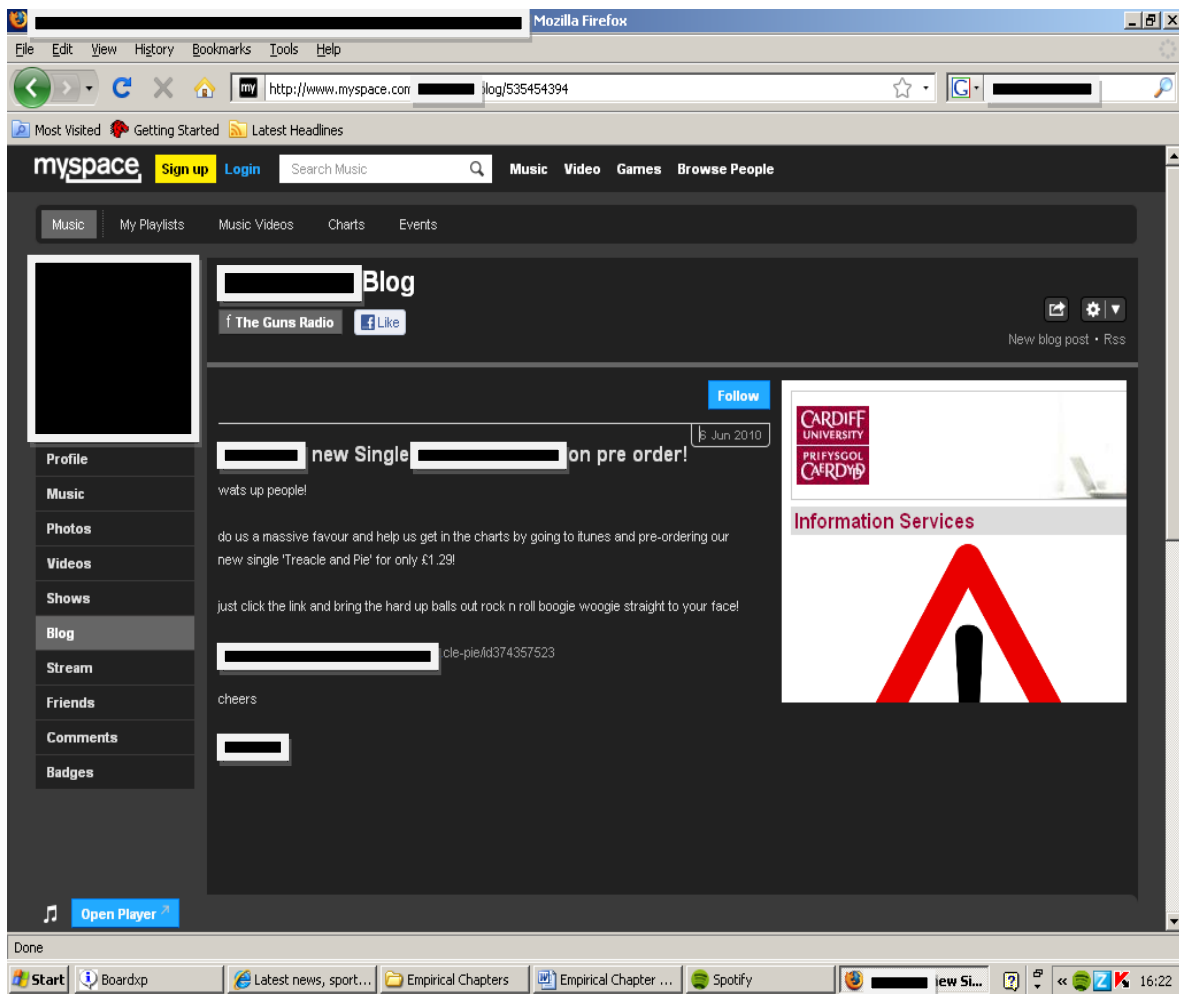
Not only does this physical artefact secure purchase of their music and give fans the favoured digital copy of the music, it also successfully engages scene members both in the embodied experience of the live gig (Fonarow, 2006) and in the legitimate purchase of music, the revenue of which goes directly to the artists. The bridging of each form of consumption is an attempt to stimulate a pattern of consumption which will provide the artists with a growing fanbase and sustainable revenue streams. The use of the ‘Oyster card’ also draws attention to attempts to bridge the gap between the materiality of the purchase and the immaterial form of the music. The inclusion of the artwork on the card in particular invoking the importance of

supporting aesthetics that was so important in the pre-digital era i.e. the album cover artwork. The bridging of online/offline and material/immaterial aims to invoke traditional attributes of fandom, as conceived within the pre-digital era, such as loyalty, long-term allegiance and value and respect for music. This example is an attempt to re-inscribe such values into fan practices in a way which incorporates both spheres in a mutually reinforcing manner.

In addition to attempts to inscribe more respectful pre-digital fan practices in the digital sphere, online spaces are also used to encourage a continuous flow of engagement between consumers and professionals in a mutual reproduction of the scene. This is evidenced through the following screenshots, collected as part of the ethnographic observations, which shows how bands have attempted to appeal to their fans to design and create content and also to aid chart success in other media;



Screenshot of MySpace blog page of a touring band who played in Cardiff: appealing to fans to send in designs of tattoos based on their album artwork.

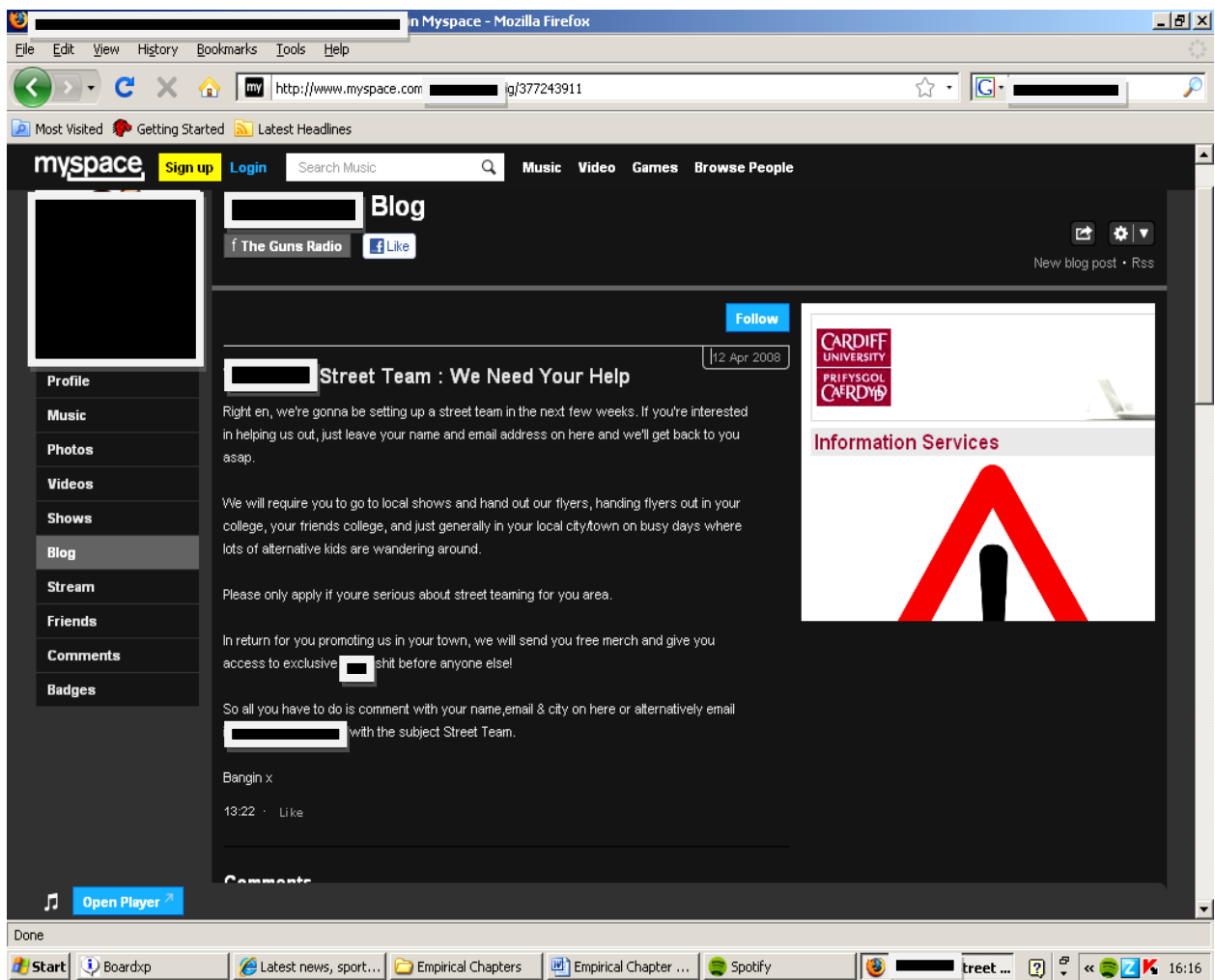


Screenshot of MySpace profile blog section from a local band: appealing to fans to pre-order their single in order to improve their chart position

These extracts reveal the ways in which artists may motivate fans to design original content or use their influence as consumers to increase musicians' profile on other media, in this case, TV, through online appeals. As well as attempting to instil traditional conceptions of fandom within consumption, there is also willingness to harness their creative capacity and encourage productive engagement in a presumptive form as conceived by Bruns (2008). Although this demonstrates an adaptive response on the musician's part to the mechanisms of the internet and the behaviour of fans that use social networking sites, it can also be suggested that, as productive capacities are brought about at the behest of professionals, interaction is constructed through their needs rather than autonomously initiated by consumers. Nevertheless, this engagement effectively utilises the set up of social networking facilities in order to stimulate productive engagement which adds another dimension which enriches the

fan experiences and attempts to re-establish respect for the artist, as was present in the pre-digital era.

Use of online platforms to engage fans are also aligned with the physical world, amongst such efforts were the employment of street teams recruited online, as this screenshot illustrates;



Screenshot of MySpace blog section of local band: appeal for street team members.

This strategy demonstrates the way in which globally networked facilities, such as MySpace, can mobilise fans in an embodied experience of promoting their favourite artists within Cardiff and the local area. This is incentivised in return for free merchandise and gig tickets and succeeds in not only engaging fans across both spheres, but also engages them in free promotional work for the band which reaches a wider range of people for minimal cost. Although the potentially exploitative nature of such arrangements for an artists' fanbase has

been highlighted (Baym and Burnett, 2009), this can provide a more efficient means of promotion, as well as a reorientation of fandom which utilises the best of online and offline strategies. Additionally, participating in street teams is another way of instilling notions of fan loyalty and a closeness which was welcomed due to its benefit for all parties. Demonstrable enthusiasm is a currency well recognised by artists, and the authenticity of fan endorsement can be more powerful than any other promotion which originates from the artist, and can stimulate ‘viral momentum’ online and in the physical world. The ultimate aim is to create sustained engagement with an artist which results in long term fandom, and therefore, sustainable revenue. Although digitisation and its consequences are established, the aim is to integrate both spheres into a co-ordinated set of practices which are adaptive, but encourage respect and re-establish monetary value to music in the digital age.

As well as encouraging a re-commodification of the music and a renewed reverence for the art form amongst their fans, artists were also looking to diversify, understanding that merchandise and other ‘experiences’ were also important sources of revenue. In order to combat the losses in revenue from the fall in music sales, there emerged an increase in the number of competitions set by bands and an increase in financial and sentimental value of the prizes given away. This is, to an extent, dependent on the relative success of an artist, but is indicative of the strategies in which value is being shifted to peripheral products such as these ‘experiences’, whilst the role of music shifts towards fulfilling a promotional role. Joel (M1M1) discusses the development of a scheme which allows artists to charge a premium for one-off high value prices;

J: ...have you heard about [name of scheme]?

JC: No.

J: It's where bands ask...they offer their fans like really exclusive things like a day in the studio with them or a sit down meal, or a special edition hand-printed copy of their successful album or something and a lot of bands are doing that. It works for a lot of bands, but, I mean, for...

JC: It depends how well known you are I suppose?

J: Yeah, exactly, and there's a fine line on that because a lot of people have argued that it's kind of just taking advantage of fans and just over pricing things big time. There was a couple of really stupid ones...I can't remember the name of the band, £250,000 right, to go with the band to record their next album and spend the whole time in a nice hotel, obviously it's...you pay for the nice hotel and everything, but you basically spend everyday with the band for like, while they're writing the album, so you're just part of the album process for £250,000. [...] a lot of people would argue that's taking advantage, but then a lot of people would kill for something like that.

The attempts to derive lost revenue, previously derived from sales of music, from charging significantly higher prices for ‘experiences’ was a way in which the market for peripheral goods was growing and attempting to be more lucrative in the way it sustains artists. There was evidence that this innovative strategy was gaining some ground with artists in the independent sphere who were slightly more established; as the band who discussed this phenomenon admitted they were not in any position to initiate such a proposition given the nature of their fanbase. However, variation on such tactics that are more realistic for the level of independent artists concerned were noted in this screenshot of a MySpace page, in which artists were offering experience-orientated prizes in return for purchase of their music. This text is taken verbatim from their blog page and illustrates some of the prizes on offer;

GOLD. [ticket colour]

01

LOS ANGELES ADVENTURE

ROUND TRIP AIRFARE. THREE DAYS AND TWO NIGHTS OF NON STOP ENTERTAINMENT. YOU ARE STAYING WITH US. WE WILL TAKE YOU TO SIX FLAGS MAGIC MOUNTAIN. WE WILL TAKE YOU THE ZOO. WE WILL BRING YOU BREAKFAST IN BED. WE WILL LOVE EACH OTHER.

[...]

GREEN

7A - 7G

GUEST LIST FOR TWO

WE WILL PROVIDE YOU AND A FRIEND WITH FREE TICKETS TO A HEALTH SHOW NEAREST YOU. ADDITIONALLY, WE CAN SPEND SOME TIME TOGETHER BACKSTAGE. BEER AND SNACKS WILL BE COMPLIMENTARY.

NOTE: RESTRICTED TO CONTINENTAL UNITED STATES

[...]

SILVER. [UK Prize]

PRESTIGE PERFORMANCE.

SPECIAL OVERSIZED SILVER TICKET THAT GRANTS ADMISSION TO A SPECIAL LONDON SHOW JUST FOR YOU AUGUST 26. EVERY PRE ORDER WILL GIVE YOU ONE.

The value of the experience is provided as the incentive to purchasing the music, signifying that the value for fans no longer resides solely in listening to a CD or mp3 recording, or attending a show, but within the promise of more exclusive merchandise or experiential prizes as the key source of revenue and creating interest around the band. Morrow (2009) suggests is a way in which artists can extend their revenue streams and conceive of their music as a ‘product’ with a long life of revenue generation through special editions, diverse merchandise and one-off ‘experiences’. In the cases above, these experiences are obtained

either by paying directly, or purchasing the music to be in with a chance of winning an ‘experiential’ prize. Although professionals interviewed within the scene did not undertake such co-ordinated prize-giving, acknowledging that they were not noted enough for it, the value of the prize, experiential or otherwise, was considered important in the search to secure revenue in a climate where music was increasingly considered a promotional tool.

The music itself is viewed as peripheral to, or as an incentive to access higher value or rare goods or prizes. Artists are tapping into the potential of alternative revenue sources, altering the way music is viewed by the audience, but also their treatment of it. Frequently, accounts mention the use of legitimate streaming facilities, predominantly Spotify, as a recognised platform through which fans can preview music, as the following accounts show;

L: No, at the end of the day, with Spotify and things like that now, you expect to be able to find it at your fingertips. If a new band releases, I listen to it on Spotify, if I like it, I buy it and I think if a band is good enough and has a big enough following there’s always going to be a certain amount of people that will buy it. So its like previewing it.

JC: Yeah, like do you think...like Spotify is quite a good example, what do you think about Spotify?

J: I love it, I think its brilliant and I think maybe its going to produce even more music fans because people...as long as there’s more avenues for people to listen to music, that’s surely a really good thing.

R: It makes it so accessible, it makes almost any music so accessible because even though its bad from one side of the spectrum, on the other side its just...people can listen to any music they want at any time. So, that’s always a good thing.

(Lisa (P2F1), promoter and Rich (M6M6) and Jon (M5M5), musicians)

[...]like Spotify, I use Spotify, um, the weird thing I don’t understand is one of our records is on Spotify now but our other records aren’t, and the distributor, I presume linked into that, has now gone bust, so, where the fuck is that money for that going? You know, I don’t know where it’s going so, it’s not coming to us! So, I’m happy for it to be on there it’s real weird coz I’m like, haven’t got control over this, what’s happening there, I don’t understand and I’d like our other records on there and I’d like to know whether the money’s come to us um, so it’s all weird but I do like it as a system and I was using it all last night just, it’s good. I’m happy with things like that if there’s monetisation, we, in all honesty the money we’ve earned of late is just through having music on TV programs. That works coz you get money through the royalty systems like, great, decent money...

(Samuel (P8M7), promoter)

Although both accounts support the principles and methods of music dissemination on Spotify, the first account is overwhelmingly supportive of the effect of the facility on independent music and the promotional potential it offers, suggesting that use will in fact

stimulate the scene. The second account is more measured, offering support but arguing that the model needs some tightening up in order to ensure that income actually reaches the artists. The use of Spotify and similar platforms has embedded itself firmly in the practices of both mainstream and independent scenes, and although there are some reservations regarding revenue security, it is widely accepted by the majority of professionals that Spotify reflects the transformation of the role of music as partially promotional and tried before it is bought.

The combination of acknowledgement of free streaming services, and their uses, alongside the presence of other strategies to garner revenue highlights the multitude of ways that professionals in the independent milieu are attempting to grapple with the challenges of retaining revenue in the digital era. Using David's (2010: 157) matrix of emerging music industry business models, based on axes of high/low trust (whether audiences will pay for recordings) and high/low proximity (the relative significance of mediated and live music), the *aspirations* of professionals within this milieu appears to fall within the high trust/high proximity model, in which revenue is garnered from both authorised recordings and live performances as a result of good relationships with fans. Efforts to engage with fans are evident through extensive use of social networking, and aims to build trusting relationships between parties in order to facilitate legitimate purchases of music, as well as encouraging purchase of tickets to live performances. However, this ideal has not yet been attained within this milieu, and actual efforts currently appear to fall either into the low trust/high proximity or high trust/low proximity models.

Examples of operation of the former model come from those who highly value performance and giving their fans an embodied experience, whilst the latter model privileges fostering trust between musicians and fans in order to secure legitimate sales from which musicians may benefit financially. This can be seen through traditional methods of advertising music and live performance; however, other more innovative methods have been employed in order to bridge the gaps between these two objectives, namely the 'Oyster Card' example. These methods have aimed to reinstate legitimate purchase in conjunction with gig attendance in order to foster trust between artist and fan and restore some of the key features of fandom which were so revered pre-digitisation. Accounts have demonstrated a desire to attain both of these aims; however, achievement on these fronts has been patchy and inconsistent, reflecting the adjustment period we are currently in whilst new business models are tested.

Although David's matrix focuses on mainstream artists and their adaptation to the digital age, these issues have relevance for those unsigned or on smaller labels, as aims for sustainability are present within a significant number of accounts. The desire to foster trust and retain proximity with fans is as much of a concern for lesser known artists as for their mainstream counterparts.

This model has served as an important basis for understanding the emergence of new business models and motivations behind them, and has significant relevance to both mainstream and independent sectors. This research extends this matrix in understanding the role of merchandise and 'experiential' prizes in efforts to foster increased trust with fans. The role of high value prizes related to artists has served not only as an incentive to buy music, but also has the effect of restoring ideals of fandom and appreciation for music that some argue have been lost as music becomes more disposable and fan-artist relationships become 'too friendly'. It is argued that, in the case of the independent scene, David's high trust/high proximity model is desirable, but that currently the milieu is in a phase of experimentation in which different strategies are being trialled in order to achieve such ends. These strategies extend beyond the traditional fields of recordings and performance, and utilise other, previously peripheral revenue streams which have growing value for the independent sector.

Conclusion

This chapter has firstly highlighted changing attitudes to the circulation of unauthorised music in this independent milieu. The data discussed here has revealed a desire by independent artists to achieve some degree of sustainability and fair reward for the music they produce, and justifiably so. There remains a clear desire by professionals to be remunerated for their music, and a resistance to attitudes which promote unfettered access to their output alone. However, this is countered by a significant voice from audiences which demonstrates an entrenched use of illegal P2P services, perceived as a danger not only to revenue, but also having a corrosive effect on attitudes to the value of music and the regard in which artists are held. Narratives around such activity, from both sides, were constructed in terms of the self and self-interest, from the practice of illegal filesharing from audiences to the notion of exclusive ownership of authored works from artists. It appeared that the 'creative commons' ethos has not been embraced within this milieu despite evidence of practices of all social actors being caught between production and consumption. This

indicates that the potential for a dramatic re-ordering of economic relations has been rejected in favour of upholding established neo-liberal values about ownership and use of immaterial product.

However, despite significant hostility to illegal filesharing, it was also acknowledged that such shifts were entrenched and that the pervasive nature of the mp3 file meant that little could be done to stem the tide. Accepting this, the majority of professionals advocated adaptation rather than resistance to such change and used music increasingly as a promotional tool, as well as selling more 'polished' versions of recordings, incorporating a variety of strategies which aimed towards sustainability.

Illegal filesharing, however, was not the only issue of concern. This chapter has also highlighted the importance of not over-playing the significance of this phenomenon in the context of the other transgressive and transformative issues that have arisen as a result of digitisation and networked communication. Through discussions of the breakdown in discrete professional roles and the ephemeral character of music, the beginnings of an understanding of the social changes that digitisation has wrought can contextualise the issue of illegal filesharing, which is but one element of these changes. It is important not to lose sight of other salient issues and to not be lead exclusively by the agenda of mainstream record labels as they push for tighter measures against filesharers, as this chapter has demonstrated, and highlight the increasingly lenient and adaptive response to both illegal and transgressive activities.

The final section of this chapter demonstrated the presence of adaptive responses from the independent sector. Discussions of innovative strategies which worked with the circulation of unauthorised content in mind demonstrates an evolution in business models which aim to foster trust and traditional notions of fandom simultaneously in the hope of securing sustainable revenue. Although music has been re-commodified in an immaterial form, and thus considered less valuable or central to musicians' revenue, peripheral products such as merchandise and 'experience' based prizes are being trialled in the hope that these will take up the economic slack, as well as re-install old-fashioned notions of fandom in consumers. Although there has been no evidence of a revolution in economic and social relations, such strategies point to a gradual adaptation and process of trial and error which aim to engage

audiences across live spaces and through alternative revenue streams, as well as maintaining efforts to encourage legitimate sales of music from which artists can directly benefit.

Chapter 8

Discussion

Introduction

This study, although initially aiming to focus more closely on the impacts of digitisation on professionals and scene members in relation to policy proposals to preserve copyright law, has rapidly evolved into a project of far greater sociological significance than first anticipated. What has emerged is a snapshot of a particular city's music scene at a particular point in which digitisation has become integral to its operation. Whilst understanding the changes to treatment of intellectual property, which is central to debates about how music is produced, consumed and distributed, along the way this research has exposed the wider social shifts which are occurring alongside the pertinent economic issues identified by policymakers and industry lobbyists. Here, I will draw together the prominent findings which illustrate such shifts and address my findings with reference to the research questions outlined in the introduction. This section will engage with the findings and the key contributions the research makes to the field, drawing on existing literature from both academia and cultural policy in outlining the value of such findings for understanding the key impacts and points of tension that digitisation has raised in Cardiff.

This chapter will firstly address changes to the scene in the digital era, outlining how the findings have understood the way in which mutually embedded online and offline practices work in conjunction to reproduce it. It engages with practical issues facing the scene and the interplay between physical and digital promotional methods, as well as engaging with the concept of milieu and the organisation of music scenes and fandom in contemporary society. This section will address the nature of newly emerging social spaces, looking specifically at the extent to which democratisation is present within the milieu. Additionally, the presumed impact of social networking and the presumption assumed by many academics, versus the reality of the form of interaction which results, is also of interest in understanding not only the impact of technology, but the sociological significance of such shifts. The second section focuses more closely on the impact of new forms of interaction and practices of presumption on shifting placement and ideas around the value of music and associated goods, as well as the extent of consumer empowerment as 'prosumers' and the precarity of professional status in the digitised milieu. Finally, the issue of illegal filesharing is placed in its social and

economic context, and an understanding of the wider sociological and cultural significance of these findings in understanding transgressive online activities and how they should be treated is elaborated. This section is particularly concerned with maintenance and re-negotiation of ‘netiquette’ and a re-orientation and placement of value on products peripheral to music in the construction of new models of revenue generation, and reflects both on the impact of online and offline interaction on the music industry, but also the future of music as an art form.

The discussion concludes with a reflection on the strengths and weaknesses of the research, as well as elaborating on the original contribution that the study has made to the fields of network and cultural studies. Findings may have a wider application and use within cultural policy, in providing insights into the attitudes of professionals, their approaches to preserving revenue streams and the creation of new avenues of sustainability for a local music industry. Concluding comments focus on possibilities for further development and suggestions for future research.

(1) The Milieu in the Digital Era

Research Question 1: What constitutes the Cardiff indie ‘milieu’ and to what extent, and in what ways, do online and offline spaces work in conjunction to reproduce it?

This research question aimed to understand the manifestation of digitisation in the reproduction of the Cardiff independent music scene and to explore the lived experiences of ‘mutual embeddedness’ as a concept outlined in the literature. This section will first examine the state of the local music economy in Cardiff with regards to its cohesion as a stable ‘scene’ in the context of digitisation. It is suggested that Webb’s (2007) concept of the ‘milieu’ may be more helpful in this context. The second section will explore the extent to which ‘mutual embeddedness’ is present, and the issues arising from such a shift.

1.1 Subculture, Scene...Milieu? Local Music Scenes, Globalisation and Digitisation

The Cardiff scene is both culturally distinct, yet also firmly anchored within online networks which aid promotion and communication with other professionals and music fans nationally and internationally. The glocalisation (Robertson, 1992; Turkle, 1997) of Cardiff’s music scene is evident from the accounts which describe both its vibrancy and the widespread

connectedness that professionals and scene members have with other professionals operating in other localities across the world. Bands based in Cardiff, and those Welsh bands who travel to Cardiff regularly to play, contribute to the production and reproduction of the scene and create a distinctive cultural milieu which sets it apart from other scenes based on issues of language, style and genre which are appropriated in acts of commoditisation and branding in an effort to export the scene nationally, most notably through the Swn Festival. However, independent acts from outside of Wales also regularly play in Cardiff as part of their touring circuit, and so there exist intertwined relationships between those based in Cardiff and those who visit the city but who reside within other localised scenes or milieu. The scene as it is constituted takes on a glocalised character, constituted of its own cultural heritage, but also appropriating musical styles which are dominant in the wider cultural milieu in both mainstream and independent music sectors. Harris (2000:17) discusses the capability of scenes to produce relationships relative to their geographic location. Global and local milieux can be 'quasi-autonomous', that is, dependent, yet containing practices, texts and forms of capital unique to each. This study highlights the way in which online communication can formulate such relationships through the use of social networking platforms to firstly and primarily promote within the scene, but also to be outward-facing in order to build and connect with the global music community, operating within their own discrete milieu. The reproduction of the milieu as seamlessly connected to the global music online milieux, whilst maintaining its distinctive local characteristics has been illustrated using the rich observational data. As will be discussed in the following section dealing with the concept of 'mutual embeddedness', social networking is a more useful tool for this outward-facing networking as a bolster for sustaining the diversity of Cardiff's scene through bringing in professionals from elsewhere.

The internet is used simultaneously between those who are within the scene to communicate with one another, and also with those operating in a variety of capacities beyond it. The ability for scene members to participate within both the local and global music scene online allowed for a melding together of the local and global in terms of the production and consumption of those who were using such spaces, but who were physically placed. However, the distinctiveness of the scene remained clear through specific features and issues which were integral to the Cardiff scene, such as the economic landscape and the significance of the Welsh language. The desire for Welsh language acts to be integrated with English

speaking artists at gigs reflects the cultural specificity of the scene as promoted through the branding of the scene via Swn and other set-ups, but also the wish to hybridise the scene in order to reflect its English and Welsh language heritage.

Cardiff's economic problems, namely low attendance at gigs, and the specific configuration and relationships between different genres, remains important in an understanding of the Cardiff milieu's position in relation to other UK cities. Use of online platforms allows the scene to engage with the global milieu whilst retaining the features of its placed scene, both productive and problematic. It has been suggested that the emerging milieu, comprised of both offline and online communicative features and the social interaction which takes place within and across these spaces, results in a milieu of a fundamentally different character to that which existed in the pre-digital era, and as such produces a myriad of consequences, both intended and unintended. Most notable of these is the idea that 'mutual embeddedness' of the online and offline domains fosters a form of continuous 'connected presence' (Miller, 2008) which is informed not only by the technology utilised, but is also informed and in turn shapes new forms of social space within Cardiff's music milieu. The ubiquity of social networking has had some effect on the way in which the milieu is organised, disrupting the established conceptions of what the literature has defined as a 'scene' and posing the question of whether, in times of global flows of communication via information-based networks, there can be a 'scene' which exists as the literature defines it (Straw, 1991; Bennett, 1999) or whether subcultural theory must re-examine its conception of modern scenes as transformed by the integration of online communication.

Earlier discussions of the development of subcultural thought have problematised the very term and its definition as a valid model for understanding contemporary music scenes and operations. It has been established that classic notions of subculture as conceived of at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham (CCCS) are outmoded, not only due to their conception of the operation of a music subculture in the 21st century, but also because of the technological advances which have added complexity to the modes of communication and nature of interaction between individuals and groups who are associated with a particular subculture. Subsequent theorists have attempted to delineate the fluidity of scenes (Muggleton, 2000) and neo-tribes (Bennett, 1999), which understand subcultural activity around music based not upon structural inequality and class conflict (Muggleton,

2000, in Webb, 2007: 22), but organised around ‘a series of temporal gatherings characterised by fluid boundaries and floating memberships’ (Bennett, 1999, in Webb, 2007: 23). These reconsiderations of membership to a subculture or scene are valuable in understanding the agency of members rather than focusing on the structure of the world, taking account of their mobilities and life course shifts over time.

However, with the advent of technology and the ubiquity of the internet within the reproduction of music scenes, what is required is an approach which takes account of the complexity which emerges in understanding individual use of such platforms and the wider changes to subculture or scene organisation across online and face-to-face spheres. Webb’s (2007) concept of the milieu has been particularly useful in understanding Cardiff’s scene through its construction of three levels of theoretical abstraction, which in sum contribute to a more thorough and multi-faceted understanding of the effect of technology on local music. Webb proposes that, in understanding the milieu, we must first understand the individual and their interaction with other actors within their culturally distinct local milieu, in line with earlier conceptions of scenes which have privileged the understanding of actors and not the structural collectivities in which they reside. Secondly, Webb utilises Bourdieu’s (1993) concept of the field of cultural production as a way in which a smaller music industry or scene can be placed within the wider context of a global music industry. Understanding the competing agenda of mainstream and independent sectors, and the various milieux which are contained within each of these spheres is important for understanding claims to expertise and authenticity across physical and virtual spaces. Thirdly, Webb discusses a need for the dialectical relationship between the milieu and the field of cultural production, and the other areas of life that involved individuals inhabit, whether they are economic, political or in relation to national or local culture. These other milieux are sub fields in their own right, but also have important bearings on the field of power as related to the music industry. This relational theory is much better equipped to understand the interactions between scene members across a multitude of spaces, but which also makes central to its concerns the significance of geographical location which has been lost in past understandings of scenes.

This theory helps make sense of the Cardiff ‘milieu’, as a field in which scene members are geographically placed within a culturally distinctive music scene, but who also have access to globally disseminated music from the mainstream, as well as being able to listen to and

interact with those operating within the independent sector. The intersection of these issues makes discussion of the Cardiff milieu, and any other, complex in its operation and consequences. Discussions of the vibrancy of the Welsh language and Welsh influences on artists, as well as a desire to keep improving provision for locally based artists and other professionals in the city signify the continued importance of developing the local scene and engaging fans to participate within it. This is framed within the context of the growing importance of globalisation and technological development which is aiding the exporting of the Cardiff scene nationally, and to a lesser extent, internationally. Through understanding the ways in which online and offline spaces are used simultaneously and are interwoven have provided us with a qualitative account of how such developments, as part of the 'extended milieu' (Durr Schmidt, 2000, in Webb, 2007: 33) which open those placed within the Cardiff milieu to wider global understanding of other geographically placed music milieux. Miller's (2008) notion of 'connected presence' can help us to understand the ways in which 'networked sociality' has changed both the form and content of online communication. The manner in which this impacts on interaction in relation to the music milieu should not be underestimated, and the simultaneous social transformations which are being established alongside economic shifts make clear that interaction is reconfiguring the basis upon which the digital music economy is founded in the post-digital era.

Therefore, it can be seen that Webb's concepts provide us with a more nuanced understanding of the ways in which the local milieu remains distinctive and is reproduced by those who are placed in it, both physically and virtually. The relationships, and the way that technology mediates the connections between the immediate and extended milieu makes clearer the particular ways in which professional and non-professional relationships regarding music are forged. It also illuminates the different ways we must think about scenes as technologically mediated in the global age, how they are reproduced, and how more rigidly organised conceptions of scenes may no longer be relevant. However, with such change brings disruption to previously clear delineations of division of labour and roles within subcultures and scenes which have since become blurred. This has interesting implications for future allocation of roles and claims to expertise within fields of promotion and musicianship which are increasingly becoming contested across all domains. Professionalisation of the scene by musicians and promoters is gradually being eroded by the accessibility of software and equipment through which prosumption can be achieved.

However, conversely, prosumption is found to be occurring in inconsistent ways, calling into question the extent of such instances and the real effect it may be having on the milieu as a whole. Addressing the problematic, as well as the positive developments, is the objective of this discussion, as well as understanding the specific nature of interaction and the way it is shaped by and shapes the use of digital technology.

1.2 'Mutual Embeddedness'

This research drew largely from the literature on network theory with reference to digitisation in providing a backdrop for the key concerns of the thesis. Castells's *The Network Society* (2000) provided the basis for understanding the transformative power of this new informational paradigm economically and culturally, which formed around the use of online platforms to produce, disseminate and consume information. However, this particular research is concerned with understanding the impact of such platforms upon music subcultures in a particular locality. Although Castells's contribution is valuable, in this context it can be perceived as an under-developed and unwieldy model for understanding the ways in which online platforms can be used to produce and consume music. Not only is it argued that technology can develop outside of the constraints of political influence, thus debunking Castells' technologically determinist perspective, but also that Castells' approach fails to engage with the social implications of the network society and their subsequent impact on development and use of technologies. Social agency in the use and development of digital technologies was of concern to this research in understanding to what extent users were 'mutually embedded' in the way they used the online and offline spaces to engage with Cardiff independent scene.

The literature review aimed to shed more light on the relationship between technology and agency, as well as understanding how professionals and scene members in Cardiff communicate and reproduce the music scene across online and offline spaces. Consistent with previous literature (Turkle, 1997; Chandler, 1998; Hardey, 2002; Wellman et al, 2006) I suggest such spaces are 'mutually embedded' and aid the reproduction of the scene in continuous and connected ways. Such conditions may afford consumers, or emerging 'prosumers' (Bruns, 2008), the ability to engage autonomously and participate in innovative ways within both online and offline spaces germane to the Cardiff. In this way, we can see the interaction and integration of digital technologies with the social as they are incorporated

into the daily routines of their users. Despite some evidence of prosumption behaviours across the Cardiff milieu, instances were patchy and inconsistent, with varying outcomes for those involved. In some instances, encouragement for prosumption was instigated by professionals, thus detracting from the spontaneous and intuitive notion of prosumption with regard to digitisation conveyed by the literature. The data suggest that its presence is often assumed, and that its instance within a milieu may be determined by a many other factors.

This study supports a focus on the primacy of digital technology as a determinant of human experience, peripheral to the everyday lives of those who use it (Kittler, 1999, in Beer, 2006, unpublished thesis). However, we must instead consider that technologies are constituted through practice, discourse and material artefacts, and are integrated across online and offline spaces (Pinch and Trocco, 2002, in Beer, 2006: 108). Additionally, we must account for the problems associated with the assumption that ‘mutual embeddedness’ is emergent in the same form and across all actors within a milieu.

The data demonstrate that engagement of those professionals and other scene members active within the Cardiff scene utilise social media and platforms which disseminate digital music in order to engage with the online scene. The consensus was that the multi-modal forms of promotion, consumption and distribution enriched the scene in quantitatively and qualitatively different ways; providing more rapid exchange of information, but also augmenting modes of communication and promotion through the use of textual, visual and audio visual modes in order to convey the vibrancy of the scene. This has also been successful in engaging professionals and other scene members, as well as those operating in other music scenes nationally and internationally. Notable illustrations of the benefits of the online sphere included the emergence of the importance of ‘viral momentum’ and the ‘feedback loop’ in the dissemination of information and music. Respondents acknowledged the power of the network in allowing information to be spread rapidly and to a wide range of people; the momentum that this afforded was particularly appreciated as it removed the need for much promotional legwork which was previously more time consuming.

In addition to the power of viral momentum in promotional work, the notion of the feedback loop was also useful in understanding where promotion was falling short and being able to address these issues in relation to scene member responses. The ability to disseminate and

feedback in this manner was highly beneficial to the conducting of not only professional duties, but increased engagement with fans, as a result of which professionals and other scene members alike noted the increased feelings of closeness and even parity amongst each other previously unheard of. This was brought about through the architecture of social networking platforms which provided tools through which this could be achieved, but which had much wider social effects for the local music economy as a result of increased ‘prosumption’ and for the running and engagement with live shows. In turn, users appropriated such platforms in varying ways in order to achieve their aims, whether that was to consume music or participate in the scene in a producer role.

The data suggest that practices of prosumption, although present and having significant implications for social interaction; constituting an online culture which affords more accessibility to be creative with content and the ability to interact with others based on the re-circulation of such products, is not as embedded as assumed in preceding literature (Poster, 2004; Bruns, 2008; Thrift, 2008). The practices were in some cases, not organic; often being instigated by musicians or promoters. Similarly, the interaction taking place often did not seem to be based around practices of prosumption, but instead satisfying the urge for ‘phatic’ communication, that which does not convey information, but which maintains ‘network sociality’ (Wittel, 2001), exchange of information which is non-dialogic. The prevalence of such communication calls into question the authenticity of ‘close’ online relationships, going as far as to suggest the disintegration of clear boundaries between fans and musicians is destructive to the ‘aura’ (Benjamin, 1936) performers possess, and does much to detract from their professional status. The extent to which ‘mutual embeddedness’ is present must be reconsidered, acknowledging the impact of phatic communication on interaction and relations between professionals and consumers as a result.

Despite high levels of participation and engagement with the music scene, professionals have pointed out only a small level of improvement in meaningful engagement of scene members in the placed scene, i.e. gig attendance. Although surface appearances portray online participation as vibrant and wide reaching, many professionals express frustration that this does not translate into higher levels of attendance at gigs or into sales of music or merchandise which would enable them to sustain themselves more easily. This highlights the issue that although online communication is engaging a wider range of scene members, often

this does not translate into outcomes which might secure income streams for individuals, which is a source of frustration. Again, phatic communication, in its neglect regarding the passing on of information, detracts from the aims of promotion which professionals are attempting to adhere to, stifling promotion and preventing sustainability of the local industry via online methods. This focus on phatic forms of communication has led to an impoverishment of the face-to-face milieu, as focus is firmly on communicating online and not through full participation in the milieu. However, the value of promotion must not be underestimated in its wider benefits for getting the word out to those operating elsewhere in the UK and internationally, and was a key tool for professionals in publicising to audiences and networking with other professionals, which ultimately opened new doors for them.

The issue of 'mutual embeddedness' is much more complex in its operation and effects than the existing literature portrays. Although participation is enhanced in multi-modal ways through the use of social networking and dissemination of digital music in Cardiff's independent milieu, which are clearly aimed towards furthering the placed milieu, there appears to be a disconnect between the practices and their effect in live spaces, possibly attributable to the phatic nature of online interaction. Despite the live space being privileged in comparison to the online space, with many accounts considering online communication to be orientated to improving the live scene, it appears that professionals identify a lack of effectiveness of online promotion which indicates they feel that the cohesion between online and offline communication may not be as great as that felt by other members of the milieu who benefit from the increased 'prosumptive' capacities it offers them. The 'bleeding' described by some respondents, namely the problem of a lack of frame around which structured and effective interaction between fans can take place, appears to negate the benefits of DIY movements (Wilson and Atkinson, 2005; Moore, 2007), and signifies a distinct break with earlier forms of online interaction. Therefore, it may be suggested that in terms of offering milieu members increased opportunities to participate, the benefits for scene members are considerable; however, in terms of the success of promotional efforts within the locality itself, its power is somewhat limited. Another loss, as a result in the gains in terms of accessibility appears to be increased precarity in the practices of fandom and support previously offered by consumers. Online platforms have not only offered increased access, but have also fundamentally altered the nature of interaction, reproducing a milieu in which communication is maintained for the sake of being connected and fandom is fleeting.

This research suggests that the internet may be more effective in building links with music scene nodes in cities around the UK. It is these outward facing benefits that have provided professionals with more opportunities, and have attributed the small size and relative lack of musical diversity to the stagnation of interest and vibrancy of the scene in Cardiff. This study has problematised the notion that ‘mutual embeddedness’ occurs in the same way for different people with different roles within a particular milieu, and begins to pick apart the differing ways in which the online and offline intertwine for professionals and non-professionals within the scene. Future research on the operation of other music scenes in prominent UK cities may shed light on whether these issues are specific to the economy of Cardiff or may be an issue applicable in music scenes in other localities.

Despite the frustration at the lack of join-up between online and offline modes of communication, almost universally across the scene it was agreed that the rise of ‘mutual embeddedness’, had had notable gains and losses in terms of cultural reproduction of the milieu. Professionals and other scene members pointed out that live events, print media and the viral power of word of mouth amongst scene members, both online and offline, remained a key way of communicating and receiving information about the scene. It remained important as a practice which was integral to the cultural reproduction of a city which drew upon the cultural specificity of its location as part of its heritage and in the way it branded itself to the rest of the UK and beyond. Fonarow, (2006) notes the importance of both bodily and mental engagement at gigs as a central component of participation in a music scene. This was echoed in the sentiments of respondents, as artists and audiences alike emphasised the primacy of bodily engagement at live events and face-to-face contact as the central component of participation; the online element of communication and dissemination being considered the supplement to this. This was also true with regard to discussions around print publications and the value of this material was very much revered as a key part of the wider cultural milieu. The journalism and graphic art contained in magazines and flyers contributed much to the aesthetic of the music and drew in a wider pool of specialists into the network of professional contacts. This echoes research by Pimlott (2011), who highlights the unique characteristics of print media and its utility and pervasiveness alongside electronic forms of flyers and magazines, reflecting the enduring and symbiotic relationship between online and offline promotion. However, the appreciation of face-to-face engagement, although reflected

in many of the professional accounts through discussions of intimacy, memory and material culture, this was not reflected in audience responses, or perception of audiences by professionals. This suggests that the primacy of such activity is not present, that much of the reproduction of the milieu now takes place within the online arena, and that the construction of interaction of the online space may be simultaneously contributing to an impoverishment of the face-to-face arena.

However, the viral power of word of mouth, enacted across both spheres, was seen as a key mode of secondary promotion. This was relied upon in informal ways, through the power of face-to-face communication about gigs, but also over social networking facilities. More organised forms of word of mouth were also mobilised by the musicians themselves in the form of recruiting fans into street teams to promote their releases and gigs. The endurance of physically placed forms of fan-to-fan engagement and promotion emphasised the continued importance of using the locale in order to promote gigs which took place in Cardiff. This demonstrates that not only are online activities anchored within the physical interaction which is key to the reproduction of the scene, but that physical forms of promotion and interaction between scene members still holds both cultural and economic value and are considered by those who promote music to be a key practice in the maintenance of an authentic scene. To ignore or cease to participate in such practices and confine oneself to the online sphere was considered intrinsically inauthentic. The authentic professional therefore recognised the diversification of both online and offline forms of word of mouth, understood their relative advantages and used them to some effect. However, much of this fan activity was again initiated by musicians, suggesting that potential fans may not always be active in initiating such promotion; calling into question the extent to which their participation across online and offline space was sustained through their own efforts.

This section has dealt with the extent and nature of 'mutual embeddedness' as a practice within this particular small music scene. It has highlighted its presence as a key operational mode which helps to reproduce the Cardiff milieu, but also the complexity that it presents in the ways in which professionals and other scene members perceive its effects on economic sustainability of the placed scene. The growth of the online sphere as a domain in which vital work in reproducing the scene is carried out has provided not only opportunities but also significant points of tension over what constitutes valuable promotion; those who employ

both online and physically placed promotional methods being considered more competent and authentic. Such arrangements have caused other disruptions with regards to roles of production and consumption to which we now turn.

(2) The Rise of the ‘Prosumer’: Shifts in the Economic and Social Landscape

Research Question 2: How is the shift towards digitisation, the rise of filesharing practices and the changes occurring within the industry more generally viewed by those operating in the independent sector? What are the key social and economic issues arising from such changes?

These data have also explored the potential for productive initiatives and practices to be more democratically enacted by non-professionals participating in the local music milieu. Much literature (Keat, 1994; McLeod, 2003; Bruns, 2008; Filby, 2008) has described the advantages of such widening of productive capacities beyond professional avenues and the great opportunities for innovation that would result, transforming the age of the Internet into the era of the produser. The term produser implies an iterative productive and consumptive role, afforded by the inherent networked features of the internet in which collaborative efforts mean that digitally communicated information and products are constantly being re-imagined and re-edited; products are never considered static or finished entities. Although there is much evidence of this through observing both online and offline communication within Cardiff’s music scene, its emergence and reproduction is far from the clear-cut notion that Bruns describes. Conflict, as well as opportunity, has been created through such changes, and threats to status, established divisions of labour and claims to authenticity have been disrupted, which have particular consequences for professionals and non-professionals alike. This section will outline such issues and suggest that Cardiff is in a transitory stage of adjustment, in a milieu which incorporates both elements of prosumption and produsage in its operation. The rise of digitised platforms and its use for communicating user-generated content is growing. However, such shifts in mutually embedded communication and evidence of prosumption have implications for social actors, which have as yet been unforeseen.

Many respondent accounts frequently brought attention to the concept of the ‘bleeding’ of roles and activities across online spaces. This refers to a broad set of practices in which established roles for promoters and musicians were being blurred in such a manner as was perceived to be detrimental to the scene. What emerged were three forms of clear threat to

professionals as a result of such ‘bleeding’, they were; lack of clearly defined roles, a loss of control and status within the scene, and a struggle to define and maintain authenticity. Here, the argument is put forward that the extent to which prosumption is occurring within the Cardiff milieu, and the interactional practices which support it, are redefining how the milieu is reproduced under post-digital conditions.

The rise of prosumption/produsage within the scene was received positively, and the innovative capacities of such practices were recognised by all. Despite this, as previously mentioned, the literature does not reflect the reality of prosumption practices within the milieu. Referring back to the literature review, it was noted that Bruns’ (2008) work postulated that the digital era would mean;

collaborative and continuous building and extending of existing content in pursuit of further improvement (2008: 21)

Although positive in a discussion of the consequences of prosumption and produsage, several issues have emerged which cast doubt on the ability of prosumption to enact continuous improvement with regard to the creation and circulation of cultural product. Firstly, the resultant breakdown of professional demarcations was seen as a clear threat to their own perceived level of expertise amongst audience members. Many expressed resentment at this breakdown, suggesting the quality of output from non-professionals would dilute the quality of output in the scene, leading to a degradation which would ultimately put it at a disadvantage. This finding is a clear example of the unintended consequences of consumers’ unlimited access to platforms and the ability to create original content. The consequent increase in content circulated by individuals detracts from the ‘quality filter’ which existed pre-digitisation, rendering the acknowledgement of professional roles of less importance within this milieu. This has important implications for dynamics between consumers and artists, and contributes to a democratisation, but that which has far-reaching consequences for the milieu, likened to a breakdown in the ‘aura’ (Benjamin, 1936) that artists possessed pre-digitisation. This finding questions the extent to which such democracy is viewed as valuable to scene members, particularly professionals, and their dislike at being de-professionalised in such a way. The lack of distinction which is brought with increased access to productive practices is not universally welcomed as this will have implications not only for recognition of professionals as such, but also for sustainability if everyone who is engaged in such practices circulates their contributions for free.

Linked to this, and also increasingly identified as problematic, is the lack of control and status also experienced under such conditions. The process by which software is easier to obtain, and communication with other within the milieu and beyond, simultaneously threatens artist sustainability and jeopardises the independent operation. This amounts to a qualitative reorientation in the nature of interaction in which roles are more fluid, making it easier to transition between producer and consumer, but also less distinct, which poses a problem for maintaining professional integrity. Particularly prominent are the detrimental effects of the changing nature of engagement with fans online. Social network platforms are advantageous in terms of their ability to disseminate information widely and in enabling professionals' closer engagement with fans, building closer ties more akin to friendship. Although the worth of such relationships in terms of sustainability is understood, such shifts prove problematic when exploring its other consequences. The breakdown of the elements of idolatry within the fan/musician relationship is regrettable to some professionals, who feel they have sacrificed a key part of their identity as artists. Social networking has robbed them of a mystique as they market themselves as friends rather than role models online. As they perceive it, they have lost the respect and awe-inspiring qualities that they used to elicit in their fans when engaging with their music, and as such a key set of experiences which were once integral to the relationship have been lost. Beer (2008) has also highlighted how the reconfiguration of relationships has been enabled through Web 2.0, in that audiences are increasingly able to be 'friends' with famous musicians, thus fostering 'closer' relationships, closely mirroring Benjamin's notion of the destruction of the 'aura' in an age where cultural product can be easily reproduced. This development has implications for the future of fan/musician relationships in terms of the ways in which musicians derive income from their music, which may have to rely less on the glamour and mystique associated with being a musician as a method of engendering respect for their craft and the personality and image which accompanies it. Instead, they are endeavouring to employ a form of emotional labour which requires they engage personally with fans as a key promotional tool. This, however, has other effects on professional personae and has fundamentally changed perceptions of these professionals, increasing engagement and approachability, but simultaneously altering their identity as perceived by themselves and their fans in the process.

The breakdown in the established division of labour and loss or reduction in status has also been accompanied by a renewed struggle in claims to authenticity in the online context. Other work has discussed how authenticity has been established with regards musical genre (McLeod, 1999), in the online context (Williams, 2006) and in relation to the mainstream music industry (Daschuk, 2011). However, these data add to this body of literature in highlighting the hierarchies of authenticity which are established with regard to professional conduct in the use of online and offline platforms. Increasingly wary of those who rely solely on the internet as the primary means of production, those who do so are often framed as inauthentic in their lack of recognition of the continuing value of physical forms of promotion by other professionals. These discussions of effective professional conduct are framed with regard to authenticity as a way of establishing what is considered ‘good’ conduct, and is an attempt to form a distinction between those who operate as professionals and those who cut corners and are ‘inauthentic’. The formation of such distinctions may be seen as a response to the threat of de-professionalism as outlined above, attempting to reconstruct hierarchies of authenticity and professional status in relation to the mutual existence and dependence of online and offline relationships. These attempts to make claims to an authentic professional identity also aim to combat the degradation of quality distinctions that are still considered important to ‘real’ professionals, but de-prioritised by others. Adhering to traditional notions of quality in recording and formatting are also claims to an authentic professional identity and a way to distinguish oneself as credible in a sea of others attempting to do the same. These data highlight the erosion of pre-digital notions of authenticity within the milieu, but that attempts to re-configure and make salient authenticity are being made as an important precursor to sustainability for professionals.

In addition to the complexities facing traditional professionals, and challenging the simplicity of the transition into the era of the prosumer, is the issue of the way consumption of music is viewed in the era of digitisation. The notion that digitised products circulating online is available to be consumed and reiterated by all who are engaged with the online network is challenged by the framing of both professionals’ and other scene members’ accounts of their production and consumption of music in terms of the self. Many accounts referred to the music in possessive terms, particularly with regard to discussions of illegal filesharing, within which many sought to preserve and assert their rights as authors of the works shared, despite much of the material being available for consumers to share with others, often free of charge.

This suggests that discourses of individualisation, based on neo-liberal notions of consumption remain paramount in such discussions, casting doubt on the idea that circulation and access to free content, appropriation and re-editing of digitised products circulating with reference to the music scene are in fact considered open for all to tinker with and re-circulate. The rights of original authors take precedence, indicating that the ‘tyranny of the individual’ continues to have prominence and that evidence of prosumption is more limited when we consider that production and consumption of music across online and offline space continue to be framed in very individualist terms. This questions the central tenets of prosumption, that consumers are now empowered to create content without constraint, and that in fact the frames through which they consider their consumption are the very frames which inhibit such practices becoming widespread.

When considering the extent to which prosumption has been practiced, it is also relevant to revisit discussions of immaterial product, one of the original theoretical bases for this thesis. The ‘autonomy’ (Lazzerato, 1996) of the consumer is called into question in light of the limited prosumption activity in evidence within the milieu, with the data suggesting that value streams are being disrupted in ways which may have negative implications for the independent professionals, but that equally, such potential for consumers to displace dominant regimes of value (Appadurai, 1986) has not turned out to be as liberating and democratic as anticipated. A prominent finding that emerged was with regard to value of digital products within the music scene. A contradiction between the emerging level of choice in terms of access to music online, both through legitimate and illegitimate channels, and the simultaneous narrowing of the consumption of music emerged. Despite access to huge catalogues of music through platforms such as Spotify and social networks, consumers were directed towards more ‘a la carte’ methods of purchasing through platforms such as iTunes, which allow purchase of individual tracks from an album. This is in marked contrast to the pre-digital configuration of the music industry which promoted both single and album sales heavily as separate sales. The lack of concern for the album as a format, a coherent body of work which is more than the sum of its parts, has been stripped of its artistic and economic value as music becomes more ephemeral, and indeed, disposable. Wider choice does not necessarily mean wider engagement with music, and those large volumes of music which are appropriated are not necessarily engaged with as a whole body of work, and as such are more easily discarded. The findings suggest that our relationship with music has become more

fragmentary, superficial and despite easier access, we are less engaged with the artistic merits of traditional formats, such as the album. Evidence of such attitudes again raises the issue of destruction of the artistic 'aura' and possible threats of a collapse of reverence for the art form. This has implications for sustainability for artists, who may find fans harder to win and keep due to such superficial engagement, and the further decline of artistic license within the music industry due to the increasing orientation towards small purchases of single songs in order to secure profit in response to the demand for cheaper music. This also has an undeniable effect of fans engagement with artists in terms of the way they listen to music, which is increasingly orientated towards generating profit in the mainstream, but at the same time lacking in any sustainable structure for those operating within the independent milieu.

Although these changes are primarily due to the rise in engagement with digital platforms, there was also evidence to suggest a small subculture is present which continues to privilege the physical format and the album as an authentic way to consume music. The fetishisation of vinyl and the CD from certain quarters, particularly musicians, demonstrates attempts to maintain classic practices of consumption, rendering such practices authentic in comparison to digitised forms. These practices indicate an attempt to maintain the physicality associated with music listening, and as with the discussion of mutual embeddedness, highlights the importance of understanding the intertwined nature of digital and physically mounted music. However, such attitudes are in stark contrast to the majority, who see mp3 as the main mode of music consumption; viewing physical formats increasingly obsolete. Fetishisation of physical formats is confined to a small amount of dedicated music lovers and is by no means the norm. De-valuation of the physical, and subsequent valorisation of digital modes is embedded within the milieu, and contributes largely to the threats to professional sustainability outlined above.

This section has illustrated the complexity associated with identifying practices of prosumption and produsage, suggesting that the enactment of such practices is not only inconsistent across groups of social actors and contexts, but also the basis for significant disruption of traditional roles and definitions within a music scene. Threats to professional status and redefining authenticity have been the result of the inception of such practices, which require more attention if we are to understand the real impact of such shifts on production and consumption.

This brings the discussion back to the notion of immaterial product and its impact on both the economic and artistic value of music across both digital and physical formats. The narrowing of consumption of music and the accompanying ethos of disposability which surrounds immaterial product also problematises value streams within mainstream platforms, which has an impact on the way in which independently-based music is consumed, the result of which is more severe financially for this sector. This highlights the continued emphasis on neo-liberal conceptions of capitalism which privilege an individual, producer or consumer's, right to profit above the development of presumptive or produsage practices. Issues of democratisation of access to content are not as clear cut as first thought, and attitudes which promote free exchange of knowledge and goods online appear to contradict the enduring attitudes to ownership of intellectual property and copyright regulation. Although there is evidence of an expression of willing with regards to free circulation of product, there remain discourses of financial sustainability which are paramount to professionals. The following section discusses the current challenges to sustainability within the independent scene and the relevance of current and proposed copyright and business models in this context.

(3) Illegal Filesharing: An Alternative Approach?

Research Question 3: How are filesharing practices, both legal and illegal, made sense of by all scene members in the wider context of their participation within the local milieu? Can filesharing be distinguished from wider practices of participation in an independent milieu?

This section aims to discuss filesharing within the wider interactions and exchanges between those operating in the milieu. Findings suggest that filesharing, as defined as a transgressive practice and rationalised in particular ways by all milieu members, cannot so easily be removed from the wider interactional changes taking place within the milieu as a result of the use of online and offline platforms as mutually embedded. Central to this discussion has been the construction and maintenance of netiquette as a key term through which we may understand the wider changes that are taking place within the music industry, and with a certain degree of applicability to the rest of the creative industries. This leads into a discussion of the significance of filesharing and reactions to it within the independent milieu in this context.

3.1 Netiquette and the Wider Social Changes Affecting the Local Milieu

A key area in which the aforementioned issues of loss of professional control, lack of clearly demarcated roles and objection to transgressive actions which threatened professional sustainability can be examined is through the construction and maintenance of netiquette. The discussion of how netiquette is both followed and disregarded within the online space, from the perspective of those within the milieu, is a good illustration of these issues. Construction of netiquette in the online space was shown through a combination of creation of completely new interactional parameters specific to the internet and in relation to face-to-face interaction. Referring back to Giddens (1984), such data highlight the importance of the ‘reflexive form of knowledgeability’ (1984: 3) with regards to the agent’s complex impact upon societal structures. Here, we witness the mobilisation of resources by social actors which enable them to enact a transformative capability over their own milieu. In terms of online-only interaction, there emerged a situation in which netiquette was in the process of being established, but also unstable to a certain degree. This too appeared to be a reiterative process, the rules of acceptable interaction changing over time and in different contexts. The architecture of the social networking platform, in combination with the nature of existing relationships between scene members dictates the nature of interaction between those involved. Economic shifts, as well as social transformations, have occurred simultaneously and resulted in a gradual redefinition of acceptable online interaction which is constantly changing. Use of the online domain has accelerated this process, leaving a milieu in which traditional conceptions of commodification are being redrawn, and with it, the modes of acceptable interaction which accompanied pre-digital definitions of value. Such findings fall in line with Winner’s notion that the use of technologies are socially mediated, and that their adoption depends on the socio-political concerns which frame them; here we see ‘techniques’ (Welsh, 2000) of individuals adopted in order to destabilise dominant economic narratives which have been sustained within the music industry for many years. These findings highlight the potential for agency within a milieu which makes heavy use of technologies to achieve economic and social ends. What we are left with is a milieu in the midst of transition, in which such simultaneous disruption is leading to turmoil with regards to value definition, sustainability for professionals and successful interaction between professionals and consumers. Such transitions go hand in hand, and have produced gains and losses which have been identified in the data. The milieu is therefore reproduced through complex exchanges across both online and offline spaces, which represent a multitude of interests and under which roles are being

renegotiated, and which highlights the intertwined nature of technological development and social agency.

However, there were actions which were considered universally unacceptable and these were at the heart of the de-stabilisation of roles and status which so concerned professionals. The breakdown of relations, so firmly established when meeting others face-to-face, appeared to break down in a milieu in which communications were conducted across both spheres, destabilising the hierarchy of professionalism which had come before it. The data illuminates the extent to which traditional distinctions between professional and non-professional roles have been eroded, thus de-emphasising the importance placed on the quality of music and a shift in the nature of engagement with the art form more generally; evidence of the destruction of the 'aura' in the digital society (Benjamin, 1936), as the endless copying and dissemination of music detracts from the authenticity of the original work. The breakdown and re-establishment of new forms of netiquette which incorporate all domains of communication has added new dimensions and further complexity to social relations germane to the local scene. Not only have the social norms which govern professional relations been irrevocably disrupted, leading scene members to begin to alter and incorporate new conventions into their interactional practice, but they have also had to consider these issues in conjunction with the new challenges to sustainability that they face. Shifts in interaction have a bearing upon attitudes to music as an art form, as music is considered more disposable, and appropriated and consumed more frequently and with lack of regard for the format it is presented in e.g. the album, in conjunction with ever increasing instances of illegal appropriation. As interaction becomes more transgressive, so too does the consumption of music, and these trends cannot be dealt with in isolation, they are mutually affecting and driven by the shifts and adjustments to interactional frames made across online and offline spaces.

The inter-dependency of interactional and economic shifts has provided the beginnings of an understanding of how and why attitudes to music itself and to other scene members, professional or otherwise, have altered in such a way. As interactional parameters are disrupted and re-negotiated, so too the parameters and conventions of acceptability for consumption have shifted. This has presented serious issues of sustainability for artists, the paradox of which is presented; in utilising social networking tools, professionals have

fundamentally altered the way they develop relationships with their fans in order to improve sales of music and merchandise. However, these changes have brought with them a fundamental re-shaping of audience attitudes to music and artists which is undermining such online endeavours and which could be of deepening concern to the independent industry as digitisation and social networking becomes more ubiquitous.

This final section addresses the nature of changing attitudes to economic relationships and exchange within the music scene, as well as suggesting that the inter-dependence of these issues with wider changes in online social relations mean that understanding and addressing illegal filesharing must not be undertaken in isolation, but with acknowledgement of the entirety of the research site and circumstances.

3.2 Contemporary Attitudes to Illegal Filesharing within an Independent Milieu

These data have uncovered the tumultuous period of social and economic upheaval brought about by digitisation. The starting point for this debate, and to an extent, this research, has been via the mainstream music industry debate over how to tackle the threat of illegal filesharing to their sustainability. However, this research argues that understanding such changes through the perspective of the corporate arm of the sector, and in isolation from wider shifts, is insufficient in tackling the challenges it has provided for sustainability in all contexts. Increases in illegal downloading effect, and are effected by, other changes to production and consumption of music and merchandise in attempts to adapt and exploit the architecture of the online domain, in order to preserve revenue and ensure future sustainability. Attitudes of adaptation within the independent sector and the ways in which this is being accomplished are wide ranging, and highlight implications for the use of immaterial product, value of physical and digital music and products peripheral to it, and the experience of fandom and consumption for audiences.

An exploration of individual motivations and justifications for illegally downloading digital music revealed a range of perspectives on both economic and moral dimensions of the debate. Using Sykes and Matza's *techniques of neutralisation* thesis (1957), it was revealed that some individuals do indeed exhibit affiliation to dominant moral codes in society through an expression of guilt over their online activities. Several of the techniques were identified as present in the data; and involved *denial of responsibility* for their activities due to its intrinsic

part of the milieu; *appealing to higher loyalties*, for example being grateful that people are listening to your music, no matter how they acquired it; and *condemnation of condemners*, attacking record companies (the alleged victims) for their continued high profits through exploitation of artists and consumers. This supports earlier literature which identified a certain amount of guilt expressed around illegal filesharing by consumers (Hinduja, 2003), that techniques of neutralisation have been used to justify a 'victimless crime' (*denial of victim*) (Higgins et al, 2008) and that general acceptance of these techniques are greater predictors of moderate participation in illegal filesharing (Ingram and Hinduja, 2008). This speaks to a wider literature which addresses motivations and conditions for participation in these practices. Links have been made between propensity to illegally fileshare and low levels of self-control (Higgins, 2004); such thinking has since acknowledged the complex interaction between these behavioural factors and social learning theory (Higgins and Makin, 2004), situational characteristics (Higgins, 2007) and ethical beliefs (Hinduja and Ingram, 2008). These are certainly important for this research, as motivations and justifications for these actions are bound up within the common practices and ethical perspectives that circulate in the milieu, as well as perceived rewards or punishments, which will inevitably have an influence on individual thinking. Equally, individuals will interpret such information differently, which accounts for the varying attitudes to piracy present in the data. Whilst such interpretations are useful, this research has gone beyond both quantification of the extent of the problem, and an examination of the moral parameters of those studied in order to acknowledge both the inevitability of these practices and address pragmatic approaches to achieving sustainability within a local music milieu. Whilst this research agrees with the need for an educative function around respect for IP (Hinduja and Higgins, 2011), it also advocates an exploration of processes of adaptation to the market in its altered state.

There was evidence of a certain amount of innovation in approaches to marketing music and merchandise from professionals, taking account of the fact that adaptation in order to engage with fans online was required in acknowledging audiences' shifting modes of engagement with music. This innovation served to demonstrate attempts to recommodify music in both physical and immaterial forms, with the aim of securing future sustainability but also acknowledging that pre-digital modes of legality no longer hold in the context of digitisation. Experimentation with new methods of promotion and sale of music has inevitably forged new ways of thinking about the value of music and the nature of fandom. The example of the

download card, designed to be purchased in the offline space for engagement online in order to stimulate legitimate sales, highlights the new ways musicians are attempting to engender habits of regular purchases from those who attend live shows and also a sense of loyalty and allegiance from their fans which has been lost in an era where access to music does not require physical presence, e.g. at a gig. Similar innovative techniques have been highlighted within the mainstream (David, 2010), but these findings highlight the nuanced attempts to re-commodify music which fall in line with values which reflect the economic, but also aesthetic attitudes towards making art in an independent milieu.

The use of material culture to draw together these domains reveals an enduring commitment to this form of promotion alongside online activities and also reveals the continued importance of material artefacts within the scene. This, alongside the reverence afforded to material formats, such as vinyl and CD, indicates a re-commodification of material forms of music and a valorisation of their place within the economic landscape of the contemporary independent music scene. In addition, to this set of practices being linked to claims to authenticity, I propose that another purpose of this is in attempting to reclaim the control lost through the rise of digitisation and the narrowing of listening practices, also as a result of digitisation. There is expressed a strong desire to re-valorise traditional methods of engaging with music through such adaptive techniques, recognising both the nature of consumption in the digital landscape, but also the importance of material culture and the mode of production, i.e. the album, as central to the listening experience. Thus, innovative attempts are being made to recapture the 'aura' (Benjamin, 1936), a privileging of the authentic producer in a milieu which is increasingly re-orientated to mutually embedded communication across online and offline domains.

Merchandise and prize-giving was also a key source of sustainability; merchandise as an accompaniment to the music, and prize giving as an inducement to purchase the music through participation in competitions. The increased prominence of merchandise sold at shows and online, as discussed in the data, suggests that this is becoming a more central source of revenue than the music itself, despite attempts discussed above which are aiming to reinstate music as the central commodity within the scene. This development is also indicative of the attitude of disposability which accompanies music, the value of which continues to fall whilst the value of t-shirts, bags and other items remains relatively constant.

Whilst studies of mainstream artists have highlighted their increased emphasis on merchandise as sources of revenue, and increasingly giving music away at reduced prices, or for free (Morrow, 2009; David 2010), independent artists have sought to both exploit the value of merchandise whilst ensuring that music remains central to the experience of participation in the scene, as discussed above. This attempt to privilege music in such a way aims to acknowledge change and adapt accordingly, shown through such actions as reducing the price of music, yet ensuring that in its recommodification, it is not side-lined in favour of peripheral products, which may detract from the economic and artistic value of music.

In addition to merchandise, the effect of prize-giving as an inducement to purchase music is also requiring increased levels of engagement between artist and fan. The rise of the selling of 'experiences' related to the artist is requiring them to give of themselves and their image in more involved ways in order to secure fan loyalty. Record companies in the mainstream have always held similar competitions in which fans can meet artists; however, accounts in the data reveal more involved experiences which can be entered into through competitions or even bought, such as the chance to be involved in the making of an album for \$250,000. These experiential prizes are another example of attempts to build a coherent and enduring relationship with fans which will evoke feelings of idolatry and mystique that many complain has been lost, whilst simultaneously demanding much more emotional labour from artists to forge relationships with a small number of fans. An attempt is being made here to strengthen the image and identity of musicians which has been threatened in order to strengthen trust and loyalty within their fanbase which might make them reconsider downloading their music from an unauthorised source. These attempts to adjust to the digital economic landscape are requiring different forms of promotion, in which musicians must increasingly mobilise their own identities as artists to encourage loyalty, but in which increasingly close relations are leading to a deterioration of such a mystique (Benjamin, 1936; Beer, 2008).

What is clear is that for many, innovation and adaptability, in whatever form they take and whatever consequences they have, such practices are essential for professionals if they are to continue to participate in the scene. This analysis takes account of the social changes in participation in the scene as an intrinsic factor in the economic impact of digitisation on the independent industry, and argues that mainstream analyses are neglecting to understand these issues when forming policy on how to deal with illegal downloading, but also ignoring how

such operations may add to their understanding of the wider economic and social changes taking place. It is not fruitful for the mainstream to impose legislation which does not address this interrelationship and continues to ignore contextual factors of this milieu and those similar to it, which is of as much importance as the mainstream, as it can often be the source for much grassroots talent to transition into the corporate sector. Most importantly, such transformations are still in a rapid stage of development, with the music industry's digital trajectory developing much faster than any other creative sector. Sociological inquiry may use this as the starting point for understanding the emergent changes to the CIs, as opposed to privileging mainstream discourses which cling to outmoded regulatory discourses. Equally, we must not necessarily consider illegal downloading the central issue; this research had raised a multitude of concerns about the value of music in an immaterial form and emerging shifts in artist/audience relationships which merit further investigation in their own right.

Bearing this in mind, the final section will reflect on this research, exploring strengths, weaknesses, and areas of sociological concern which may provide the basis for future research.

(4) Reflections on the Research

4.1 Strengths of the Study

The research design aimed to identify a small research site through which one particular scene and its professional members could be recruited, as well as drawing upon the perspectives of audiences to provide a well-rounded picture of impacts of digitisation on the broad range of actors involved. An in-depth, qualitative case study approach was well-suited to the research site and the temporal and financial constraints exerted on the researcher. The discrete nature of the city as a research site was advantageous and provided the basis for defining and identifying scene members clearly, offering a multitude of perspectives based on individuals' positions in the scene. Additionally, this method afforded insight into the contextual and cultural features of the city, which were as integral to understanding the scene as exploration of the impact of digitisation. Adoption of the case study approach allowed thorough understanding of all aspects of the scene, which proved invaluable when making sense of the impacts of digitisation on soundscapes and Cardiff's cultural specificity as well as on practical issues such as a promotion and organisation of shows online.

Collection of qualitative data was an invaluable strategy for this particular research, as it aimed to uncover not just attitudes and approaches to the challenges posed by digitisation, but also fleshed out the complexity of social, as well as economic shifts and their interrelationship. This has added much to the understanding of illegal downloading beyond quantitative reports of financial losses to the mainstream music industry and aims to provide more informative information about the context in which illegal downloading occurs. Importantly, it has been found that an economically reductionist approach to such challenges does not provide the full picture; interview accounts point to a fundamental change in attitudes to consumption and the value of music in the digital age which are formed by and underpin their interactions with others in the scene. The strength of adopting a multi-method qualitative approach with a wide range of actors highlighted the highly relevant nature of such data in understanding the wider contributing factors, the changing attitudes which have provided the basis for such shifts in production and consumption.

The aim of this research has not been to directly inform policy development in the creative industries; however, the highlighting of the sociological, as well as economic, significance of digitisation in an independent music economy has highlighted the ways in which policy makers are currently misinformed about the reason why music fans choose to appropriate music illegally, and the appropriate ways to ensure sustainability for the future. Accounts of adaptability and innovation are absent from consideration in government documents, and it is argued that the independent scene, already closely linked economically with the mainstream (Hesmondhalgh, 2007), can inform a re-orientation in approach which moves focus away this singular issue and addresses the endemic changes, social, cultural and economic, to the creative industries in the digital age.

4.2 Weaknesses of the Study and Future Research

Although this work provides good insight into the multi-dimensionality of this issue and succeeds in bringing to light a much wider set of issues which bear upon illegal downloading, whilst simultaneously highlighting that wider shifts are equally significant, there are some inevitable limitations. The focus on one particular locality as the sole research site, whilst fruitful in understanding the operations and issues relevant to one particular independent scene, do not speak for all small-scale independent operations in the UK. Whilst this study did not aim to be representative, it acknowledges that the findings are geographically,

economically and culturally specific to Cardiff. Future research into the impact of digitisation on similar scenes will be useful in gaining a deeper understanding of where the independent sector lie on such issues, and may provide both supportive and contradicting findings to the ones discussed here. This emphasises the importance and complexity researchers must acknowledge here, one cannot conceive of the independent sector as one cohesive entity, it is made up of many interconnected nodes of varying range and strength, distinguished by a lack of hierarchy; more accurately characterised by the term, 'milieu' than by the organisation of the mainstream oligarchy. Understanding these differences means further research into the independent sector is needed to flesh out the concepts and ideas discussed here, but in addition, we must be mindful of the ways in which mainstream and independent professionals are linked and the value of such findings for corporate enterprises.

Future research to address this should come in the form of similar studies in other UK cities, such as Bristol, London or Manchester, and possibly others in Europe, which would enrich the data set, providing a wider range of data which could be drawn upon and which also could take themes uncovered and explore them in more depth, seeking to understand how those in different musical milieu interpret such issues. Not only might this provide further understanding around network formation in the independent sector, but also how those in other locations deal with the challenges posed by digitisation, and to what extent these approaches draw parallels with those discussed in this thesis.

Through virtue of their availability and the methodological difficulties experienced in accessing audiences, this research is consequently richer in professional data in comparison with audience data. Whilst professionals were easier to access due to their vested interest in the subject of the research and provided richer face-to-face accounts, this study could have engaged non-professionals more effectively to provide increasingly in-depth accounts of what motivated them to consume and, in some cases, produce or re-edit digital works. Future opportunities for audience research in this field could focus exclusively on audiences, utilising a combination of a wider range of ethnographic interviews and follow up focus group interviews to provide a more comprehensive picture of attitudes and practices, which may act as a valuable comparator for the professional data collected here.

By focusing further on shifts in value placed upon digital music, the re-commodification of physical music formats and newly emerging neo-liberal conceptions of consumption and dissemination online, research may be drawing nearer to a more holistic understanding of the impacts of digitisation beyond illegal downloading. However, it is hoped that this particular study will lead to a more constructive exchange of ideas between independent and mainstream operations. The links between these two sectors have been well discussed in the literature (Hesmondhalgh, 1997; Strachan, 2007) and it is hoped that this research may form the beginnings of a re-orientation of approach to the ideology and practical solutions discussed by industry lobbyists as informed by research conducted at the grassroots. Despite vast differences in approach to revenue generation, it is argued that this research has value for steering the attitudes of large record companies and their supporting organisations away from focusing on draconian measures to curb profit loss, and towards a thorough understanding of the fundamental changes to the way people engage with music have come about. Armed with this understanding, it may be able to focus more on adaptability and innovation rather than alienating its customer base with unrealistic and overly draconian methods to recoup their losses. Further research may focus more on policy analysis to address the discourse with comparisons made to these particular findings, and aim to create a more effective dialogue between the two sectors.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Interview Schedule –Musicians and Promoters

(1). Basic Information

1. Age, Gender, Occupation (take at the start)
2. Can you tell me a bit about your band and how you're involved with music in Cardiff?
 - What kind of music?
 - How long have you been playing together?
 - How did you get into performing?
 - Is making music and performing a full time job? If so, how do you make a living from this? If not, what else do you do for income?
 - Where are you based?

(2) Performing Music in Cardiff and Beyond

2. Can you tell me about some of the gigs you've done in Cardiff?
 - Where? When? How did you come to perform?
3. Which key promoters, managers, or any other individuals or organisations within the industry are you working with locally?
 - Who? How did you come to work with them?
 - What have been the outcomes of this?
4. Tell me about some of the gigs that you've done outside of Cardiff?
 - Where? How were you able to do them?
 - Which individuals/groups of people helped you to organise and take part in these gigs?
 - What were the effects of doing these gigs on your fanbase and industry contacts?
5. Which other bands have you worked with both within and outside of Cardiff?
 - How did you come to play with them?
 - Are there certain bands you regularly play with? If so, why?

(3) Creation of Networks within the Scene

6. Can you tell me a bit about your last gig?
 - How you came to be a part of it.
 - Who else was involved?

- Relationships with other artists playing, the venue and those who organised the gig.

7. What part did you play in promoting the gig?

- Physical and digital methods?
- Other methods?
- Where and who to?
- What was most effective?

8. How do you go about picking which gigs you want to do?

- Who's choice? Yours, managers, promoters?
- How is building contacts and relationships with others in the industry important?
- How is this achieved and through which methods?

9. Do you ever talk to your fans at shows?

- How do they approach you/you approach them?
- What do you talk about?
- Do you gain information from them (emails etc) and what is this used for?

(4) Using the Internet and Digitised Product to Create a Fanbase

10. What has been the role of digital music in your promotional and performance activities?

- Putting your music online?
- Promoting your music online?
- What facilities used?

11. Do you use the internet to communicate with fans and others within the music industry?

- Social networking, blogs, fansites, downloads – access, upload, create, manage information about you and your activities?
- Local, national and international level?
- In what capacity? Using which platforms?
- How do you see the relationship between physical and networked promotion – how do they compliment each other, if at all?

13. How do you interact with your fans online?

- Social networking, blogging, discussion forums, audio-visual media?
- Contribution of fans – what, when, where?
- Interaction with fans related to content they contribute?
- How do relationships with fans develop through presence at gigs and online?

12. In what ways have you encounter copyright issues over digital music, if at all?

- Specific examples?

- Have you followed debates over copyright in the media?
- From your perspective, what are the most important issues in these debates?
- What is your attitude to current debates over music copyright in popular press?
- What are the boundaries of (il)legality. Are these clear cut?

Appendix B

Ethnographic Interview Schedule – Consumers

1. Can you tell me why you decided to come to this gig tonight?
2. Do you come out to gigs often? What type of shows do you enjoy going to see in Cardiff?
(link to promoters, live music nights)
3. How do you keep up with what is happening in Cardiff, live music wise?
4. Does the internet play a part in your participation in live music? What sites/facilities do you find most useful and why?
5. Do you purchase music online? What facilities do you use and why?
6. Do you/have you ever downloaded using filesharing sites? What are your reasons for using them?
7. Have you ever uploaded music related things of your own onto the internet?
8. What kind of impact do you think the websites and services you use online has had on your participation in live music in Cardiff?

Appendix C
Flyer Advertising Research at Gigs

(i) Front



(ii)Reverse

|

Are you interested in what's going on in the live music scene in Cardiff?

Do you regularly attend gigs, write music reviews for local print publications or websites, write blogs or contribute any other material to the local scene?

If so, I'd really like to hear from you! My name is Jo Coates and I'm a research student from Cardiff University, currently looking into the live music scene in the city and the ways in which the Internet and other technologies have impacted upon the promotion of live music.

I'm really interested in hearing from people who regularly go to gigs and in the ways they participate in live music in the city. I'm hoping to recruit people to take part in a series of group discussions about their participation and provide information about their participation over a period of time.

You will be rewarded for your time with free entry to selected gigs in Cardiff.



If you're interested in taking part and would like more information, please contact me at coatesjl@cf.ac.uk, or ring 02920 875441 (Mon-Fri) or 07891189816 at any other time.



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Appendix D

Participant Information Sheet (for Interviewees) with Attached Consent Form

Participant Information Sheet – Study of Live Music in Cardiff (Interviews)

I would like to invite you to participate in my research into live music in Cardiff. This information sheet will provide you with the information you need to make a decision about whether to take part. I will give details on the purpose of the study, what you will be asked to participate in as part of the research, your rights as a respondent, how the data will be used and treated and any other useful contact information. Please read the sheet carefully before making your decision, which may answer any questions you may have about the research and your role within it.

What is the research about?

The aim of the research is to examine the operation and promotion of live ‘indie’ music in Cardiff and its relationship to the production, access and exchange of local music in a digital form; for example the exchange of mp3 files over the internet. I am interested in the impact of the growth in popularity of digital music and the operation of live music in a particular area.

How will the research be carried out?

I am collecting data from three distinct groups of people; local promoters of indie music, performers and fans. Exploring the perspectives and attitudes of each group are important for my research, and will be useful in building up an overall picture of the current state of local music in relation to digitised music. During data collection I will be interested in discussing the experiences of individuals and their views on the topic through either focus groups (involving musicians and consumers separately) and interviews (involving promoters).

What will I be asked to do?

I am therefore inviting you to participate in an interview or focus group, which will explore your involvement with local music and your perspectives on the relationship of local music to digital music. The sessions will be audio-taped and transcribed in order that they be analysed accurately. The sessions will last approximately 1 hour.

What will be done with the data I give after the interviews?

After the sessions have taken place, the information will be recorded and analysed as part of my PhD research project, and may also contribute to other publications in academic journals. Please note that you will remain anonymous and none of the comments that you make will be attributed to you, neither will your real name appear in the final write-up of the project or in any other publications. Only myself and my supervisors will have access to the data and only I will know your real name. If, after you have taken part in the focus group, you decide you would like to withdraw from the study, you may do so at any time and for any reason. The

data you give will then be removed and will not appear in the study. If you wish to see a copy of the transcript or drafts of the report, please contact me and I can provide you with these. You may also amend passages of data that you have given retrospectively if you change your mind about what you said or if you feel that your words have been misrepresented.

About the researcher:

My name is Jo Coates and I am a PhD student in the School of Social Sciences at Cardiff University. My research is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and this study has been approved by the School of Social Sciences Ethics Committee. If you have any further questions about this research, then you may contact myself by email at coatesjl@cardiff.ac.uk or by telephone on weekdays on 02920 875441. Thank you for your time.

Consent Form

Having decided that you would like to take part in the research, please read the following bullet points and confirm that you understand and agree to participation by signing below.

By signing this consent form I confirm that;

- I fully understand the information given on the sheet and have had any questions I might have answered to my satisfaction.
- I give consent to take part in the study and understand that any information I give will be anonymous, confidential and that I have a right to withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason.
- I understand that I have a right to ask for copies of transcripts of the sessions in which I participate and may amend any comments I make at a later date

PRINT NAME:.....

SIGNED:.....

DATE:.....

Appendix E

Tables of Participants

(i) Promoters

Pseudonym	Age	Occupation	Provenance
James (P1M1)	30	Full-time promoter	Birmingham
Lisa (P2F1)	30	Label Manager	North Wales
Matt (P3M2)	32	Programme manager for charity	Bristol
Lloyd (P4M3)	30	Promoter and magazine editor	North Wales
James (P5M4)	29	Full time promoter/venue manager	Cardiff/South Wales Valleys
Kyle (P6M5)	32	Full time promoter/venue manager	Bristol
Stu (P7M6)	32	Full time promoter/DJ	Cardiff
Samuel (P8M7)	31	Promoter and musician	Cardiff
Jake (P9M8)	35	Full time promoter	South Africa
Emily (P10F2)	30	Full-time promoter	Bristol
Steve (P11M9)	34	Did not disclose	Cardiff

(ii) Musicians

Pseudonym	Age	Occupation	Provenance
Joel (M1M1)	21	Student	Cardiff
Rob (M2M2)	25	Mechanic	Cardiff
Hywel (M3M3)	22	Student	Cardiff

Rhys (M4M4)	19	Student	Cardiff
Jon (M5M5)	18	Student	Cardiff
Rich (M6M6)	18	Student	Cardiff
Chris (M7M7)	19	Student	Cardiff
Gareth (M8M8)	26	Civil Servant	Caerphilly
Isaac (M9M9)	27	Civil Servant	Cardiff
Evan (M10M10)	27	Civil Servant	Caerphilly
Andy (M11M11)	30	Musician and part-time student	Dublin
Ed (M12M12)	29	Student	Cardiff
Paul (M13M13)	25	Student	Cardiff
Martin (M14M14)	24	Student	Cardiff
Dom (M15M15)	25	Student	Cardiff
Karen (M16F1)	35	PhD Student and Musician	Cardiff
Tony (M17M16)	37	Full time musician	Cardiff
Toby (M18M17)	32	Full time musician	Cardiff
Hayley (M19F2)	27	Music teacher	Dublin
Jonathan (M20M18)	29	No info given	Cardiff
Nick (M21M19)	26	No info given	Reading
Dan (M22M20)	28	No info given	Cardiff
Dave (M23M21)	29	Music Teacher	Cardiff

(iii) Audience Members

Group and Location of	Gender	Age	Occupation	Location
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Interview				
1 (Buffalo Bar)	M	28	Work for IT company	Swansea
	M	25	Work for IT company	Swansea
	M	38	Work for IT company	Swansea
2 (The Old Library)	M	18	Student	Cardiff
	M	18	Student	Cardiff
	M	19	Student	Cardiff
3 (The Old Library)	F	23	Restaurant Manager	Cardiff (originally Leicester)
	F	26	Florist	Cardiff
4 (The Old Library)	M	18	Student	Cardiff
	M	18	Student	Cardiff
	M	19	Student	Cardiff
5 (The Old Library)	F	18	Student	Cardiff
	F	18	Student	Cardiff
	F	18	Student	Cardiff
6 (The Old Library)	M	34	Engineer	Caerphilly
7 (The Old Library)	M	35	Runs own internet company	Cardiff (originally Spain)
8 (The Gate)	M	18	Gap Year	Colchester
9 (The Gate)	M	40	Part-time	Cardiff

			Musician	
10 (The Gate)	M	35	Part-time musician	Cardiff
	M	25	Part-time musician	Cardiff
11 (The Globe)	F	18	Student	Newcastle-upon-Tyne
	F	18	Student	Newcastle-upon-Tyne
12 (The Globe)	M	20	Student	Dublin
13 (The Gate)	M	29	IT Helpdesk Technician	Cardiff
	F	24	Civil Servant	Pontypool
14 (The Globe)	F	30	Lawyer	Cardiff (originally Reading)
15 (The Globe)	M	27	Engineer	Cardiff
16 (The Globe)	M	32	Chef	Cardiff
17 (The Old Library)	M	'Mid-Fourties'	Vocal Coach/Part-time Musician	Cardiff
	F	18	Student	Cardiff (originally Spain)
18 (The Old Library)	M	20	Student	Swansea
	M	20	Student	Cardiff
	M	20	Student	Cardiff

Appendix F: Coding Frame

Detailed below is the coding frame used in the analysis of the data. The data was coded using NVivo8 and organised using the ‘tree node’ system within the programme. The frame therefore details under which ‘tree’ the codes were organised, and where applicable, 1st and 2nd sub-codes within that code.

<u>Top Code</u>	<u>1st Sub-code</u>	<u>2nd Sub Code</u>
INVOLVEMENT IN THE CARDIFF MILIEU	Promotion	
	Management	
	Journalism	
	Performance	
	Recording and Releasing	
	Musician Biography	
	As a Fan	
	Within Cardiff	
GENERAL INVOLVEMENT WITH LIVE MUSIC	Outside of Cardiff	
	Over the Lifecourse of Respondent	
	Past Roles	
THE CARDIFF MILIEU	‘Cliqeyness’	
	The Indie Scene	
	Compared with Other Cities	
	Negative Aspects of the Milieu	
	Genre	
	Prominence on the UK Touring Map	

	Venues	
	Keeping Up with the Scene	
	The Gig	
	Welsh Language Issues	
	Geography	
	Other Factors	
RECENT GIGS ORGANISED	Online Promotion	
	Offline/Physical Promotion	
	Local/National	
	Merchandise	
SELECTION PROCESS	Venue	
	Artist Selection	
	Audience	
NETWORKS AND CONTACTS	History	
	Promoters	
	Record Labels	
	Attitudes of Others	
	Subsequent Online Communication	
	Importance of Networking	
	Artists	
	Venues	
	Community	
	Local Record Stores	
	Media	

	National/International	
	Fans	
ONLINE PROMOTION	Social Networking	<i>Facebook</i>
		<i>MySpace</i>
		<i>Twitter</i>
		<i>Blogging</i>
		<i>Music Zines</i>
		<i>Other</i>
	Using the Internet	<i>Search Tactics</i>
		<i>Discovering New Music</i>
	Viral Momentum	
	Feedback Loop	
	Then and Now	
MIXING ONLINE AND OFFLINE	Preferences	
	Effectiveness	
INTERACTION WITH LIVE AUDIENCES	Followed by Online Communication	
	Continuous Online Presence	
THE INDEPENDENT SECTOR	Co-operation	
	Monetary Rewards	
	Problems for the Sector	
	Ethical Practice	
	Mythology	
	Reputation	
ROLE OF DIGITISATION	Accessibility	

	Simplicity	
	Minimal Cost	
	Saturation	
	Online Hype	
	Quality	
	Control Over Promotion	
	Internet Architecture	
	Old Formats	
	Fandom	
	Innovation	
	Containment and Portability	
	Value	
	Ownership	
COPYRIGHT ISSUES RE:DIGITAL	Music for Free	
	Piracy	
	Mainstream Vs Independent	
	New Models	
	Different Genres	
	Cultural Policy	
	Shifts in the Music Industry	
PURCHASING MUSIC	Preferences	
	Others' Practices	<i>Generational Differences</i>
OFFLINE PROMOTION	Word of Mouth	
	Re-framing and Re- configuring Content	

AUDIENCES	Motivations for Attending Live Shows	
	Experiences with Live Music	
	Methods for Participation	<i>Online</i>
		<i>Offline</i>
	Sharing	
	Impacts of Internet on Local Scene	

Appendix G: Network Visualisation of the Cardiff Milieu

The network illustration overleaf depicts the Cardiff milieu as interpreted by the researcher, with the help of professionals (promoters and musicians) I interviewed throughout the course of my fieldwork, from August 2009-January 2011. It must be made clear that this interpretation is by no means complete, and has probably changed greatly since this research was carried out. It is my interpretation of the milieu, based on the information given by my respondents. It covers a variety of node types, including artists, promoters, graphic designers, photographers, venues, journalists, radio stations (local and national), print and online music publications.

