



Live music and the New Urban Agenda: Social, economic, environmental and spatial sustainability in live music ecologies

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ABSTRACT

This conceptual study explores the relationship between live popular music and the sustainability goals of the New Urban Agenda, which is the United Nation's vision on a sustainable future in the context of growing urbanisation. In connection to the Sustainable Development Goals, the agenda reflects a broad approach to sustainability. It addresses environmental, social, economic and spatial issues. We consider the opportunities and complexities of implementing these four forms of sustainability in live music ecologies. Therefore, this article discusses the impacts of musical performance on social relationships in cities, urban economies and the environment. Furthermore, we examine the spatial conditions needed to support these sustainability goals. To achieve the proposed goals, various stakeholders (e.g. music organisations, urban planners and policy-makers) will need to work together to, among other things, enhance inclusivity, mitigate the negative effects of live music on the environment, and address issues of gentrification.

1. Introduction

This paper explores the relationship between live popular music and the sustainability goals of the New Urban Agenda (NUA from here). The NUA presents the United Nation's vision on improving cities in the context of growing urbanisation by addressing issues of social, economic, environmental and spatial sustainability (Caprotti et al., 2017). In connection to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), the NUA seeks to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable (UN-Habitat, 2020; United Nations General Assembly, 2016). The agenda was adopted in 2016 at the United Nations' Habitat III conference and provides an influential framework for managing urban growth in both developed and developing countries. As Valencia et al. (2019, p. 19) observe:

“The SDGs and the NUA are ambitious, comprehensive and, arguably, socially progressive agendas. They have the potential to contribute to the transition towards more sustainable, inclusive and resilient cities by serving as tools that question the status quo and mobilise actors and resources.”

The trend of growing urbanisation addressed in the NUA calls for studies on the connections between culture, urban planning and

sustainability. However, culture is often neglected in policy debates about sustainable cities (Lavanga & Drosner, 2020).

In this conceptual study, we argue that live music can support the NUA as this cultural form is a vital part of the social and cultural life of cities. Furthermore, it sustains diverse communities and economic activities. We consider issues of sustainability to be crucial for urban live music ecologies, which we understand as the networks of venues, festivals and other social actors that are involved in the organisation of live performances in specific cities (Behr et al., 2016; Van der Hoeven et al., 2022). Live music ecologies and urban planning are strongly connected. On the one hand urban planning provides the right conditions for successful live music events, by creating, among other things, a strong public transport network, public spaces for performing and mitigating the negative effects of gentrification (e.g. rising rents and noise complaints) on venues (Gibson & Homan, 2004; Van der Hoeven & Hitters, 2020; Whiting & Carter, 2016). On the other hand, live music can support urban planning by acting as a catalyst of urban change (Kronenburg, 2020), through place-making (Gibson & Homan, 2004; Wynn & Yetis-Bayraktar, 2016) and enhancing the wellbeing of their inhabitants (Van der Hoeven & Hitters, 2019). However, in increasingly dense cities with a growing number of events, a sustainable balance needs to be found between the conflicting interests of, among others, the

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live music sector and citizens with varying expectations about urban living. While some people are attracted to cities because of their vibrant nightlife, others might be critical about the ‘eventification of place’ (Jakob, 2013) and the ensuing nuisance (Hitters & Mulder, 2020).

While various studies have looked at the connections between music and sustainability (e.g. Brennan et al., 2019; Fleming et al., 2019; Kinnunen et al., 2020), they have largely focused on environmental and social sustainability. Furthermore, such studies have not examined in a holistic manner how these two relate to the other forms of sustainability addressed in the NUA (i.e. economic and spatial sustainability). Particularly festivals have received much attention as events with a large ecological footprint (e.g. Brennan et al., 2019; Brooks et al., 2009). Nevertheless, research also demonstrates that festivals can play a vital role in enhancing awareness of sustainable practices through campaigns at events (Alonso-Vazquez & Ballico, 2021; Laing & Frost, 2010). These existing studies have been very important to conceptualise the connections between musical performance and sustainability, but have paid less attention to urban venues and inner-city festivals. We address this gap by focusing on cities and conceptualising sustainable live music practices in relation to the NUA. As the meaning of the sustainability concept is increasingly being stretched, it is vital to offer clear definitions that recognise the tensions that exist between cultural consumption, creative city policies and cultural economy on the one hand and sustainable behaviour and sustainable urban development on the other hand (Kagan et al., 2018; Oakley & Ward, 2018; Ratiu, 2013). In other words, it needs to be acknowledged that live music can have both positive and negative effects on communities and the environment. Therefore, we discuss the challenges to be addressed when the NUA is implemented in local live music ecologies.

The paper is divided into two main parts. In the first part, we provide a literature review about the connections between live music and social, economic, environmental and spatial developments in cities. In the second part, we analyse how live music could support the four dimensions of sustainability discussed in the United Nations’ handbook for the NUA (UN-Habitat, 2020): social (e.g. empowerment of marginalised groups), economic (e.g. job creation and livelihoods), environmental (e.g. biodiversity) and spatial (spatial conditions for sustainability). In doing so, we define these four forms of sustainability in relation to live music and address both the opportunities and complexities of implementing them.

2. Live music and urban space

Both policy-makers and academics have turned to the concepts of ‘ecology’ and ‘ecosystems’ as analogies that can enhance our understanding of how place-based cultural activities take shape. Baker (2019) links the application of the ecological approach in music research to the concept of ‘urban ecology’ developed in the Chicago School of sociology (Liu & Emirbayer, 2016). The latter concept suggests that urban development and the distribution of creative communities can be understood in similar ways as found in the science of natural ecology, “based on a symbiotic relationship between interdependence and territoriality” (Baker, 2019, p. 37).

Live music ecologies can be seen as a specific urban ecology, with its own characteristics (Van der Hoeven et al., 2022). First, live music is a lived cultural practice, focused on an aesthetic experience. It is a temporary event that is highly meaningful to participants and can be part of people’s identities. Second, live music ecologies consist of a network of actors and organisations that shape live music practices. These can be actors from both inside the music industry (e.g. booking agents, venues) and outside the industry (e.g. policymakers, regulators) (Behr et al., 2016). Third, live music relies on material resources, such as stages, the built environment and all the facilities needed for touring. Fourth, live music is a social institution, structured around institutionalised norms and implicit rules (e.g. concert rituals and conventions associated with genres) (Holt, 2020). However, live music as a social institution can

change over the years through innovation and new policies. Therefore, we will now turn to debates about the relationship between live music and cities, which shape how live music ecologies could evolve. In doing so, we focus on the categories that are also central to the NUA. We will discuss the social, economic, environmental and spatial role of live music in cities as four key areas of contestation.

A rich body of literature has considered how live music sustains social relationships in cities. The density of cities provides good conditions for creativity to thrive, as people with similar tastes can cluster to form scenes (Cohen, 2012; Florida et al., 2010). Focusing on niche genres in post-industrial cities, Grazian (2013, p. 132) argues: “The racial, ethnic, and lifestyle diversity of urban populations also ensures variety among microscenes, while the human density of heterogeneous residents tightly sequestered in local mixed-income neighbourhoods bolsters the intensity of such small-bore social worlds.” Furthermore, he notes that urban nightlife scenes attract singles and other people looking for intimacy. Other researchers have focused on live music’s contribution to social change, as it allows migrants, disadvantaged communities and protest groups to express themselves and to create a sense of belonging and identity (Connell & Gibson, 2002; Sánchez-Fuarros, 2013). Nevertheless, live music activities are also fraught with social tensions, such as a lack of inclusivity and harassment of women (Grazian, 2009; Hill et al., 2020; Holt, 2020). Arguably, music events tend to particularly strengthen bonding social capital among people with similar backgrounds, instead of bridging social divides (Wilks, 2011). Social inequalities in cities at large could be echoed in the provision of live music when particular areas have a lack of venues, institutions fail to reflect the diversity of contemporary cities in their programming, or marginalise musical genres of disadvantaged communities (Nunes, 2019; Roberts, 2015). This implies that in an ideal situation (cf. Baird & Scott, 2018), live music ecologies reflect the diversity of cities at large by catering to different communities, generations and lifestyles.

Next, we turn to debates about the urban economics of live music. The economic benefits of live music have always been a crucial yet contested justification for investments in live music ecologies, be it from public sources or private ones. Many places present themselves as ‘Music Cities’ for the purpose of city branding (Baker, 2019; Bennett, 2020). Driven by neo-liberal economic policies, cities around the world have invested in the infrastructure for live music by subsidising new venues, arenas, festivals, music precincts and concert halls (Baird & Scott, 2018; Homan, 2014). Most of these are combinations of public and private investments, with many variations across the globe. However, all of them use public funds or at least need public support for realising this infrastructure. The predicted returns on investment for urban popular music infrastructure have been used in public debates widely, while at the same time being heavily criticised by opponents to such projects (Bennett, 2020). Especially large scale live music events and festivals are profitable businesses. Not only for the artists, bookers, promoters, managers and other intermediaries directly involved, but arguably also for the urban environments in which concerts usually take place. Visitor spending is expected to account for much of the economic impact of live music. But there may also be additional economic effects on the location decisions of firms and urban land values (Seaman, 2021). Baird and Scott (2018) point at the reputational benefits of such investments and argue that cities can hardly refrain from developing live music. Nevertheless, cultural or “creative city” policies are often at odds with urban sustainability goals (Ratiu, 2013) or more long term oriented sustainable urban development (Kagan et al., 2018). Cunningham and Potts, while arguing for a broader understanding of creative industries’ contribution to the economy, also highlight that “a focus on economy-wide creative contributions dissipates a sectoral focus on the specific needs and dynamics of especially the arts or cultural sectors of the creative industries” (2015, p. 388). The latter ties in with discussions of the highly skewed nature of the music economy, in which superstar earnings are massive, while the majority of musicians suffer from highly precarious and economically unsustainable labour conditions (Hesmondhalgh

et al., 2021). The music economy is rife with systematic inequality. As Oakley and Ward argue about the approaches to culture in the last decades (2018, p. 4):

“The creative economy has seen cultural policy swallowed up by a narrow vision of economic growth, its impacts on the urban fabric captured by property developers, and its promises of meaningful activity challenged by the exploitation and inequities of cultural labour markets.”

The third area of contestation we consider is environmental sustainability. Live music ecologies rely on finite material resources and thus have a negative impact on the environment. These environmental consequences have received much attention, particularly in relation to festivals (Brennan et al., 2019; Cummings, 2014; Laing & Frost, 2010; Moore, 2021; Webster & McKay, 2016). Harmful effects include, among others, the high waste levels at festivals, the carbon emission of travelling musicians and audiences, and the impact of outdoor concerts on flora and fauna. Nevertheless, festival events and musical performances have also been understood as contributing to sustainable practices through awareness campaigns and sustainable innovations that are tested at festival sites (Cummings, 2014; Fleming et al., 2019). According to Kagan and Kirchberg (2016, p. 1496):

“Collective musical practices nurture certain values that in themselves do not necessarily or automatically lead societies towards sustainability, but which can be helpful when integrated within sustainability-oriented worldviews and value systems: cooperation, listening and tuning in to each other, and sharing responsibilities towards common desires.”

In that sense music could inspire people to live more sustainable lives. Live music ecologies as social institutions have strong connections to counter-cultural movements (e.g. punk), social protest and festivals. Reflecting on the potential alternative lifestyles developed at festivals, Brennan et al. (2019) observe that the ‘environmental utopianism’ associated with festivals clashes with their actual negative environmental impact. Highlighting the contradictions in the rhetoric of ‘greenwash marketing’, they find that “festival sites vividly dramatise the difficulty of living sustainably – a challenge that is all the more visible when rural landscapes are temporarily transformed into festival communities” (p. 253). Furthermore, they observe relevant differences between greenfield festivals in remote locations and urban festivals. The audiences of the latter are more likely to use public transport as these inner-city locations are more accessible, thus reducing the carbon emissions of travelling (Laing & Frost, 2010). However, urban festivals usually have less control over sustainable practices, as they rely on existing venues for their activities.

Finally, we consider debates about the connections between live music and space. Live music’s spatial embedding is complex, as it both affects and is affected by the urban environment (Van der Hoeven & Hitters, 2020). Researchers have noted how live music shapes the experience of urban spaces. Concerts can act as catalysts of urban change by demonstrating the possible new functions of areas (Kronenburg, 2020). Such culture-led regeneration happens, for example, when derelict industrial spaces are transformed to areas for leisure and living through place-making activities. Gravagnuolo et al. (2021) argue that such adaptive re-use of cultural heritage can add to a sustainable and circular city. Flagship music venues and festivals can also be used for urban imagineering, to enhance the image of a city or area (Baird & Scott, 2018). Meanwhile, live music is also affected by its environment. This can be positive as the characteristics of a location might add to the general atmosphere of a concert (Bottà, 2012; Holt, 2020; Kronenburg, 2020). Nevertheless, many authors have noted the complexities of the relationship between live music and urban space. As a consequence of gentrification, rents might become too high for small venues, audiences and musicians (Behr et al., 2020; Cohen, 2013; Lobato, 2006). Holt (2013) observes declining cultural activity in some urban spaces and

artists that can no longer afford to live where the venues are. He argues (p. 36) that gentrification “creates a spatial separation between the sites of public performance and everyday life” as it “detaches musical creativity from neighborhood ecologies”. Another challenge to live music’s spatial embedding are complaints about issues such as noise, anti-social behaviour, congestion, and unavailability of public parks during commercial musical events (Ballico & Carter, 2018; Behr et al., 2020; Hitters & Mulder, 2020). In the case of the latter, fenced-off commercial events could conflict with the accessibility of public spaces in cities.

This literature review has provided an overview of contemporary academic and public debates about the place of live music in cities and the tensions this generates among different urban stakeholders. In the next section, we will further assess these debates in the context of the NUA.

3. Live music ecologies and the new urban agenda

The NUA is accompanied by a handbook in which UN-Habitat (2020) unpacks this global framework by explaining core dimensions. Table 1 provides an overview of the different topics discussed in the handbook and the corresponding interventions we identified for the live music sector. In this section, we will use the dimensions defined in the handbook to address how various forms of sustainability can be achieved in live music ecologies. Furthermore, we consider tensions surrounding issues of sustainability by analysing the specific characteristics of urban live music ecologies that we conceptualised in the theory section. Finally, we discuss how these challenges could be managed to achieve a better contribution of live music to the NUA goals.

3.1. Social sustainability

3.1.1. Definition

A socially sustainable urban live music ecology is inclusive and enhances social relationships between people and diverse communities in cities. In this section, we will discuss how this can be achieved by focusing on these themes that are central to the NUA’s approach to social sustainability: Empowerment of marginalised groups, gender equality, and age-responsive planning.

3.1.2. Analysing social sustainability in live music ecologies

The NUA pays specific attention to discrimination faced by various groups, including women, people with disabilities and migrants (United Nations General Assembly, 2016, article 20). Live music organisations can play a vital role in addressing forms of inequality in the events they stage, in their own organisation and the city at large. For example, to become a safe space for women, live music venues and festivals need policies and procedures against sexual harassment. As argued by Hill et al., 2020, p. 377):

“... it is the responsibility of everyone to work towards the broader shift away from a culture of male entitlement to female, trans and non-binary bodies. Venues and promoters are uniquely placed to take a role preventing and responding to incidents of sexual violence within live music culture.”

Hill goes on to suggest a dual approach, focusing not only on accurate responses to incidents when they occur, but also a policy to prevent harassment to happen by instigating a culture change and communicating that such behaviour is unacceptable (p. 377).

Furthermore, live music organisations can become more inclusive through their programming by addressing the underrepresentation of women. For example, the Keychange initiative aims to achieve an equal gender balance of the performers at festivals (Keychange, 2018). Raine (2019) argues that this complex problem needs to be addressed through a concerted focus on supporting the visibility and career development of women in the music industries.

The New Urban Agenda is likewise committed to supporting the

Table 1
Addressing four dimensions of sustainability in live music ecologies.

Dimension of sustainability in the NUA	NUA Handbook	Policy interventions in live music ecologies
Social	<i>Empowerment of marginalised groups; Planning for migrants, ethnic minorities and persons with disabilities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Spaces to develop social networks (Sánchez-Fuarros, 2013) ● inclusive musical activities for minority communities ● Access for disabled people (Attitude Is Everything, 2018; Webster et al., 2018)
	<i>Gender equality</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Policies and procedures against sexual harassment (Hill et al., 2020; Webster et al., 2018) ● Countering the underrepresentation of female performers (Raine, 2019)
	<i>Age-responsive planning</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Supporting live music participation for all ages (Elbourne, 2013, p. 69)
Economic	<i>Job creation and livelihoods</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fair pay scheme for musicians and employees ● Talent development activities for musicians and support staff (e.g. internships) ● Circular economy and ethical purchasing (Moore, 2021)
	<i>Productivity and competitiveness</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● New organisational models, such as social enterprises (Cato et al., 2007), crowdfunding and community ownership (Gillon, 2020) cooperatives (Boyle & Oakley, 2018) and digital Decentralised Autonomous Organisations (Owen & O'Dair, 2020)
Environmental	<i>Biodiversity and ecosystem conservation; Resilience and adaptation to climate change; Climate change mitigation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reducing waste and pollution ● Mitigating negative impact of festivals on flora and fauna ● Awareness campaigns at musical events and in venues (promoting sustainable practices) (Fleming et al., 2019) ● Sustainability policies of venues and festivals ● Donation added to tickets for carbon offset (Laing & Frost, 2010) ● Self-regulation, certification schemes and audits (Laing & Frost, 2010; Moore, 2021) ● Sustainable buildings (e.g. green roofs)
Spatial	<i>Spatial sustainability and equity; Spatial sustainability and urban density</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Preserving iconic musical venues through, for example, the Asset of Community Value (Gillon, 2020) and Agent of Change principle (Ross, 2017) ● Equal geographical distribution of live music events (Mercado-Celis, 2017) ● Public transport to and from events (Brennan, 2020; Whiting & Carter, 2016) ● Free concerts in public space (Gibson & Homan, 2004) ● Coordinating organisations and music boards (Van der Hoeven & Hitters, 2020)

human rights of refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants: “[A]lthough the movement of large populations into towns and cities poses a variety of challenges, it can also bring significant social, economic and cultural contributions to urban life” (United Nations General Assembly 2016, article 28). Live music events can contribute to the integration of migrants as music helps migrant communities to find a shared identity and sense of belonging through performances (Sánchez-Fuarros, 2013). For example, Flow Festival in Helsinki addresses explicitly on their website how they seek to contribute to inclusivity:

“Flow Festival is committed to forwarding the principles of justice, equity and equality. Everyone is welcomed to the festival just as they are, and we tolerate no form of discrimination. We expect our entire staff, as well as our associates and distributors to adhere to the same values. For example, we work with Startup Refugees, a non-profit voluntary network supporting refugees with employment and entrepreneurship.”¹

Other relevant initiatives targeting migrants are the free sing-along events organised by Paradiso (Amsterdam) and Ancienne Belgique (Brussels). These events help participants to learn the local language through singing domestic songs and are an opportunity to meet new people.

People with disabilities are another group identified in the NUA as requiring specific attention in urban planning (UN-Habitat, 2020). According to the World Bank (2021), 15% of the world’s population experiences some form of disability. A key issue for disabled people is the accessibility of buildings and spaces, including live music venues and festivals. This issue can be addressed through dedicated policies and facilities such as, for example, someone overseeing access, an assistance dog policy, clear information on the website, step-free access and an awareness training for staff (Attitude Is Everything, 2018; Parkinson et al., 2015; Webster et al., 2018). Some Dutch festivals organise separate festivals for people with mental health issues, for whom a regular festival might be too stressful. These small-scale festivals take place just before the main event in a setting which is less intense than the actual festival (NOS, 2016). Another best-practice is the Berlin based charity Handicapped, which organises and promotes barrier-free live music.²

To enable the participation of all groups in urban life, the NUA stresses the importance of age-responsive planning for both youth and older people (United Nations General Assembly, 2016, articles 20 and 26). In this context, a challenge for young people is age restrictions at venues due to alcohol regulation. To cater to young people, who are actually the live music consumers of the future, all-age events or alcohol-free events could be organised (Elbourne, 2013, p. 69; Terrill et al., 2015, p. 15). Next, the age-friendly cities and communities movement raises awareness of the needs of an ageing population in urban areas (Buffel & Phillipson, 2018). Indeed, changing demographics could necessitate new approaches for older live music consumers, as they might have specific accessibility demands and expectations about the programming (Nuchelmans, 2011). Furthermore, retired people might benefit from opportunities to volunteer at live music activities.

This section has discussed multiple ways to make live music events more inclusive for different groups. This overview is by no means exhaustive, as other groups might also face specific challenges. In all cases, the examples underscore the importance of supporting social sustainability through specific policies and interventions.

¹ <https://www.flowfestival.com/en/festival/sustainable-flow/> (accessed 19 December 2021).

² <https://handicapped-berlin.de> (accessed 15 September 2021).

3.2. Economic sustainability

3.2.1. Definition

Economic sustainability is generally concerned with the continued growth of economic production. Within the context of the NUA, it is acknowledged that there are limits to such growth. Sustainability then refers to sustained and inclusive economic growth and productivity, with a focus on the quality and equity of employment and organisation (UN-Habitat, 2020, p. 38). An economically sustainable urban live music ecology promotes the fair, inclusive, responsible, circular and equitable economic operation of live music.

3.2.2. Analysing economic sustainability in live music ecologies

As discussed in the literature review, a key characteristic of live music ecologies is that they are very dependent on both finite natural and human resources in order to operate. As an economic sector, driven by growth and profit maximisation, there is a tendency to become even more resource-heavy and drawing ever more music fans and bigger crowds to arenas, stadiums and festivals. Clearly, the NUA points at the unsustainability of such a focus on economic growth. However, there are strong economic forces that shape institutionalised practices of the actors and organisations of live music ecologies.

A prominent structural economic characteristic of live music as an institution are the stark inequalities in the labour conditions of music creators, intermediaries, and support personnel (Hesmondhalgh et al., 2021). This characteristic impedes the contribution of live music to the NUA goal of economic sustainability. The live music economy is known as a superstar economy, where a small percentage of very well-known artists generate the lion's share of revenues from performances (Krueger, 2019). Further down the line, the performance of live music is carried out by many working under precarious labour conditions, hardly able to make a living from their work in the live music industry (Everts & Haynes, 2021). On the organisational level, small enterprises have clear scale disadvantages in the live music economy, which is highly concentrated and dominated by large global corporations such as Live Nation and AEG, operating through local subsidiaries (Tschmuck, 2021). Such for-profit companies are largely driven by commercial objectives. Most small music venues and festivals are non-profits, associations or even cooperatives (see below), driven by the intrinsic value of live music resulting in less focus on profitability (Whiting, 2021). Revenues then, are very unequally distributed, and business models and governance structures are still largely focused on large sales volumes and minimising costs.

A key challenge that the NUA points at is the inclusivity and fairness of labour as a result of economic productivity growth. Recent worldwide COVID-related lockdowns of live music venues and festivals have only exacerbated the existing problems, causing the revenues from live music for all involved to dry up. Various actors in live music have initiated attempts to tackle such issues, mainly focusing on so-called "fair-pay" or "fair practice" schemes for musicians and support personnel (Deloitte Access Economics, 2011; Live DMA, 2021).

A possible contribution to the economic sustainability and competitiveness of the live music sector is the use of alternative modes of financing for small live music venues, festivals and grass-roots initiatives. Most small venue owners "see themselves as curators of cultural space and facilitators of the types of sociality required for such spaces to thrive" (Whiting, 2021, p. 560). Small venues and festivals, then, rely on various sources of revenue in order to supplement the small margins on programming live performances. Next to government subsidies and grants, new financing forms have opened up a more differentiated potential of revenue sources. Crowdfunding is one of these new sources, in which collective engagement of many individual supporters can yield substantial amounts of funding by means of relatively small donations (Dalla Chiesa & Dekker, 2021; D'Amato & Cassella, 2021; Wijngaarden & Loots, 2021). Crowdfunding can add to economic sustainability by moving from a transactional to a relational model of financing, by which

communities - which may be local supporters or global fan bases - build a lasting relationship with an artist, a venue or a festival (Gillon, 2020; Wijngaarden & Loots, 2021). Another possibility is government regulation in the form of a levy on live music tickets, which is used in France (Webster et al., 2018). This redistributes money from large venues and festivals to the smaller ones, in order to foster their function as breeding places for talent development. It underscores the responsibility of live music organisations to support talent development of musicians and staff.

Economic sustainability of live music ecologies can be further strengthened by the adoption of inclusive, fair and community based modes or organisation, as an alternative to the bureaucratic institutionalisation of for-profit and traditional non-profit organisational models (Cato et al., 2007; Holt, 2020). Social enterprises, co-operatives, community ownership and even digital Decentralised Autonomous Organisations (DAO's) can be considered as such alternatives. Gillon (2020) for example, discusses the Puzzle Hall Inn, a small venue in a small town in the North of England, which became revived through a crowdfunding campaign, mobilising local support and subsequently adopting a community owned, co-operative form. He concludes that such a form opposes commercial exploitation: "In the community that has grown around Puzzle, the creation and enjoyment of music culture resists commodification, escapes commercial industry norms and achieves sustainability by other means" (p. 164). Co-operative businesses offer alternative models of ownership and control of creative production. They are owned and run by participating and working members, who share in the collective revenues equivalent to their contribution. Equitability is ensured by democratic voting on issues of management and control (Boyle & Oakley, 2018). A good example is jazz.coop/The Globe³ in Newcastle, which was the first co-operatively owned music venue and education centre in the UK, established in 2014 by issuing community shares. Thanks to community support, the venue could continue during the COVID-lockdown and it quickly adopted live streaming opportunities to reach their audience.

While the co-operative is in fact a revived organisational form with its roots in the 19th century, the digital Decentralised Autonomous Organisation (DAO) relies on digital platforms and blockchain technologies. These technologies allow the development of new flat, democratic and inclusive governance systems without the need of human intermediaries, which may be used for crowdfunding, file sharing, music creation and streaming (Owen & O'Dair, 2020; Zichichi et al., 2019). DAO's are becoming popular in music, especially among electronic music fans. An example is Friends With Benefits, a DAO community of electronic music fans and artists, amongst others. Based on membership investment in cryptocurrency, the organisation has 1,500 members, and organised music events in Europe and North America, created its own ticketing system and an editorial platform. Its mission includes democratising knowledge and equitable pay to DJ's (Ryce, 2021). Nevertheless, the technologies underlying the cryptocurrency based systems are currently far from accessible nor sustainable, consuming enormous amounts of energy and resources, making DAO's so far a questionable contributor to achieving an equitable society.

With many venues and festivals across the globe having committed to work towards a more sustainable future (see section on environmental sustainability), there is a need for sustainable practices to become ingrained in the business operations of the live music sector. Here, economic sustainability can be addressed by following principles of the circular economy. One of the ways in which this can be achieved in the live music sector is by ethical purchasing (Moore, 2021). Already, many venues and festivals are changing business practices by employing ethical purchasing policies for their productions and operations (p. 233). Such practices tie in with the principles of the circular economy, which aims to value scarce resources fairly, in order to efficiently use, reuse

³ <https://jazz.coop/> (accessed 19 december 2021).

and recover them. The aim is a closed system, where waste does not exist since it is a new resource (Moore, 2021). However, given the structural economic characteristics of the commercial live music economy such principles are not self-evident and may require dedicated government intervention to achieve economic sustainability in this way. In addition, this requires a strong commitment from all involved in the urban live music ecology to work towards an integrated vision on new economic principles to guide day-to-day operations of staging live music.

3.3. Environmental sustainability

3.3.1. Definition

The NUA encourages cities to “protect, conserve, restore and promote their ecosystems, water, natural habitats and biodiversity, minimise their environmental impact and change to sustainable consumption and production patterns” (United Nations General Assembly, 2016, article 13h). In the last decade or so, many projects to address climate change have been initiated by music professionals and researchers in the field of popular music studies. However, these overwhelmingly focus on festivals, neglecting the urban context where so many concerts take place. To address this issue, we suggest a broad definition of environmental sustainability that encompasses both venues and festivals and builds upon the NUA definition: Environmentally sustainable urban live music activities seek to contribute to biodiversity and ecosystem conservation, resilience and adaptation to climate change, and climate change mitigation through the practices of music professionals, audiences, artists and suppliers.

3.3.2. Analysing environmental sustainability in live music ecologies

The diverse actors in urban live music ecologies have in many different ways experimented with sustainable practices (Moore, 2021). Examples are a range of efforts by organisers of concerts and festivals to reduce waste and pollution, through recycling and having plastic-free events. Furthermore, they initiated awareness campaigns to promote sustainable practices (Fleming et al., 2019). Some festivals allow audiences to add a donation to their ticket for carbon offsets (Grobe, 2016; Laing & Frost, 2010). More formal approaches include self-regulation, certification schemes and audits. These are used to assess the sustainability strategies and policies of touring musicians and event organisers (Laing & Frost, 2010; Moore, 2021). For example, a carbon audit of Radiohead’s performances resulted in changes to the touring locations, with the band focusing on venues serviced by public transport (Laing & Frost, 2010). Recently, Live Nation initiated a Green Nation Touring Program in 2021, to give artists the tools to reduce the environmental impact of tours (e.g. green venue selection and optimising power requirements).

Notwithstanding the positive intentions and outcomes of such initiatives, various specific characteristics of live music ecologies impede sustainable practices. We will consider how three of such characteristics pose challenges to achieving the NUA’s goal of environmental sustainability. First, the norms and values of live music as a social institution shape how environmental policies are enacted, in both positive and negative ways. The connections between music and social protest can encourage sustainable behaviour. However, the exuberance of festivals is potentially at odds with sustainable practices. As discussed in the theory section, live music is a lived cultural practice with a strong emphasis on pleasure and escapism. Positive intentions by audiences do not necessarily lead to concrete results, if events become ‘responsibility holidays’ (Brennan et al., 2019) where people temporarily give-up on their sustainable ideals. Second, many segments of the live music business have a commercial orientation, which could conflict with sustainable practices. Indeed, various authors raise awareness of ‘greenwash marketing’ (Brennan et al., 2019; Gatti et al., 2019; Miller, 2017). In this case, sustainability efforts become part of the communication strategies to attract visitors and funding. Furthermore, reducing environmental impact is competing with other interests of artists, such as playing in

places where the highest fees can be commanded (Brennan, 2020, p. 40). In fact, Brennan (2020) argues that ‘exclusivity agreements’ might prevent artists from performing near particular concerts, which might result in more travel. Third, there are inequalities in available resources to address sustainability issues among different live music organisations. Actors at the grassroots level often have less time, knowledge and financial resources to change their operations (Brennan et al., 2019), requiring additional support to become more sustainable.

To address these challenges and achieve sustainable practices, live music ecologies need effective regulation and support networks that encourage coordinated efforts among all actors. Moore (2021) stresses the importance of environmental legislation that is implemented by all countries and organisations within them, not just the pioneers in sustainable practices. She observes signs that legislation is catching up with the required changes to address the environmental costs of live music:

“The focus on the Circular Economy in recent EU legislation and the UK’s waste strategy, both issued in 2018, placing circularity at the top of the agenda takes us to a new level challenging fundamental economic models of consumption. The fact that the Dutch government has recognised that music festivals can play a major part in testing circularity could see in a much closer alignment between government, legislation and the music festival industry.” (p. 244)

Intermediary organisations are needed to promote and support sustainable practices, ensuring widespread adoption of new legislation in live music ecologies. Such support networks are growing in recent years, as the knowledge about environmentally-friendly practices expands in the live music industry. In fact, dedicated organisations such as Reverb and Julie’s Bicycle were founded to encourage positive change in the cultural sector.⁴ These organisations can support concerted efforts to achieve sustainability. Live music ecologies consist of a complex network of mutually dependent actors including a lot of self-employed workers and the entire supply chain of ancillary companies (Behr et al., 2016). This implies a necessity of collaboration and coordination between the various actors. In fact, event organisers can leverage their role as “middle man” by forcing sustainable practices both upstream and downstream in the value chain (Brooks et al., 2009, p.293). Moore (2021, p. 235) argues that environmental practices need to be implemented by the entire supply chain to be effective:

“Festival and event organisers who have done much to develop waste separation strategies onsite at their events are sometimes shocked to find that when they follow the supply chain their separated waste is all sent to incineration or their plastic waste is bundled and shipped overseas.”

Furthermore, urban music venues are specific actors in live music ecologies that can have a vital role in promoting sustainable behaviours and reducing energy emissions. Unlike festivals, they can use their building to achieve these goals, for example, by having cool and green roofs that help to reduce extreme heat. This requires local policies and subsidies to support such efforts, in particular for grassroots actors with insufficient financial resources. Finally, research and monitoring is needed to assess whether the various green initiatives indeed contribute to the desired goals.

3.4. Spatial sustainability

3.4.1. Definition

Spatial sustainability concerns the ability of cities to manage increasing urbanisation and growth. In relation to the NUA, UN-Habitat (p. 45) defines it as the spatial conditions required to support three principles: “leave no one behind (social sustainability), ensure sustainable and inclusive urban economies (economic sustainability) and

⁴ www.reverb.org and www.juliesbicycle.com (accessed 22 July 2021).

ensure environmental sustainability". For the field of live music we can adapt this definition to the spatial conditions required to achieve social, economic and environmentally sustainable live music activities in cities.

3.4.2. Analysing spatial sustainability in live music ecologies

Key challenges that can impede the achievement of the NUA goal of spatial sustainability are gentrification, densification and social-spatial inequalities in live music ecologies. With an increasing density of people living closer to venues, also the risk of noise issues grows (Homan, 2014). Furthermore, rising rents could make an area less affordable for small scale cultural organisations (e.g. grassroots venues) and artists (Gibson & Homan, 2004). Nevertheless, in fact music venues themselves might, albeit inadvertently, also contribute to the process of gentrification (Holt, 2020; Kagan et al., 2018). New venues could attract tourists and a wealthier demographic to an area. Holt's (2020, pp. 75–76) analysis of the development of rock clubs in New York explains this process:

"Gentrification privileges affluent populations and for-profit cultural organisations. Institutions such as the rock club, fitness gym, and art museum have evolved into corporate forms and been integrated into a consumer culture value system. I argue that the small and informal rock club in bohemian neighborhood scenes of the Lower East Side in the 1970s and 1980s shaped the mythology of the club, but that the contemporary landscape is dominated by another model, the commercial indie concert theater. The latter is governed by a new institutional arrangement of the corporate concert industry, larger media markets, and by the aesthetics and values of a new condition of urban life."

In other words, he argues that this segment of the live music ecology as a social institution has developed in a way that leads to a more commercial orientation, targeting audiences with a high economic status. Such socio-spatial dynamics can extend to how different communities, venues and genres are represented in live music ecologies. Mercado-Celis (2017) notes how venues from centrally located neighbourhoods are often more dominant in urban imaginaries, while consumers and producers of music from other areas receive less attention. Similarly, in his research in the city of Birmingham, Roberts (2015) finds that particular music styles (e.g., indie music) are normalised contrary to the cultural expressions of disadvantaged youth (e.g., grime).

To address these issues and achieve spatial sustainability in live music ecologies, urban policies are required that recognise the connections between culture and urban development. Baird and Scott (2018) distinguish hard and soft institutions to classify such policy approaches. For them, hard institutions refer to laws, regulations and the physical organisation of space through land use zoning, and soft institutions to partnerships, expectations, relations of trust, and activities such as education and training. This typology is useful as a starting point to identify the policies required to support spatial sustainability.

A first important hard institutional condition to support live music is good and widely available public transport. As found in a study about access to live music events (Whiting & Carter, 2016, p. 3):

"For gig-goers, the availability of late-night trains, busses or taxis is a crucial element to accessing live music. Provision and availability of these services is typically outside the control of music venues or performers. This suggests a role that government planning and private companies play in enabling or inhibiting access to live music."

A good network of public transport can ensure that live music is accessible to people who do not live close to venues and festivals. Nevertheless, ideally there are also venues outside the city centre that cater to residents in the urban periphery.

Furthermore, in order to maintain the cultural vitality to which live music contributes, hard institutional conditions can seek to mitigate the negative effects of densification and gentrification. For example, the Agent of Change principle places the responsibility for sound proofing

on new developments (i.e. the agent of change), preventing closure of existing venues due to noise complaints following on from new buildings in an area (Behr et al., 2020; Ross, 2017). Another policy intervention that can protect existing venues is the Asset of Community Value listing used in the UK. In this case a building of public interest is nominated by a local group for its key contribution to social wellbeing in the community. If the building is sold, this community group gets the first opportunity to place a bid, as the Asset of Community Value results in a six-month moratorium on the sale. Gillon (2020) discusses an example of how a group of volunteers this way saved a live music venue through crowdsourcing and creating a social enterprise. Both the Agent of Change principle and the Asset of Community Value can protect individual venues. However, it needs to be recognised that such venues are part of a wider live music ecology with potentially conflicting interests between different actors. Bennett (2020, p. 6) reminds us that narratives of 'protecting venues' - in particular concerning the Agent of Change principle - often gloss over the complexities of balancing the needs of inhabitants (e.g. a quiet environment) with those of music businesses.

The soft institutional policies focus on coordinating the diverging interests in the network of actors and organisations that shape live music practices. For example, a growing number of events for large audiences might lead to tensions between organisers and residents or challenge nonprofit, smaller-scale musical experiences (Holt, 2020). Managing the interests of different actors within the live music ecology requires what Kagan et al. (2018, p. 36) describe as transversal networking: "An enabling policy would also facilitate connections of different challenging perspectives offered by diverse cultural actors across the city, and bring together key stakeholders." Successful local live music ecologies have a diversity of venues and festivals that cater to different scenes, communities, areas and cultural tastes. This diversity fosters musical creativity and allows artists to build up an audience by progressing to bigger stages within a city (Cohen, 2012). However, the grassroots venues that are vital for talent development are also vulnerable to processes of urban densification and gentrification.

A coordinating organisation can help to align the different interests of all stakeholders. In Rotterdam, for example, a dedicated coordinating organisation called 'Rotterdam Festivals' manages the festival calendar, and shares location profiles that contain conditions and instructions on how specific spaces in the city can be used in a sustainable manner for events (Van der Hoeven & Hitters, 2020). Furthermore, they ensure that the diverse events together target different communities in the city and are spread evenly. Such coordination on the city level is essential for a sustainable embedding of live music in space. In terms of audiences, a balance needs to be found between different target groups, such as tourists and residents. Cultural policies will need to recognise the tensions that exist between on the one hand attracting a creative class of professionals and large numbers of tourists and on the other hand reaching out to local communities. In the latter case, cultural policies could move away from the economisation of culture by focusing on how music supports inclusivity, sustainability and wellbeing (Holt, 2020; Kagan et al., 2018). For example, free events can be used to enhance the accessibility of live music and to counter the negative effects of gentrification. Gibson and Homan (2004) analyse a series of free live music concerts in public space that were initiated in response to a decline of live music venues. The authors note that these events support community aspirations and interactions and provide room for less commercial forms of music. However, they also highlight the risk that the events might inadvertently encourage further gentrification.

4. Conclusions

This article set out to enhance the understanding of the ways in which live music connects to the objectives of the NUA. It conceptualised four types of sustainability for urban live music practices: social, economic, environmental and spatial sustainability. Even though live music and urban planning are strongly connected, earlier studies

have not addressed how this cultural form relates to the objectives of the NUA. So far, most studies on issues of sustainability in the live music sector have primarily focused on festivals.

To support our focus on live music practices in cities, we used the concept of urban live music ecologies. By adopting this framework, we have been able to identify a number of key areas by which live music ecologies may impede the NUA's sustainability goals. It becomes clear how sustainability concerns may arise in relation to all characteristics of live music ecologies that we discussed: First, live music is a *lived cultural practice*, focused on an aesthetic experience. Although there are many benefits associated with the consumption of music, it also highlights how the exuberance of the experience of live music in clubs or at festivals might be in conflict with environmental concerns or create tensions of inclusivity and harassment. Second, live music requires *material conditions* and thus relies on finite natural and spatial resources. Third, live music is a *social institution*, structured around institutionalised norms and implicit rules, including the profit-driven practices of the mainstream music business, which would need to be re-evaluated to address the dimensions of sustainability in the NUA. Fourth, what an ecological perspective brings to the fore, then, is that this requires commitment and cooperation between a *broad network of social actors*, which needs to be regulated by dedicated policy and planning interventions to work towards the NUA's four dimensions of sustainability.

We define a socially sustainable urban live music ecology to be inclusive, enhancing social relationships between people and diverse communities in cities. To achieve this, policies are required that support the empowerment of marginalised groups, gender equality, and age-responsive planning. Economic sustainability in live music concerns the fair, inclusive, responsible, circular and equitable economic operation of live music. There are clearly limits to the predominant commercial logic of the live music sector as well as its institutionalised inequalities and reliance on natural and human resources. A sustainable live music economy could be supported by adoption of fair pay practices, new financing models, equitable and democratic organisational forms and integrating principles of circularity in day-to-day operations. Environmentally sustainable urban live music activities seek to contribute to biodiversity and ecosystem conservation, resilience and adaptation to climate change, and climate change mitigation through the practices of music professionals, audiences, artists and suppliers. We observed that these goals are challenged by the specific characteristics of live music ecologies: live music has a strong focus on pleasure and escapism, the commercial orientation of many actors often undermines sustainable practices, and grassroots organisations might lack the necessary resources (Brennan et al., 2019). Therefore, live music ecologies need regulation and support networks, in order to share knowledge and foster coordinated efforts among all actors. Finally, spatial sustainability concerns the spatial conditions required to achieve social, economic and environmentally sustainable live music activities in cities. To achieve this, particular attention is required to the challenges of gentrification, densification and inequalities in live music ecologies. This requires the integration of culture in urban development policies, supporting the coordination of the diverging interests of different stakeholders. To address the four dimensions of sustainability in general, funders can set conditions for fair pay and inclusivity and support sustainable development by redirecting funding towards sustainable practices. As we have shown, there are many promising practices initiated by actors within the live music sector in support of sustainability goals, but it is important to recognise the institutional logics and local contingencies of live music ecologies that may impede the realisation of these goals (Bennett, 2020; Kagan et al., 2018).

A key underlying contradiction is that live music in cities can have both positive and negative outcomes for urban communities and the environment. The production and consumption of live music, and indeed of culture in a broader sense, may excessively use resources, reinforce inequalities, exploit workers and have damaging effects on the

environment. However, the NUA frames culture largely in positive terms (United Nations General Assembly, 2016, article 10): "The New Urban Agenda acknowledges that culture and cultural diversity are sources of enrichment for humankind and provide an important contribution to the sustainable development of cities, human settlements and citizens, empowering them to play an active and unique role in development initiatives." Nevertheless, Oakley and Ward (2018) remind us that more culture is not necessarily better for the environment. This paradox requires more attention in the implementation of the NUA to counter-balance potential negative outcomes of culture in urban spaces. Future research on the NUA will need to adopt an integrated approach to sustainability, recognising these contradictions between culture and sustainable practices. Furthermore, it is imperative that the NUA is not considered as the next 'toolkit' which may provide universalistic solutions to highly complex and situational sustainability problems (Bennett, 2020). There are many ways in which live music can contribute to achieving the different forms of sustainability, but the extent to which specific solutions or initiatives play out in particular places and urban contexts hinges on existing local infrastructures, institutions and highly path-dependent regulatory landscapes (Kagan et al., 2018).

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CRediT authorship contribution statement

Arno van der Hoeven: Conceptualization, Methodology, Formal analysis, Investigation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing, Funding acquisition. **Erik Hitters:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Formal analysis, Investigation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing, Supervision, Funding acquisition.

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